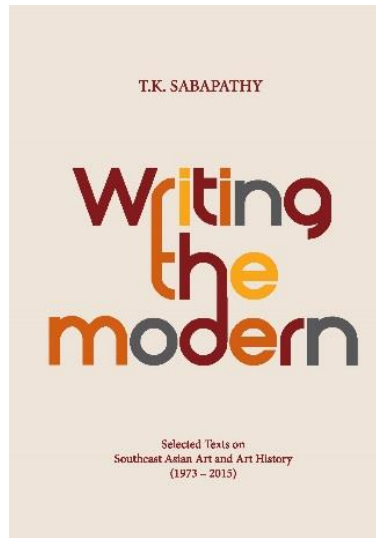


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Singapore Art Museum publishes four decades of critical and historical texts
by renowned art scholar, critic and curator T.K. Sabapathy**



T.K Sabapathy, *Writing the Modern: Selected Texts on Art & Art History in Singapore, Malaysia & Southeast Asia, 1973-2015*. Edited by Ahmad Mashadi, Susie Lingham, Peter Schoppert and Joyce Toh, Singapore: Singapore Art Museum, 2018.

SINGAPORE, 22 JANUARY 2018 – During Singapore Art Week 2018, Singapore Art Museum (SAM) will launch an anthology of texts by esteemed art critic, curator and scholar of art developments and art history in Singapore, Malaysia and Southeast Asia from the 1970s to 2010s, T.K. Sabapathy. Selected from over four decades of critical and historical scholarship, ***Writing the Modern: Selected Texts on Art & Art History in Singapore, Malaysia & Southeast Asia, 1973-2015*** brings together Sabapathy's most significant and influential writings for the first time. With its detailed explication of artworks and critical reflections on art historical developments in Singapore, Malaysia and Southeast Asia, the anthology will serve as maps for an exploration of visual art development and art histories of the region.

From the early 1970s, through SAM's founding in 1996, and till today, T.K. Sabapathy has contributed significantly to Singapore's and the regional art scene in various capacities – as historian and educator, critic, advisor and advocate of the visual arts and culture. His dedication to the documentation and development of the region's art scene has been instrumental in the building of the modern and contemporary art history of Singapore and Southeast Asia, and in the establishment of SAM.

SAM is pleased to publish this anthology in recognition and appreciation of Sabapathy's work and his instrumental involvement with SAM. Ms Jane Ittogi, Chair of the Singapore Art Museum, says, "For many artists, curators, writers and art institutions in Southeast Asia, Sabapathy has been and continues to be a leading thinker, mentor and interlocutor. The launch of this anthology is well-timed, as the major

revamp of the museum buildings approaches¹. The anthology enables deep introspection of modern and contemporary art development in Singapore and Southeast Asia, and SAM's own milestones within it, as well as charting of the next phase of development."

Sabapathy was an art writer at The Straits Times, Singapore Press Holdings for several years, and has served as a SAM Board member (1993 – 2001, and 2007), as well as on numerous other committees, including the Acquisitions Committee (1997 – 2007), the Exhibition Committee (1998 – 2000) and the Collections Development Committee (2000 – 2001). More recently, he was the Co-Chair and Curatorial Advisor of the Singapore Biennale 2013 and 2016, and is also currently the Curatorial Advisor to the SAM Board.

He was a strong advocate for a dedicated visual art museum even in the early days of the development of cultural institutions in Singapore, as evidenced by some of the articles and essays included in the anthology, such as "*Gallery's Promise*" (Singapore, Straits Times, 1986) and "*The Need for a Real Art Gallery*" (Singapore: Straits Times, 1989). His writings also emphasised the importance of a national collection.

In 1996, Sabapathy took on the role as Chief Curator of one of SAM's opening exhibitions, *Modernity and Beyond: Themes in Southeast Asian Art*, and was one of the writers and the editor of the exhibition catalogue. His curatorial and scholarly contributions and leadership since then have been pivotal to numerous SAM exhibitions, including *Pago-Pago to Gelombang: 40 Years of Latiff Mohidin* (1994, at the National Museum Art Gallery, prior to SAM's official opening), *Thomas Yeo: A Retrospective* (1997), *Trimuti and Ten Years After* (1998-99), and *36 Ideas from Asia: Contemporary Southeast Asian Art* (2002).

Given the scope and diversity of Sabapathy's writings, ranging from newspaper reviews and articles in Malaysia and Singapore, to catalogue essays, conference presentations, extracts of monographic studies and artist interviews in the region and worldwide, ***Writing the Modern*** has taken several years in the making through the combined efforts, expertise, and commitment from key individuals, including the editors of the anthology: Ahmad Mashadi, Head of NUS Museum, Dr. Susie Lingham, Lecturer, Fine Art, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Peter Schoppert, Director of NUS Press and Joyce Toh, Curatorial Co-Head of SAM.

Writing the Modern will be available online via <https://nuspress.nus.edu.sg> from 19 January 2018 and at leading bookstores in Singapore and Malaysia from 26 January 2018, and is distributed worldwide for the Singapore Art Museum by the National University of Singapore Press.

¹ It was announced on 1 April 2017 that the Singapore Art Museum buildings will undergo a major revamp to address the growing needs of contemporary art in Singapore. The building works for both museum buildings will commence end 2018, and is expected to complete by 2021.

Excerpts of the anthology and images are available at www.bit.ly/WritingTheModern. Image use guidelines apply.

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About the Singapore Art Museum

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.

In 2011, SAM was the venue organiser of the Singapore Biennale, becoming the main organiser for the 2013 and 2016 editions. SAM was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee on 13 November 2013, operating under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. To find out more, visit www.singaporeartmuseum.sg

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Annex A

Profile of Author, T.K. Sabapathy



T.K. Sabapathy is an esteemed scholar of Singaporean and Southeast Asian art history. As an historian, curator, teacher, critic and advisor he has influenced artistic opinion and shaped knowledge of art of the region for over 45 years.

Sabapathy's early scholarly engagements were marked by clear commitments to the art historiography of the early (Hindu-Buddhist) traditions of Southeast Asian art. He later emerged and continues as an eloquent proponent of assessing modern and contemporary Southeast Asian art, asserting the dignity and centrality of their histories and development. His art historical methods, critical documentation and detailed explication of the works by key artists have defined Singapore and Malaysian art. His extensive studies of modern (and contemporary) Southeast Asian art and artists have added visual intelligibility and intellectual depth to discourses on art in the region.

Sabapathy has been teaching the history of art in institutions in the United Kingdom, Malaysia and Singapore for more than forty-five years. He has developed curricula and bibliographical resources for the study especially of modern art in Southeast Asia. His teaching has had an enduring impact on teachers, artists, architects, art writers and curators.

He is currently an adjunct associate professor in the Department of Architecture, national University of Singapore, where he teaches the history of art.

Annex B

Profile of Editors

Ahmad Mashadi



Ahmad Mashadi is currently the Head of NUS Museum, National University of Singapore. Exhibition projects that he has curated and co-curated include *Modernity and Beyond: Themes in Southeast Asian Art* (Singapore Art Museum, 1996), *Cubism in Asia* (The Japan Foundation, Tokyo, Seoul, Singapore, 2006), *Telah Terbit* (Singapore Art Museum, 2006), *Camping & Tramping Through the Colonial Archive: The Museum in Malaya* (2011) and *Radio Malaya: Abridged Conversations About Art* (2016). He also curated Singapore participations for Indian Triennale (2000), Venice Biennale (2001) and Sao Paulo (2004).

Susie Lingham (Singapore)



Dr. Susie Lingham is an interdisciplinary and independent thinker, writer, educator, curator, and maker in the arts. Appointed Creative Director of the Singapore Biennale 2016, *An Atlas of Mirrors*, Susie was Director of the Singapore Art Museum from 2013 to 2016, shaping its new vision/mission, curatorial direction and acquisition strategy, and oversaw the development, organization and curating of 13 exhibitions, including *5 Stars: Art Reflects on Peace, Justice, Equality, Democracy and Progress* (2015/16). Prior to these appointments, she was Assistant Professor at the National Institute of Education/NTU, Singapore (2009-2013). Conferred the Distinguished Alumni Medal 2014 by NAFA, Susie has a DPhil in Literature, Religion and Philosophy (University of Sussex, U.K.), and has taught at universities and art colleges in Australia, Singapore and the U.K.

Peter Schoppert



Peter Schoppert is a publisher who writes from time to time on art and related subjects, with credits in publications like *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *The Straits Times*, *Art Asia Pacific*, and *Inter-Asian Cultural Studies*. Peter ran the innovative PublicArt.SG website for many years, and recently served a three-year term as Chair of Singapore's Public Art Appraisal Committee. He served on the Board of the Substation, Singapore's first independent arts centre, from 2006 to 2014 and is currently on the Acquisitions Committee for the Singapore Art Museum.

Joyce Toh (Singapore)



Joyce Toh is Co-Head of Curatorial & Collections at the Singapore Art Museum and oversees its Philippines collection and Publications portfolio. She holds a Masters in Aesthetics (Philosophy of Art) from University of York, UK and a BA in Art History from Syracuse University, USA. Joyce has been a co-curator and part of the organising team for the Singapore Biennale 2013 and 2016. Other exhibitions she has curated and co-curated include *Medium at Large – Shapeshifting Material & Methods in Contemporary Art* (2014), *Sensorium 360 – Contemporary Art and the Sensed World* (2014), and *Thrice Upon A Time: A Century of Story in the Art of the Philippines* (2009-10). Prior to joining Singapore Art Museum, Joyce was involved in various public and private sector arts organisations in Singapore and overseas, including Arts Council England (UK), Christie's (New York), and Wetterling Teo Gallery (Singapore).

Annex C

Publication details and editorial overview

Author: T.K. Sabapathy

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Section 1: '*The Southeast Asian Artist in Relation to Art History*', edited with overview by Joyce Toh

Section 2: '*A Mind for Method, and an Eye for Medium, Material and Form*', edited with overview by Susie Lingham

Section 3: '*Art Institutions and the Exhibition*', edited with overview by Peter Schoppert

Section 4: '*Regional Perspectives on Southeast Asian Art*', edited with overview by Ahmad Mashadi

Annex D

Distributors and stockists

Writing the Modern: Selected Texts on Art & Art History in Singapore, Malaysia & Southeast Asia, 1973-2015 by T.K. Sabapathy may be purchased at leading bookshops or from NUS Press at <https://nuspress.nus.edu.sg/>

Bookshops and libraries may order from the following distributors and stockists:

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