

**SPEECH BY DR LEE BOON YANG, MINISTER FOR INFORMATION,
COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS, AT DONATION CEREMONY OF *DAY
AND NIGHT* BY GAO XINGJIAN, 23 NOVEMBER 2007 5.00PM, AT
SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM**

Mr Gao Xingjian

Your Excellency,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

We are delighted to be here today to celebrate the generous donation of Mr Gao Xingjian's painting *Day and Night* to the Singapore Art Museum, together with an exhibition of his artwork at the Big Pictures Show.

2 Gao Xingjian is an eminent figure who has given voice to his creative talent through a variety of expressions. As a recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Gao has been internationally lauded for illustrating the cultural essence of the East and West through his formidable body of literary works such as *Soul Mountain* and *One Man's Bible*. However, it is not possible to convey a true sense of his life philosophy and creativity without discussing his virtuosity as a painter, a theatre practitioner and more recently, a film maker.

3 According to Gao, literature is purely a matter of the individual, the gratification of the intellect together with an observation, a review of what has been experienced, memories and feelings or the portrayal of a state of mind. On the other hand, the return to painting is to be freed from language, to surrender concepts to language, and to paint that which is beyond the realm of language-

starting from the point where words cease. And yet, it is also about the return to the true feeling of man, to human perception and to the inner self.

4 Thus, arising from the individual's spirituality, and freed of doctrines and past ideologies, Gao has moved freely between art forms and cultures, intent on liberating art from the shadows of historicism and dialectics, to present art as it truly is, and to let the artwork speak for itself.

5 Two years ago, the Singapore Art Museum put together Gao Xingjian's first retrospective exhibition in Asia. *Gao Xingjian Experience* featured 60 monochromatic ink paintings by the artist and allowed the viewers in Singapore to explore the mindscapes and inner visions of Gao through his ink paintings. In conjunction with the exhibition, the museum organized a forum which was well attended by more than 300 admirers of Gao's trans-disciplinary art practice. This evening, I am most honored to receive on behalf of the Singapore Art Museum, National Heritage Board, Mr Gao Xingjian's donation of "Day and Night".

6 "Day and Night" is the biggest work created by Gao to date. Measuring 1.9 by 4.7 meters, the work shows lone and grouped figures in an ethereal landscape. The myriad shades of black and translucent grey demonstrate dramatic illusions of space, drawing the viewer into the emotive senses of the ink on paper. To me, "Day and Night" speaks of solitude and companionship, of worldliness and nothingness, and of the sub-consciousness of human existence. The work will become an important addition to the Singapore Art Museum's permanent collection.

Conclusion

Thank you Mr Gao for this generous gesture and for your valuable support to the Singapore Art Museum. We are proud that an internationally recognized artist like Gao Xingjian has chosen Singapore Art Museum as the Museum for this donation. Mr Gao's significant contribution will go a long way in fostering

artistic and intellectual exchange between Singapore and the world, and will certainly help in building a culturally and artistically vibrant Singapore.

Thank you.