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PRESS RELEASE

Singapore Management University and students of the late artist Chua Ek Kay remember him

Singapore, 3 March 2009 – The Singapore Management University (SMU) is proud to host **Remembering Chua Ek Kay: One Year On...**, an exhibition initiated by a group of the late Chua Ek Kay's most dedicated students to mark the first anniversary of his passing. Under his tutelage in Chinese ink painting since 1988, Chua's students hope that this display of art works will generate discourse on art and evoke memories of him as an artist, a friend and a teacher.

The exhibition opens on 12 March 2009 and features 33 pieces of works: 18 works by the late distinguished contemporary ink artist and Cultural Medallion recipient, Chua Ek Kay. Among the exhibits are some of his earliest works, which reveal his deep roots in the formal discipline of Chinese painting and calligraphy. His later works show his development of a unique contemporary style that transcended east-west dichotomy and integrated tradition with modernity. The exhibition also features 15 art pieces by Chua's students who remember him for his emphasis on the discipline required to develop a strong foundation in traditional ink and brushwork. Parallel to his own artistic journey, he encouraged them to be creative in their composition and develop their own style. "I particularly admire his foresight in delicately balancing discipline and freedom in his teaching so that each of us could explore and discover our own artistic strengths and style. He also showed us in his own works that the true spirit of Chinese ink painting can transcend the boundaries of ethnicity, geography and subject matter," said Dr Goh Ban Eng, Senior Lecturer of Management at the SMU Lee Kong Chian School of Business. Dr Goh, who is also Chairperson of the Exhibition Organising Committee, was a student of the late artist.

In October 2006, SMU was privileged to receive a very important body of work from Chua Ek Kay's *Singapore Street Scenes* series. Housed in the Lee Kong Chian School of Business, the 30-piece collection spans two decades of his artistic practice and charts the evolution and artistic maturing of Chua's distinctive style. The works capture many of his haunts in the Bras Basah, Little India and Chinatown districts, invoke nostalgia and pay tribute to Singapore's history and heritage. "In receiving Ek Kay's gift, we are acutely aware that we received more than just paintings. SMU assumed responsibility to share his legacy and ensure that people in Singapore can continue to know about Ek Kay, his immense talent, his works and his contributions to Singapore's contemporary art scene. A friend of the university, Ek Kay shared his artistic development and philosophy on various platforms with our students and the SMU community. The gift represented his generosity and open hearted support of SMU's Visual Arts Initiative," said Professor Howard Hunter, President of SMU. Of

the collection, three works have been specifically selected for the exhibition. See [Annex](#) for a selection of artworks that will be on exhibition.

To recognise Chua for his generous donation, SMU presented an exhibition *Chua Ek Kay's Street Scenes: A Gift of History* in August 2007, and published a monograph entitled *Chua Ek Kay: Singapore Street Scenes, Evoking Memories*. The first publication to be produced on his monumental Singapore Street Scenes where Chua was also personally involved in the publication, the book contains insightful essays by some of Singapore's noted commentators and historians: Joanna Lee, Gretchen Liu, Kwok Kian Chow and T.K. Sabapathy. Professor Hunter added, "I am honoured that Ek Kay gave SMU the opportunity to share his invaluable trace of our city's social history. With his passing, we lost an exemplary artist, a very modest man, mentor and friend."

The exhibition will be officially opened by Guest-of-Honour Professor Howard Hunter, President, SMU on 12 March 2009. The evening's programme also includes an address by Mr Kwok Kian Chow, Director of Singapore Art Museum, and tributes and memories by friends and students.

Remembering Chua Ek Kay: One Year On... will run from 13-18 March 2009, 11.00 am to 8.00 pm daily at the SMU Gallery, School of Economics / School of Social Sciences.

About Chua Ek Kay (1947-2008)

Chua Ek Kay was one of Singapore's foremost artists. Born in 1947 in Guangdong province, China, he migrated to Singapore when he was five years old. Chua decided to devote himself to art making relatively late in life in 1987 and pursued it with single-minded devotion. At the prime of his life, he returned to being a student, first at LaSalle College of the Arts, then to Australia for a Bachelor's degree at the University of Tasmania in 1994, and a Master's degree at the University of Western Sydney the following year. Chua received a number of eminent art awards and accolades, and made tremendous contributions to developing the local arts scene as artist, educator, judge, advisor and mentor. In the ultimate recognition to his esteemed achievements and contributions to developing Singapore's artistic standing, he was conferred the prestigious Cultural Medallion by the Singapore government in 1999. On 8 February 2008, Singapore lost one of its most prominent artists who has been acknowledged as a bridge between Asian and Western art. Chua was described by Professor Tommy Koh, Chairman of National Heritage Board (The Straits Times, Life! 12 February 2008) as "one of Singapore's best and most innovative artists" who has "left Singapore with a rich legacy of his genius and creativity that will survive the test of time."

About SMU's Visual Arts Initiative

SMU launched the Visual Arts Initiative on 12 January 2006, with the aim to fill every corner of the new campus with art and artistic activities such that its students and the public will be enriched and enlivened by artistic aesthetics and creativity. Through this initiative, SMU will develop and host exhibitions and enrichment programmes

and will develop an institutional collection of contemporary art, with Southeast Asian art as the principal focus.

Exhibition Details:

Date: 13-18 March 2009

Time: 11.00 am to 8.00 pm daily

Venue: SMU Gallery (School of Economics / School of Social Sciences)

Exhibition Organising Committee:

Chairperson: Dr Goh Ban Eng

Members: Ms Tan Lay Choo
Ms Kong Mei Sing
Ms Koh Ai Soon
Ms Hui Fong Chee
Ms Ng Kha Keow
Ms Tan Pheck Eng
Ms Ng Lan Yu

A Selection of Art Works exhibited

Teacher's art works



Chua Ek Kay

Lotus

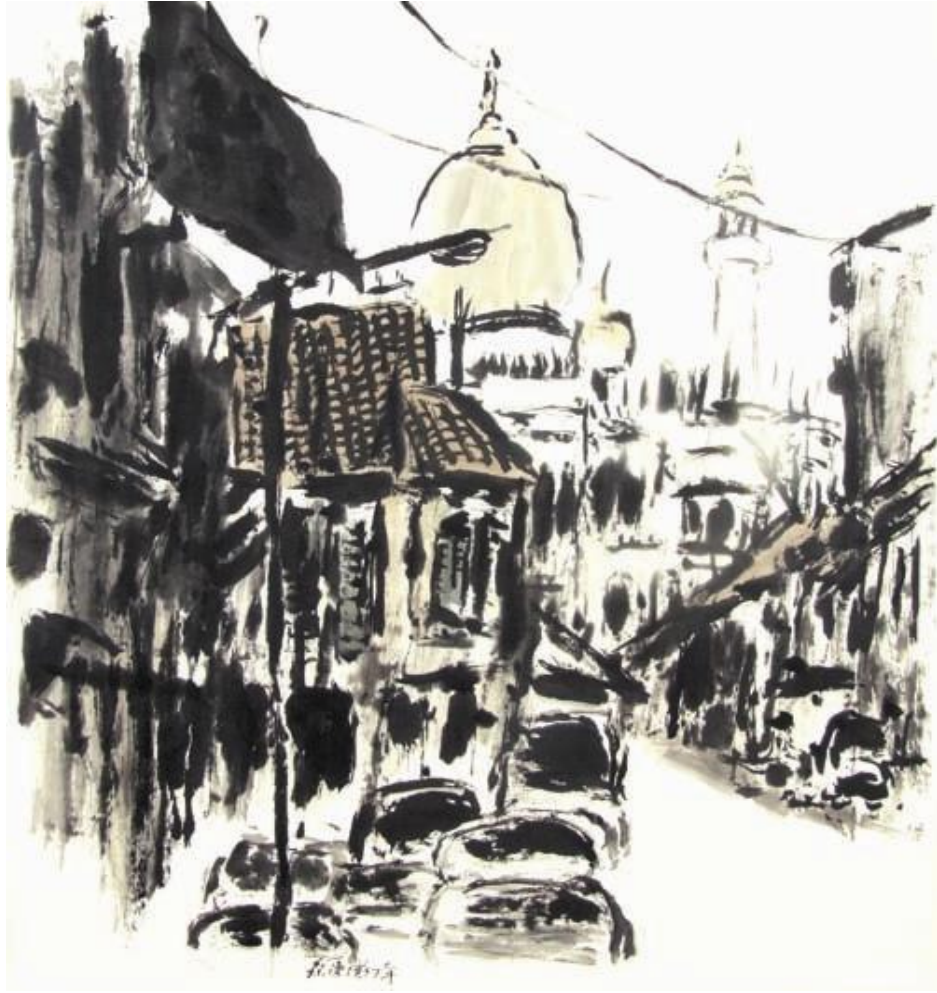
Chinese ink and pigment on paper

72 x 72 cm

2003



Chua Ek Kay
Rambutan and Sunflower
Chinese ink and pigment on paper
69 x 69 cm
2001



Chua Ek Kay
Street Scene at Jalan Sultan
Chinese ink and colour on paper
97 x 91 cm
1997

SMU Collection
Gift of the artist



Chua Ek Kay
Moonlight at Borobudur
Chinese ink and colour on paper
96.5 x 90 cm
1996

SMU Collection
Gift of the artist



Chua Ek Kay

Tea Blossoms

Chinese ink and pigment on paper

46 x 68 cm

1991

Collection of Tan Lay Choo

Students' Art Works



Hui Fong Chee
Landscape
Chinese ink and pigment on paper
35 x 37.5 cm
2000



Goh Ban Eng
Joyful Fish
Chinese ink on paper
68.5 x 45.5 cm
1995



Kong Mei Sing
Ushering in the Spring
Chinese ink and pigment on paper
70 x 35 cm
1989



Tan Lay Choo
Wisteria
Chinese ink and pigment on paper
68 x 47 cm
1992