

**MEDIA RELEASE****For immediate release****ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM LAUNCHES WORLD'S  
FIRST EXHIBITION ON PORT CITIES IN ASIA**

**Singapore, 27 October 2016** – The Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) presents *Port Cities: Multicultural Emporiums of Asia, 1500 – 1900*, an exhibition which explores the unique heritage of Asian port cities and tells the story of how the global flow of people, goods and ideas contributed to the evolution of multi-cultural societies in Singapore, and other port cities in Asia today.

The first in the world to explore the topic, *Port Cities: Multicultural Emporiums of Asia, 1500 – 1900* also charts a lesser known era of globalisation, identifying linkages between cities across the Asian continent, from Goa and Bombay in India, to Batavia (Jakarta) and Manila in Southeast Asia, to Canton (Guangzhou) and Nagasaki in East Asia. Exhibits tell the stories of how specific people and objects adapted as they travelled across the seas from one port city to another; and how communities in many of these port cities were thoroughly modern, in that they blended the latest global trends with their own local traditions of craft and design to create entirely new forms of fashion, decorative arts and ways of living.

Speaking on the exhibition, Director of the ACM and NHB Group Director, Museums, Mr Kennie Ting said, “Port cities that have come before Singapore illustrate that globalisation and cosmopolitanism are not a modern phenomenon. There have been global trade networks since ancient times and certainly during the period of 1500 – 1900. These networks facilitated the development and evolution of multicultural societies in historic port cities leading up to Singapore. As the latest in a long line of cosmopolitan port cities in Asia, Singapore is in a good position to explore this topic because our history is precisely that of trade, and connections across cultures.”

He added, “This special exhibition furthers the museum’s mission of exploring and presenting cross-cultural and hybrid forms of art, people, and cultures that have emerged at crossroads of civilisations in Asia. Focusing on “East-meets-West” and “East-meets-East” is crucial in that it allows us to better understand who we are as Singapore; and as Singaporeans today. I hope that through this exhibition, Singaporeans and visitors get a

deeper understanding of what makes Singapore tick, and what it means to have lived and continue to live in a multicultural society grounded in trade.”

*Port Cities: Multicultural Emporiums of Asia, 1500 – 1900* has been made possible through the strong relationships between ACM and many international partners. Over 180 objects from eight countries – Singapore, Portugal, Netherlands, Switzerland, Japan, Indonesia, Belgium, the Philippines and 22 acclaimed institutions and private collections around the world, will be on display to tell this lesser known history behind our pan-Asian networks. Many of these objects are being showcased for the first time in Singapore such as a collection of rare Chinese objects from 17<sup>th</sup> century Batavia on loan from Stiftsbibliothek St Gallen in Switzerland, which ACM is also partnering for the first time.

The exhibition presents three aspects related to the movement of people, goods and ideas in Asia – Divergence (Moving, Selling, Copying), Convergence (Owning, Collecting, Commissioning), and Integration (Contriving, Combining, Creating); and how these aspects shaped the development of port cities.

Mr Peter Lee, guest curator at ACM and of the exhibition, shared, “We hope visitors will gain a new perspective of port cities through this fresh curatorial approach, as we trace the stories of intensely globalised individuals and communities through lesser known networks. The Chettiar community for example, were as globalised and multicultural then as they are today. They have been trading beyond their homeland for centuries, even building temples in Saigon more than two hundred years ago, when Pondicherry and Saigon became part of the French colonial empire.”

The public can also look forward to a series of interactive programmes and events, ranging from symposiums, curator tours, a special two-part series talk by the Director on historic port cities, as well as a series of cross-cultural performances taking place fortnightly in December to further enrich the exhibition and engage the community. [Refer to **Annex A** for programmes]

Miss Naomi Wang, assistant curator at ACM and of the exhibition shared, “With the strong support from our international partners, we were able to string together a bigger picture of the multi-cultural linkages seen across port cities till today. For instance, we have assembled artefacts from the life of a 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch-Japanese lady who lived in Batavia. Her

portrait from the Rijksmuseum in Netherlands and personal artefacts from the Matsura Historical Museum in Hirado, Japan are reunited in Singapore for the first time. These objects help us to uncover and present intriguing stories of individuals whose lives were testaments of cross cultural linkages.”

*Port Cities: Multicultural Emporiums of Asia, 1500 – 1900* exhibition runs from 4 November 2016 to 19 February 2017 at the Asian Civilisations Museum. Admission charges apply for this special exhibition.

**Annex A: About the exhibition and programme highlights**

**Annex B: List of lending institutions for the exhibition**

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About the Asian Civilisations Museum

The Asian Civilisations Museum is the only museum in region devoted to exploring the artistic heritage of Asia, especially the ancestral cultures of Singaporeans. The museum has launched two new wings with new galleries in late 2015 and early 2016. Founded in 1993, and in its present building by the Singapore River since 2003, the museum’s collection grew out of the 19th-century Raffles Museum. The ACM spotlights the long historical connections between the cultures of Asia, and between Asia and the world.

Objects on display tell stories of the trade and the exchange of ideas that were the result of international commerce, as well as the flow of religions and faith through Asia. Singapore’s history as a port city that brought people together from all over the world is used as a means of examining the history of Asia. Special exhibitions bring magnificent objects from around the world to our Singapore audience. Programmes like the annual River Nights encourage visitors to connect more closely with culture and the arts. For more information, visit [www.acm.org.sg](http://www.acm.org.sg).



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## **ANNEX A: ABOUT THE EXHIBITION AND PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS**




### **Port Cities: Multicultural Emporiums of Asia, 1500 – 1900**

港口城市: 亚洲多元文化的商贸中心, 1500–1900 年

- Exhibition dates : 4 November 2016 to 19 February 2017
- Venue : Asian Civilisations Museum  
1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555
- Admission fee : S\$15
- Website : [www.acm.org.sg](http://www.acm.org.sg)
- Enquiries : 6332 7798 / [nhb\\_acm\\_vs@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_acm_vs@nhb.gov.sg)
- Opening hours : Monday to Sunday: 10am to 7pm (to 9pm on Friday)
- Getting there : By MRT – Raffles Place  
By Bus – 75, 100, 107, 130, 131, 167  
By Car – Parking is available at Parliament House, Connaught Drive, The Fullerton Hotel, One Fullerton, and Six Battery Road

### **Programme Highlights for Port Cities: Multicultural Emporiums of Asia, 1500 – 1900**

<b>ROJAK! WEEKEND FESTIVAL</b>	
	<p><b>14 and 15 January</b> <b>Saturday, 1 to 9pm</b> <b>Sunday, 1 to 5pm</b> <b>Free admission (includes free entry to special exhibition)</b></p> <p>Kick-start your year with a weekend of art, food, and music! Be spoiled for choices at the art market and food bazaar, and catch roving live acts and performances beside the iconic Singapore River. Have your future told or <i>lepak</i> on the ACM Green with local films and the starry night sky as an accompaniment. Round off your day with a trip through the new special exhibition, <i>Port Cities: Multicultural Emporiums of Asia, 1500–1900</i>.</p>

SECRET PARTY	
	<p><b>From 6 to 19 February</b>  <b>Weekdays, 7pm, 8pm</b>  <b>Weekends, 6pm, 7pm</b>  <b>\$99 per person (includes food, drinks, and entry to the <i>Port Cities</i> exhibition)</b></p> <p>Hush now, come closer. Let us take you on a journey through ACM's <i>Port Cities</i> as the night unfurls its splendor, igniting every sensation imaginable. Dance your way through a sensorial feast that will leave you wanting more. Polish off the night with signature cocktails created just for the event by our mixologist. A night of mystery and sensuality awaits you.</p>
CURATOR TOURS	
 	<p><b>Fridays, 18 November, 16 December, 20 January, 17 February</b>  <b>7.30 to 8.30pm</b>  <b>\$25 per session, book at ACM Front Desk or Peatix (<a href="http://acmcuratortours.peatix.com">http://acmcuratortours.peatix.com</a>)</b></p> <p>Join exhibition curators Peter Lee and Naomi Wang to hear their thoughts and get exclusive behind the scenes insights into port cities across Asia.</p> <p>A minimum of 15 people is needed to proceed. Payment must be made at Front Desk or Peatix before the closing date. Registration closes a day before each tour.</p>

**DIRECTOR'S TOUR**



**Friday, 6 January**

**7.30 to 8.30pm**

**\$50 per session, book at ACM Front Desk or Peatix (<http://acmcuratortours.peatix.com>)**

Enjoy an extra special visit by joining an exclusive tour led by museum director Kennie Ting through the new exhibition, *Port Cities: Multicultural Emporiums of Asia, 1500–1900*.

About the speaker

Kennie Ting is Director, Asian Civilisations Museum, and Group Director, Museums, for the National Heritage Board. He is fascinated by the architectural heritage of colonial cities in Asia, and is the author of two books, *The Romance of the Grand Tour – 100 Years of Travel in South East Asia*, and a volume on Heritage in the Singapore Chronicles series commissioned by the Institute of Policy Studies.

Limited spaces available. Payment must be made at Front Desk or Peatix before the closing date. Registration closes a day before each tour. A minimum of 15 people is needed to proceed. If the event is cancelled, full refund will be made to participants who have purchased tickets.

**DRAWN TO ART**





**Fridays, 11 November, 2 December, 13 January**

**7 to 9pm**

**Free admission**

There's more than meets the eye. Delve deeper into the objects, and yourself, as an artist takes you through a journey of

	<p>exploration.</p> <p>Workshops are suitable for beginners. Registration is required. Limited spaces available.</p>
<p><b>FUN-TASTIC FRIDAYS</b></p>	
	<p><b>Fridays, 2, 9, 16, 23 December</b></p> <p><b>12 to 4pm</b></p> <p><b>Free admission</b></p> <p>Calling all explorers this school holiday! Embark on a voyage to faraway ports. We will journey across different lands, and unravel the mysteries of the past through exciting interactive character tour and stories. What's more? Make this Christmas season special by making your own Christmas gifts for your loved ones. Join us on this globetrotting journey every Friday!</p>
<p><b>SATURDAYS@ACM X 398.2 STORYTELLING FESTIVAL</b></p>	
	<p><b>Saturday, 3 December</b></p> <p><b>11am to 6pm</b></p> <p><b>Free admission</b></p> <p>Voyage across the seas to strange islands as master storytellers from 398.2 Storytelling Festival transport you into a world of fascinating tales. Take home your own masterpiece when you join us for a fantastical good time at ACM!</p> <p>Saturdays@ACM is a regular free family-friendly programme that happens every first Saturday of the month. Join us on other dates – 5 November 2016, 7 January, and 4 February 2017.</p>



**DIRECTOR'S TRAVEL JOURNAL – TALKS BY KENNIE TING**



**9 December, 14 January**

**7 to 8pm**

**Free admission**

Visit historic port cities like Nagasaki, Goa, Canton (Guangzhou), and Batavia (Jakarta) as part of a two-part series talk. Let the Director of the Asian Civilisations Museum take you through time from the 1500s to today, and explore what remains of the old cities in the contemporary ones.

About the speaker

Kennie Ting is Director, Asian Civilisations Museum, and Group Director, Museums, for the National Heritage Board. He is fascinated by the architectural heritage of colonial cities in Asia, and is the author of two books, *The Romance of the Grand Tour – 100 Years of Travel in South East Asia*, and a volume on Heritage in the Singapore Chronicles series commissioned by the Institute of Policy Studies.



**ANNEX B: LIST OF LENDING INSTITUTIONS FOR THE EXHIBITION**

Country	Institutions
Indonesia	Museum Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta  Jakarta History Museum  Gereja Sion (Portuguese Zion Church), Jakarta
Japan	Matsura Historical Museum, Hirado  Obakusan Mampuku-ji Temple, Kyoto Prefecture  Matsuzakaya Collection, Nagoya
Netherlands	Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam  Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, The Hague
Philippines	Ayala Museum, Philippines
Portugal	Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon
Singapore	Asian Civilisations Museum  National Museum of Singapore  National Archives Singapore  National Library Board  Indian Heritage Centre  Saigon Chettiar's Temple Trust Pte Ltd
Switzerland	Stiftsbibliothek St Gallen, Switzerland