

Media Release

For Immediate Release

**Singapore Art Museum salutes Singapore's Golden Jubilee through
*5 Stars: Art Reflects on Peace, Justice, Equality, Democracy and Progress***

*Featuring five commissioned works that contemplate the universal ideals
represented by the five stars on the Singapore flag*



Singapore, 22 September 2015 – In its latest exhibition, ***5 Stars: Art Reflects on Peace, Justice, Equality, Democracy and Progress***, Singapore Art Museum's (SAM) salutes Singapore's Golden Jubilee and the five stars on the Singapore flag representing universal humanist ideals. Ho Tzu Nyen, Matthew Ngui, T.K. Sabapathy, Suzann Victor and Zulkifle Mahmod – five of the nation's art luminaries whose life-long commitment to art as a discipline are inimitable and exemplary – were invited to ponder and respond to each of the nation's core values. Through the creative and curatorial process, they offer nuanced and layered interpretations of the abstract concepts of peace, justice, equality, democracy and progress, which resonate with Singapore's multifaceted, complex identity.

Engaging with "big ideas" through contemporary art, *5 Stars* encourages contemplation of what these shared human ideals mean in the present day, and how they might continue to help us envision our futures. The SAM curatorial team was led by Senior Curator Ms Joyce Toh, together with Senior Curator Ms Tan Siuli and Curator Mr Louis Ho. *5 Stars* will run from 2 October 2015 to 5 June 2016.

"Five decades after Singapore's independence, the founding ideals of Peace, Justice, Equality, Democracy and Progress, symbolised by the five stars on our national flag, continue to be the cornerstones of our society. In paying homage to Singapore's 50th anniversary, 5

Stars looks to the future of our nation, ruminating upon these national values that connect us all in a universal way. Through the language of contemporary art, the exhibition offers new ‘thought-spaces’ – from our nation’s conscious reflections on its ideals, we recognise the humanist foundations of today’s world,” says Dr Susie Lingham, Director, Singapore Art Museum.

Peace – Suzann Victor, *Bloodline of Peace*, 2015

Suzann Victor reflects on the value of Peace with her artwork *Bloodlines of Peace*. Peace is a transient state, requiring genuine intentions, active construction, education and maintenance for it to be sustainable. *Bloodlines of Peace*, a 40-metre long quilt made of thousands of Fresnel lenses, references the commitment and sacrifice necessary for peace to be maintained, through the incorporation of blood into her artwork, collected from individuals who represent key communities in Singapore.

Justice – Ho Tzu Nyen, *No Man*, 2015

The understanding of Justice has evolved in the law over many civilizations. Ho Tzu Nyen’s moving image and sound work is a meditation on the relationship between crowds, power, and how justice is meted out. The artwork, *No Man*, takes as its starting point a poem by John Donne, “Meditation XVII – Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions”, and reflects on how all of humanity is intertwined. *No Man* invites viewers into a hall of mirrors where the viewer experiences being in the midst of a spectral crowd.

Equality – T.K. Sabapathy, *Of Equal Measure*, 2015

The value of equality is epitomised through the lifelong work of art historian T.K. Sabapathy. *Of Equal Measure* is a curated presentation of the varied facets of Sabapathy’s work, through interviews on video, texts and books from his writings and conceptual portraits and artworks by artists. It is a celebration of Sabapathy’s singular and foundational role in the discipline of Art in Singapore, and seeks to underscore the irrevocable value of art to the history and legacy of any nation, society and culture.

Democracy – Matthew Ngui, *Every Point of View*, 2015

Engaging with the value of Democracy, Matthew Ngui - through his work *Every Point of View* - presents a spectrum of clear, bold definition statements on democracy within a dynamic, striking installation. The work encourages various encounters of viewpoints and perspectives on the idea of democracy. Comprising a ‘forest’ of pipes, the installation includes text projection and uses anamorphosis as a conceptual device to explore the notion of different perspectives on the value of democracy.

Progress – Zulkifli Mahmud, *Raising Spirits and Restoring Souls*, 2015

Contemplating Progress, Zulkifli Mahmud's poetic sound installation *Raising Spirits and Restoring Souls* evokes the Singapore national anthem, *Majulah Singapura* (Onward Singapore), in particular the line, "*Sama-sama menuju bahagia*" (Let us progress towards happiness together). In this instance, Progress is not defined by technology but relates to growth, development, evolution and a turn towards the future with courage. Along a maze of copper pipes that hug the walls, wrapping around the gallery space, a staccato, metronomic orchestra of clinks and twangs tap out the rhythms of a melody that seems all-too-familiar, yet somehow eludes immediate recognition.

5 Stars Commitment Bands

In conjunction with the 5 Stars exhibition, SAM also presents limited-edition merchandise – the **5 Stars Commitment Bands**. Each band in the series is symbolic of one of the values represented by the five stars on the national flag. Created in collaboration with Singaporean designers ALT, Carrie K., SUPERMAMA, SunMoonRain, and Vice & Vanity, the bands will be available for purchase at SUPERMAMA at SAM from 2 October 2015 onwards.

5 Stars: Art Reflects on Peace, Justice, Equality, Democracy and Progress will be on at Singapore Art Museum from 2 October 2015 to 5 June 2016. The *5 Stars* exhibition is also extended through the **Crescent Project: Art Embraces All**, referencing the crescent on the flag, which symbolises a young nation on the ascendant. The *Crescent Project* encompasses a range of public and educational programmes, including roundtable sessions, community engagements, educational workshops and publications. A dedicated programmes room will make space for more interactivity on the five values – a play-and-think space for one and all.

-
www.singaporeartmuseum.sg
www.facebook.com/singaporeartmuseum
www.twitter.com/sg_artmuseum
www.instagram.com/sg_artmuseum
www.youtube.com/samtelly
-

For more information, please read on:

- Annex A – Exhibition synopsis
- Annex B – 5 Stars – Artists and artworks
- Annex C – 5 Stars – Public programmes
- Annex D – 5 Stars – Merchandise

About the Singapore Art Museum

The Singapore Art Museum (SAM) is a contemporary art museum which focuses on art-making and art-thinking in Singapore, Southeast Asia and Asia, encompassing a worldwide perspective on contemporary art practice. SAM advocates and makes accessible interdisciplinary contemporary art through research-led and evolving curatorial practice. Since it opened in January 1996, SAM has built up one of the most important collections of contemporary art from the region. It seeks to seed and nourish a stimulating and creative space in Singapore through exhibitions and public programmes, and to deepen every visitor's experience. These include outreach and education, research and publications, as well as cross-disciplinary residencies and exchanges.

SAM occupies two buildings: the old St Joseph's Institution on Bras Basah Road, built in 1855 and now a National Monument; and SAM at 8Q, a conservation building across the road on Queen Street that was the old Catholic High School.

In 2011, SAM was the venue organiser of the Singapore Biennale, becoming the main organiser in 2013. SAM was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee on 13 November 2013, operating under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, and is no longer part of the National Heritage Board.

For more information, please contact:

Shirlene Noordin

Phish Communications

DID: +65 6344 2953

Email: shirlene@phish-comms.com

Lynn Sim

Singapore Art Museum

DID: +65 6697 9762

Email: lynn.sim@singaporeartmuseum.sg

Exhibition Venue

SAM is located at 71 Bras Basah Rd Singapore 189555
 SAM at 8Q is located at 8 Queen Street Singapore 188535

Opening Hours

Saturdays to Thursdays | 10.00 am to 7.00 pm (Last admission at 6:15pm)
 Fridays | 10.00 am to 9.00 pm

Admission Fees (Inclusive SAM and SAM at 8Q)

Singaporeans and Permanent Residents	Free
Non-Singaporean Visitors	
Adults	S\$10
Children under the age of six	Free
Students (with valid student ID)	S\$5
Seniors (60 years and above with valid ID)	S\$5
Groups of 20 or more	20% off adult admission tickets
Free admission to SAM every Friday from 6.00 pm to 9.00 pm and on Open House days	

Special Exhibitions

Free admission to the Singapore Art Museum will be granted to as many contemporary art exhibitions as possible. However, from time to time, our Museum brings in internationally renowned works and exhibitions from overseas. Entry charges may then apply to help cover costs and ensure sustainability.

SAM Online

www.singaporeartmuseum.sg
www.facebook.com/singaporeartmuseum
www.twitter.com/sg_artmuseum
www.instagram.com/sg_artmuseum
www.youtube.com/samtelly

Enquiries

Call +65 65899 580 or email enquiries@singaporeartmuseum.sg

How to get to SAM

By Bus: SBS: 7, 14, 16, 36, 111, 131, 162, 175, 508, 518
 SMRT 77, 167, 171, 700
 By Train: 2-minute walk from Bras Basah MRT Station
 10-minute walk from Dhoby Ghaut, Bugis or City Hall MRT stations
 By Car: Carpark spaces available at Waterloo Street, Queen Street, NTUC Income Centre, Plaza by the Park, Hotel Grand Pacific and Singapore Management University

Annex A: Exhibition Synopsis

5 Stars: Art Reflects on Peace, Justice, Equality, Democracy and Progress **2 October 2015 to 5 June 2016 | Singapore Art Museum**

5 Stars: Art Reflects on Peace, Justice, Equality, Democracy and Progress is the Singapore Art Museum's (SAM) salute to Singapore's Golden Jubilee and the five stars on the Singapore flag, which represent universal humanist values.

In inviting and commissioning five art luminaries of the nation – Ho Tzu Nyen, Matthew Ngui, T.K. Sabapathy, Suzann Victor and Zulkifle Mahmud – to ponder and respond to each of the values, SAM gives scope to these extraordinary Singaporeans, whose life-long commitment to art as a discipline is inimitable and exemplary. Through the creative and curatorial process, these abstract, intangible concepts are made manifest, and each unique artistic expression and presentation offers nuanced and layered interpretations of the nation's core values, which resonate with Singapore's multifaceted, complex identity. New 'thought-spaces' unfold: from one island-nation's conscious reflections on its ideals, we recognise the humanist foundations of today's world.

Engaging with these 'big ideas' through contemporary art, the **5 Stars** exhibition is curated to encourage diverse individuals and audiences to come together to contemplate what these shared human ideals mean in the present day, and how they might continue to help us envision our futures.

Annex B: Artists and Artworks

5 Stars: Art Reflects on Peace, Justice, Equality, Democracy and Progress

Ho Tzu Nyen

No Man

2015

Six channel video installation with sound

15 minutes, loop

Collection of the Artist

Singapore Art Museum commission

The idea of justice is inextricably bound up with notions about the individual and society, and their responsibilities towards each other. Through the meting out of justice, society undertakes to act on behalf of individuals to protect them, as well as to exact punishment. And yet, neither society nor justice are abstractions – the former is a massing of individuals, at once no man and everyman, called upon as judge, witness, as well as congregation, in the execution of justice, and the execution of justice itself is always palpable.

Taking as its starting point a poem by John Donne, “Meditation XVII – Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions”, *No Man* reflects on how all of humanity is intertwined, such that the taking of a life – while insignificant at first – gradually diminishes the whole. A meditation on the relationship between crowds and power, and the representation of the masses and the individual, *No Man* invites viewers into a hall of mirrors where a sense of self is gradually dissolved, receding into shadows amidst the shifting tableaux. Flanked by an assembly of spectral figures, the passage through this work conjures a passage through limbo, its haunting mob evoking Dante’s *Inferno*, and alluding to the final Judgement, where all are held accountable, beyond this mortal plane.

Ho Tzu Nyen (b. 1976, Singapore) is a writer and visual artist whose practice spans video, painting and theatre. Frequently related to historical and philosophical texts as well as art history, Ho’s recent works comprise immersive multimedia installations, an apt vehicle for combining his personal interest in film, text, image and music. He has exhibited widely at home as well as abroad, participating in Biennales and Triennales such as the 6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in Brisbane, Australia (2009), group exhibitions including *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia*– a travelling exhibition by the Guggenheim Museum, New York (2013) – and a solo exhibition at the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2012). He represented Singapore at the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011.

Matthew Ngui

Every Point of View

2015

Plastic pipes, real-time video projection

Dimensions variable

Collection of the Artist

Singapore Art Museum commission

Matthew Ngui's use of the optical effect of anamorphosis is particularly apt in his engagement with the idea of Democracy. Dense with the vertical whiteness of over 400 PVC pipes, *Every Point of View* invokes the multi-pillared Parthenon in Athens, coincidentally the birthplace of democracy as an ideal and practice.

Wandering amidst the forest of pipes, a viewer fleetingly encounters perspectives on the idea of *Democracy*. Representatives of particular demographics were invited to respond to two questions about Democracy, and the written responses were projected and traced onto the pipes. At specific points, the pipes become a *continuous surface*, where each statement is 'jigsawed' into coherence. Operating on the dynamics of anamorphic perception, only exact viewer positioning enables each statement to be read: the instant the viewer steps away from this tightly configured point, the perspective vanishes. These perspectives on democracy are experienced as moments of *surveilled* epiphany, as live camera feedback captures real-time footage at those points, which is projected in a separate space. A soundscape of murmurings of public enunciations on democracy is 'piped' through, and viewers become listeners and speakers too, speaking into, or listening from openings on certain pipes.

The artist sees the work as "analogous" to the democratic process: that democracy "is an understanding that different viewpoints exist and that it is within this acknowledgment that ways to co-exist are devised consensually and sometimes, not so."

Matthew Ngui (born in 1962, Singapore) is a visual artist, trained in sculpture and now working in the areas of installation, video, performance, site-specific works and public art. He has exhibited locally and internationally in contemporary art museums and spaces in cities such as Berlin, Bordeaux, Copenhagen, Graz, Hong Kong, London, Manila and Vienna. Participating in the São Paulo (1996), Venice (2001) and Gwangju Biennales (2002) and the tenth Documenta in 1997, Ngui focuses on site-specific installations and performances that engage the locality and people of the city and space in which the work is exhibited.

T.K. Sabapathy

Of Equal Measure

2015

Books, mixed media, video and artworks by Kumari Nahappan, Elaine Navas and Tan Swie Hian

Dimensions variable

Books and artworks by Elaine Navas and Tan Swie Hian: Collection of T.K. Sabapathy

Artwork by Kumari Nahappan: Singapore Art Museum commission and Collection of the Artist

Working tirelessly as an art historian, educator, critic, writer and curator, T.K. Sabapathy's entire life's work has been focused around the creative output of artists – an endeavour to establish art history as an academic discipline in Singapore. In recognising the value of his singular and foundational role in Singapore, *Of Equal Measure* also seeks to underscore the irrevocable value of art – and its roots – to the history and legacy of any nation, society and culture. Insofar that artistic talent and creative expression may originate from any individual, art may be regarded as a precious space of equality and egalitarianism within society.

Drawing upon Sabapathy's personal book collection, one component of this specially curated presentation traces the chronology of his critical writings in a practice spanning over four decades – a remarkable production of knowledge that has resulted in 'textual topology' that is vital to the study of art from this region. Expressed through the medium of language, the work of the art critic and historian also pivots upon deeply personal relationships with the creators of the artworks, and where individual artists have often been the subjects of Sabapathy's work, on occasion, the roles are reversed. Three very different portraits capture the art historian – now the subject of the artist's gaze – and here, in the realm of art, between word and image, a measure of mindful symmetry is framed.

T.K. Sabapathy (b. 1938, Singapore) is an internationally recognised and respected art historian who has researched and published extensively on Southeast Asian art and artists. His influential writing has inaugurated important art historical trajectories for appreciating the modern and the contemporary in Southeast Asia. His monographic studies of artists, especially in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, have established significant benchmarks in developing the critical literature on art and artists.

Suzann Victor

Bloodline of Peace

2015

Fresnel lens, blood and metal pins

4000 x 216 cm

Collection of the Artist

Singapore Art Museum commission

Expansive in scope and in spirit, *Bloodline of Peace* brings together a diverse range of Singaporeans who are conjoined through the shared act of giving life's most precious fluid: blood. Unfolding like a monumental quilt, the work comprises over 11,500 units created from more than 34,500 prismatic Fresnel lenses, a material that Victor first used in 1997. Now, in *Bloodline of Peace*, each segment holds and magnifies in its 'heart', a single drop of blood contributed by individuals representing Singapore's key communities such as the armed forces, medicine, civil defence, the arts and the pioneer generation.

Blood *is* life, visceral, and when drawn by force, it implies brutality, pain, and death. Yet, when donated voluntarily, it is an act that saves the lives of loved ones – and strangers – during medical emergencies. Ultimately, the symbolically rich gift of blood signifies the utmost sacrifice for a fellow human being and for nation, and poignantly, peace – that most fragile of conditions – can oftentimes only be attained, upheld and protected through a *willingness* to make this highest sacrifice.

In the artist's words, "A transient state, *Peace* is defined by absence – that of war and bloodshed. To be sustainable, commitment and preservation are necessary processes undertaken by civilians while armed and medical personnel are at the frontiers."

Suzann Victor (b. 1959) received her PhD (Visual Art) in 2009 from the University of Western Sydney. With distinctive forms and ideas, Victor's compelling artworks garnered critical attention at prestigious international platforms including the 6th Havana Biennale (1997), 49th Venice Biennale (2001), 2nd Asia-Pacific Triennial, Australia (1996), 6th Gwangju Biennale, Korea (2006) and 'Thermocline of Art: New Asian Waves' at ZKM Centre for Art & Media, Karlsruhe, Germany (2007). Formerly the Artistic Director of 5th Passage Ltd (1992-1993), Victor was nominated for the coveted New York-based Civitella Fellowship (2009) while her acclaimed signature series "Contours" was voted top of "10 Must-See List" (Forbes) at Art Stage 2015. Her public artworks are at high-profile locations including the National Museum of Singapore and World Square, Sydney.

Zulkifle Mahmud

Raising Spirits and Restoring Souls

2015

64-channel midi controller, solenoids, e-bows, amplifiers, piano/bass/guitar strings, copper pipes, midi player and others

Dimensions variable

Collection of the Artist

Singapore Art Museum commission

Along a maze of copper pipes that hug the walls, wrapping around the gallery space, a staccato, metronomic orchestra of clinks and twangs tap out the rhythms of a melody that seems all too familiar, yet somehow eludes immediate recognition. The sounds are produced by solenoid valves and e-bows, devices which activate when an electromagnetic current runs through them, while pre-recorded singing issues forth from the stereo sets. Zulkifle's *Raising Spirits and Restoring Souls* draws upon and reimagines Singapore's national anthem, *Majulah Singapura (Onward Singapore)*, and in the process, much of the song has been distilled to its percussive beat. Composed by Zubir Said in 1958, *Majulah Singapura* – which is sung daily by every school child in Singapore – contains the phrase "*Sama-sama menuju bahagia*", which translates as, "Let us progress towards happiness together". This sentence was of particular interest to Zulkifle, and in examining the idea of 'Progress' and what it signifies to Singaporeans from across the social and economic spectrum, the artist collaborated with children from disadvantaged backgrounds to record their vocal rendition of the phrase, and this is the only line that is 'sung' in the sound installation. He asks, "Does the song really resonate with Singaporeans? What is progress in this context? Most of us believe that progress is a linear path; perhaps it is anything but."

Zulkifle Mahmud (b. 1975, Singapore) is at the forefront of a generation of sound-media artists in Singapore. Adopting a multidisciplinary/multi-genre approach that also includes drawings, prints, sculptures and ready-mades, Zulkifle has exhibited in Singapore, Thailand, Germany, Japan, Italy, Moscow, China, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Norway. Zulkifle represented Singapore at the Ogaki Biennale in 2006 and the 52nd Venice Biennale 2007, and other notable initiatives include winning the Singapore Straits Time Life! Theatre Award 2010 for Best Sound Design. Most recently in 2015, his work was featured in 'Singapore: Inside Out', which was presented in Beijing, London, New York and Singapore.

Annex C: Public Programmes

Crescent Project: Art Embraces All

CRESCENT ROOM

Date: Friday, 2 Oct 2015 – Monday, 2 May 2016

Venue: Gallery 2.9, SAM

The Crescent Room is a special play-and-think space for one and all, shaped to extend your experience of the *5 Stars* exhibition. Grasp fresh understanding of all five values at your fingertips through hands-on games and activities. Experience for yourself what it means to win at something you may rather not, contribute to creating possibilities for others, discover how Mathematics help you understand the value of happiness, increase your 'value' vocabulary, or simply exercise your vote and share your views!

Visit www.singaporeartmuseum.sg for more information

THE ORIGINAL SELFIE MACHINE

Date: Friday, 2 October 2015 – Monday, 2 May 2016

Venue: SAM

Set your scene, bring your own props and show us what the 5 stars mean to you. Leave us a photo with your name and email address, and the two best entries will stand to win a Lomography Diana Mini camera!

\$4 (for 2 printouts)

5 STARS CURATOR TOURS

Date: Wednesday, 7 October and 4 November 2015

Time: 7:30pm

Venue: SAM

Interested to find out more about the artworks in the *5 Stars* exhibition? Join SAM curators Joyce Toh and Louis Ho as they each bring you on a specially curated tour that will provide insights into the artworks featured in the exhibition, as well as discuss the curatorial process behind their selection and presentation.

\$15. Tickets available at SAM and SISTIC.

ROUNDTABLE@SAM – ART AND THE BIG IDEAS OF A SMALL NATION

As part of our Crescent Project: Art Embraces All, SAM presents a series of Roundtables on *Art and the Big Ideas of a Small Nation*, where experts in their fields are invited to share how the five values affect and influence their experience, expectations, and visions of the individual, communities, and the state.

ACTIVITY SHEETS

Suitable for both students and young adults, the activity sheets – which are based on selected artworks in the exhibition – are catered to different age groups and are available for download at the SAM website.

Annex D: 5 Stars Merchandise

5 Stars: Art Reflects on Peace, Justice, Equality, Democracy and Progress invites diverse individuals and audiences to come together to contemplate what these universal humanist ideals mean in the present day, and how they might continue to help us envision our futures. In this spirit, we've teamed up with 5 Singaporean designers to create commemorative commitment bands, each representing a meaningful interpretation of the nation's core values, to be worn alone or stacked. Commit to a value today!



Justice

Representing the quest for balance between truth and fairness, this band is inspired by the needle engraved counting marks on a daching scale - Southeast Asia's version of weighing scales. – Angie Lai-Tay, ALT

Equality

A friendship band is a symbol for true equality. It is through friendship that we recognise and respect an individual, and accept each other's differences. – Aaron and Vivi, Vice + Vanity

Progress

An open-ended answer to a never-ending question; progress is about the constant quest for more, to always strive for higher levels - and it all begins with a question "why not?" – Carolyn Kan, Carrie K.



Peace

Agate is known for its restorative powers and ability to bring about inner peace. The black and white agate, alluding to the yin and yang, symbolises peace through harmony and balance. – Shabnam Melwani, SunMoonRain

Democracy

Each stoneware band is painstakingly handmade and unique, just as democracy is moulded by people and different points of view. – Edwin Low, Supermama

\$120* each. Produced in limited quantities of 50.

*Each purchase comes with a limited edition **5 Stars** Tote Bag.

5 Stars Tote Bags \$10 each

5 Stars Artwork Postcards \$10 for a set of 10, or sold loosely at \$1 each

*Sold exclusively at **Supermama**.*

All proceeds go towards supporting the Singapore Art Museum and its programmes.