

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

The National Museum of Singapore and the Maybank Foundation celebrate the diverse intangible cultural heritage of Singapore and Southeast Asia with new series of commissioned videos

Inspired by the National Museum's collection, the four video artworks pay tribute to the various aspects of intangible cultural heritage of our region's communities across food, dance, martial arts and storytelling



Singapore, 2 May 2023 – From food to performing arts, Southeast Asia's intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is an important link to our past and intrinsic to our rich cultural identity. To pay homage to the time-honoured traditions and living expressions that define and connect us across the region, the National Museum of Singapore and the Maybank Foundation will be presenting a series of four original video artworks on the Museum's LED Wall that showcase creative contemporary responses to the theme of intangible cultural heritage (ICH).

2 Titled ***Spinning Connections: Creative Takes on Intangible Cultural Heritage***, the commissioned artworks were selected from entries submitted through an Open Call exercise held between April to May last year, to foster collaboration with the artistic community to engage audiences on important contemporary issues. Each artwork highlights an aspect of ICH, namely food, dance, martial arts and storytelling, while drawing connections to the National Museum's collection. The artworks bring contemporary resonance to the past and invite visitors to understand the present in different ways.

3 While ICH evolves over generations, it is also facing contemporary challenges such as rapidly changing lifestyles. These videos utilise a mix of artistic styles to inspire reflections on the enduring importance and relevance of ICH today. The four video artworks are:

- ***Gestures of One*** by Biome Entertainment that explores Singaporean cultural heritage and its global outreach through cinematic language. Referencing Chinese, Malay and Indian dance forms as an act of communication, dialogue and interaction with one another and the space, this artwork is suggestive of an interconnected heritage and seeks to welcome audiences into a dream-like experience of what unites us, with the intention to inspire harmony, solidarity and hope.
- Highlighting the importance of food as the universal ‘language’ embraced by all, Addpetizer’s ***Re(union)*** surveys the ways in which rice is used as a central ingredient across a selection of local and regional dishes. The unifying quality of the humble crop symbolises the coming together of cultures through food heritage, giving rise to a variety of dishes that form part of Singapore’s hawker and food heritage.
- ***Kilat Kan Silat*** by Paradise Pictures is driven by the desire to celebrate and bring awareness to the power and beauty of the martial art *Silat Tua*, which has deep roots in the culture and traditions of Southeast Asia. Inspired by the etymology of the word ‘*kilat*’, which could be variously read as ‘lightning’, ‘bright’ or ‘shining’, the film showcases *Silat Tua* as a contemporary art form and endeavours to bring the practice into the spotlight, to inspire others to appreciate and celebrate the cultural richness of Singapore and the Nusantara region.
- Meaning ‘honey’ in Malay, ***Madu*** by Studio 1914 is a retelling of a fairytale from traditional Southeast Asian honey hunters, which attempts to rejuvenate our connection between our cultural heritage and nature by uncovering living linkages. The synthesised images of *Madu* were developed by training an artificial intelligence (AI) model on selected datasets from the National Museum of Singapore’s William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings.

4 Chung May Khuen, Director of the National Museum of Singapore, said, “While Singapore has come a long way to become the global city that we know and love today, we hold dear to us our roots and traditions that tie us back to the larger, culturally rich Southeast Asia region. Through this meaningful partnership with the Maybank Foundation, we were able to engage with our regional artists and creatives to continue exploring the region’s multifaceted ICH and co-create new works that will refresh and enhance our understanding of our heritage. In a rapidly changing world, we hope that these video artworks will spark conversations and discussions on the value of ICH, as Singapore and the region balance the need to preserve our heritage with growing modernity.”

Ms Izlyn Ramli, Chief Executive Officer of Maybank Foundation adds, “Southeast Asia is a rich wellspring with the region’s diverse cultures. We are excited to be supporting the National Museum of Singapore in the second Open Call series, to provide an opportunity for artists in this region to showcase their interpretations of our diverse ICH through relevant and familiar ways. We hope this collaboration will continue to encourage more Southeast Asian artists to reflect on how their art can empower and inspire their communities to preserve the region’s ICH.”

5 *Spinning Connections* is on display until 6 August 2023. More information about the showcase can be found at go.gov.sg/spinningconnections.

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About the National Museum of Singapore

With a history dating back to 1887, the National Museum of Singapore is the nation's oldest museum with a progressive mind. Its galleries adopt multi-perspectives ways of presenting history and culture, featuring important artefacts that tell the stories of Singapore and the world to redefine the conventional museum experience. The museum is home to thought-provoking exhibitions and hosts exciting events all year round including the Singapore Night Festival. The National Museum of Singapore refreshed its permanent galleries and re-opened them in September 2015 for Singapore's Golden Jubilee. In 2022, it celebrated its 135th anniversary. For more details, please visit www.nationalmuseum.sg.

About Maybank Foundation

Maybank, through Maybank Foundation, seeks to create the best possible impact on a long-term basis, in areas such as education, community empowerment, arts & culture, environmental diversity, healthy living and disaster relief. Maybank Foundation exists to positively impact communities in markets that Maybank operates.

Artwork details

Gestures of One by Biome Entertainment



Gestures of One is a dance video artwork that explores Singaporean cultural heritage and its global outreach through cinematic language. In the short film, three dancers come together within the space of the National Museum of Singapore, referencing Chinese, Malay and Indian dance in both historical and modern nuances. The dancer's movements are all different and rooted in their respective cultures, and yet are shown to have similarities that allow the dancers to come together as an ensemble, with the museum as a fourth character in the film. The dancers' gestures are an act of communication, of dialogue and of interaction with one another and the space. Their story of an interconnected heritage seeks to welcome audiences into a dream-like experience of what unites us, with the intention to inspire harmony, solidarity and hope.

Re(union) by Addpetizer



Inspired by the National Collection, *Re(union)* aims to explore the ways in which rice is used as a central ingredient across a selection of local and regional dishes. Its versatility to be paired with various ingredients have since given rise to a variety of dishes that form part of Singapore's hawker and food heritage.

The placement of the dishes in round plates, together with the circular motion of grinding, symbolises the unifying quality of rice as the base ingredient as well as the coming together of cultures through food heritage. As more dishes are revealed, the grinding sound is overlaid with the gradual crescendo of ambient sounds – symbolising the adoption of these dishes into various cultural settings and highlighting the importance of food as the universal 'language' embraced by all.

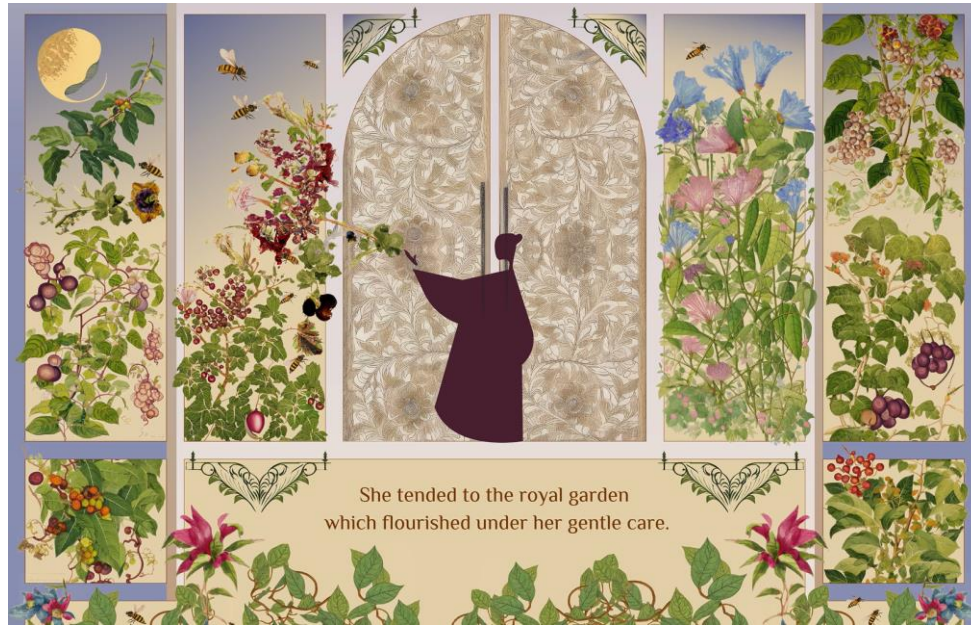
Kilat Kan Silat by Paradise Pictures



Kilat Kan Silat is driven by the desire to celebrate and bring awareness to the power and beauty of the martial art *Silat Tua*. This ancient art form, which has deep roots in the culture and traditions of Southeast Asia, is celebrated in a new light as a contemporary dance film. This film aims to showcase *Silat Tua* as a contemporary art form, highlighting the fluidity, grace, and strength of its practitioners.

Inspired by the etymology of the word '*kilat*', which could be read as either 'lightning', 'bright' or 'shining', *Kilat Kan Silat* endeavours to bring the practice into the spotlight, shining a light on its beauty. The goal is to create a visual representation of the beauty of *Silat Tua*, using film to highlight the artistry and skill of its practitioners. Through this, the artists hope to inspire others to appreciate and celebrate the cultural richness of Singapore and the Nusantara region.

Madu by Studio 1914



From the great Tualang tree began a soft deep hum. Like an ancient spirit exhaling and inhaling, breathing...

When a gifted palace gardener, Hitam Manis, falls in love with a prince, she is ordered to be killed by the Sultan. Instead of dying, she turns into a honey bee and flies into the rainforest surrounding the palace. Years later, while out hunting, her prince is drawn to a magnificent honeycomb on a tall Tualang tree.

Inspired by a fairytale from traditional honey hunters, the synthesised images of *Madu* (meaning 'honey' in Malay) were developed by training an AI model on selected datasets from the National Museum of Singapore's William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings. Through examining visuals from our colonial histories and Southeast Asian traditions, *Madu* is an attempt to rejuvenate our connection between nature and our cultural heritage by uncovering living linkages.