

**SPEECH BY DR LEE BOON YANG
MINISTER FOR INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE
ARTS
AT THE EXHIBITION OPENING CEREMONY OF
THE BIG PICTURE SHOW CUM
APB FOUNDATION SIGNATURE ART PRIZE ANNOUNCEMENT
ON TUESDAY 30 OCTOBER 2007, 7:00 PM AT THE
SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM GLASS HALL**

Mr Koh Poh Tiong, Trustee and Chairman of the Advisory Committee,
Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation

Distinguished guests,

Ladies & gentlemen,

Good evening.

I am pleased to join you this evening to celebrate two happy events. It is like a “double happiness” occasion.

2 First, we have the opening of a remarkable exhibition *The Big Picture Show*. This exhibition showcases a selection of big artworks carrying equally big statements from the artists. We are talking about visual art. So size is perhaps one of the first thing noted by a viewer. It certainly influences a viewer’s experience of the artwork. Size is also a means through which the artist communicates the intensity of his feelings on the subject and his ability to master the complexity of handling large canvases. But square metres of canvas will not determine the final reaction of the viewer. Big artworks succeed not

because of sheer size, but because the artist had imbued in the work his creative energy and inspiring images of the humanity's uplifting qualities such as endurance, love, justice and equality.

3 In putting together *The Big Picture Show*, the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) has also taken the opportunity to display some of the largest artworks in its permanent collection. These works reveal the diversity and complexity of art practices across the Southeast Asian and Asian countries. To accommodate these monumental size paintings, the Singapore Art Museum is also opening a new gallery.

4 The exhibition brings together works from several different sources including loans from private collections. On display is one important work which has come all the way from Laos. This is a painting by celebrated artist Marc Leguay, entitled “***Laos Traditional Daily Life***” on loan from the National Faculty of Fine Arts, Laos. This is a reflection of the friendship and close ties between SAM and the National Faculty of Fine Arts, Laos. We are grateful to all the collectors who had shared their treasures with our visitors.

5 The second happy event tonight is the announcement of the APB Foundation Signature Art Prize, sponsored by Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation, and co-organised by the Singapore Art Museum.

6 SAM is possibly one of the few museums in the world specialising in modern and contemporary Southeast Asian Art. We are located almost in the heart of SEA. So it is natural for us to have an interest and empathy for SEA art. This is an important niche area that we can focus on. It is also an opportunity for us to seek out and promote major artistic talents from our ASEAN and Asian neighbours. Over time we hope to contribute to a more vibrant regional art ecosystem.

7 It is in this context that the Singapore Art Museum is organising a regional award to recognise emerging talents as well as provide them with a suitable platform for showcasing their works in Singapore. We are very pleased to welcome Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation in this worthy project.

8 We thank the APB Foundation for sponsoring the APB Foundation Signature Art Prize. This will become an outstanding mark of distinction and excellence awarded to regional artists whose work represents a significant development in contemporary art. We aim to make it a premier juried prize of contemporary art in the region. We hope that the nomination, selection and award will stimulate and promote lively public discussion on new developments in contemporary art in Singapore and internationally.

9 APB Foundation has generously agreed to donate S\$2.25 million over 15 years to organise the APB Foundation Signature Art Prize series. The inaugural event is scheduled to take place in 2008, and will be held once every three years for the duration of 15 years. This long term partnership between SAM and the APB Foundation will have a very important impact on the continued development of the visual arts in Singapore and the region. I am very grateful and appreciative of APB Foundation for its generous contribution and patronage of the visual arts in Singapore and the region. Thank you for this magnificent boost to the arts.

10 Finally, it gives me great pleasure to announce the launch of the APB Foundation Signature Art Prize series and declare *The Big Picture Show* open. I hope that this exhibition will give the Singapore audience a new perspective on Southeast Asian and Asian art.

11 Have a pleasant evening.