



MEDIA RELEASE

51 PATRONS OF HERITAGE HONOURED – WAR JOURNAL, WRITINGS AND ARTWORKS AMONG RARE PERSONAL DONATIONS MADE.

SINGAPORE, 15 April 2008 – The *Patron of Heritage Awards* is in its second year after a successful inaugural ceremony last year. Celebrating donations and loans given to heritage causes between January and December 2007, the Award recognises the contribution of 51 outstanding individuals and organisations. Their generous gifts in cash and kind, as well as long-term loans, totalled more than \$11 million.

Cash sponsorships and in-kind donations amounted to S\$6.6 million and S\$4.2 million respectively. In-kind donations refer to artefacts and artworks, or other gifts of significant commercial value such as professional services rendered as well as venue and media spaces. Long-term loans of artefacts, artworks and other materials constitute the remaining value.

Organised by the National Heritage Board (NHB), the Award is Singapore's most prestigious accolade acknowledging those who have made significant contributions to enrich our country's heritage. Dr Lee Boon Yang, Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts, will grace the ceremony as its Patron and Guest of Honour at the Asian Civilisations Museum.

Mr Michael Koh, CEO of NHB said: "We are extremely grateful for the strong support we have received from our growing pool of heritage and museum patrons. Their noble and altruistic acts ensure that Singapore's rich and unique heritage stays vibrant and alive for generations to come. With the support of our heritage benefactors, Singapore residents and visitors of all ages were treated last year to outstanding exhibitions and events like *Greek Masterpieces from the Louvre*, *The Big Picture Show*, *On The Nalanda Trail* and the *Singapore HeritageFest*."

This year's 37 organisations and 14 individuals were selected from among the nominations received. The breakdown for the awards is as follows:

Donations in cash, kind or material¹:

- Distinguished Patron of Heritage (S\$2 million and above): One winner
- Patron of Heritage (S\$1 million to S\$1,999,999): One winner
- Partner of Heritage (S\$150,000 to S\$999,999): 17 winners
- Friend of Heritage (S\$50,000 to S\$149,999): 31 winners

Long-term loans (5 years or more) of materials (artefacts, artworks and others):

- Supporter of Heritage (value of items less than S\$1 million): One winner

The gifts of benefactors have certainly helped Singapore's museum-going culture to flourish. Last year, museums run by the National Heritage Board (NHB) recorded visits by some 1.72 million people – a 50% increase over the previous year. The Board's outreach efforts also achieved stunning results, with about 3.5 million Singaporeans and tourists participating in a range of programmes such as the *Singapore HeritageFest*. This is a jump of almost 30% over the 2.74 million participants in 2006.

The generosity of the award winners has boosted the development of Singapore's arts and heritage sector. Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation which clinched the top award of *Distinguished Patron of Heritage*, has pledged S\$2.25 million over 15 years towards the APB Foundation Signature Art Prize series. Co-organised with the Singapore Art Museum, this award will support new developments from recognised artists in contemporary visual arts in Singapore and the region.

In the *Patron of Heritage* category, the Lee Foundation has donated more than S\$1.2 million to support projects run by several museums. This includes funding educational programmes at the Singapore Philatelic Museum from 2007 to 2009.

What is significant this year are the individuals who have contributed family heirlooms and prized personal items to Singapore's treasure trove of heritage. A war-time journal written by Mr Tham Sien Yen, a key member of the Force 136 – an anti-Japanese resistance group established by the British after the fall of Singapore during World War II – was loaned to the

¹ In-kind contributions include advertising/media space, venue space, F&B and manpower services. Materials comprise museological materials such as artworks and artefacts as well as archival materials like photographs, video and audio recordings.

National Archives of Singapore along with other documents by Mr Tham's family. Currently on display at the Memories at Old Ford Factory, the journal provides interesting snapshots of life for Force 136 members in Malaya in the final days of World War II between April and September 1945.

Other award winner is Mrs Julia Oh, a dedicated museum volunteer for more than 25 years. She has pledged a sum of S\$10,000 per year over the next decade for the *Julia Oh – NHB International Continuing Education Grant*. This grant, the first to the NHB from an individual, will enhance the expertise of young professionals in the areas of museum, archival or conservation-related work through a series of overseas attachments with top institutions.

Another contribution came from Mrs Poon Lee Lee, the wife of Singapore Cultural Medallion winner and prominent abstract artist, the late Anthony Poon. She donated 23 significant works by her husband worth more than S\$500,000 to the Singapore Art Museum (SAM), fulfilling the late artist's last wish for SAM to own his best works.

For more information, please contact:

Ms Aryanti Kamar
PR Manager
Sirius Art Pte Ltd
DID: 6324 8721
E-Mail: aryanti@siriusart.com.sg

Or

Mr Garry Moss
Assoc PR Manager
Sirius Art Pte Ltd
DID: 6324 8722
E-Mail: garry@siriusart.com.sg

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About Patron of Heritage Awards

Established in 2006, the *Patron of Heritage Awards* is an annual event that aims to boost heritage philanthropy in Singapore by honouring individuals and organisations who have made significant contributions towards enriching our national heritage.

About National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) champions the development and promotion of a vibrant cultural and heritage sector in Singapore. Through innovative programmes and collaborations, we make heritage enriching, relevant and accessible. Managing national museums and interpretative centres, NHB leverages on state-of-the-art technology and its refreshing new approaches to educate, engage and excite diverse audiences. It also manages the National Archives of Singapore, and the Heritage Conservation Centre. NHB was formed on 1 August 1993 as a statutory board under the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA).