

Foreword

Cultural Connections was first published by the Culture Academy Singapore in 2016 to provide a platform for arts and culture administrators, and professionals within Singapore's public sector to publish their research in their respective fields, as well as to share best practices with their colleagues.

Over the past three years, this annual publication has widened its reach to include essays contributed by academics, diplomats and our counterparts from overseas. This has contributed to the sharing of knowledge within Singapore and around our Southeast Asian region. Over time, the Culture Academy Singapore seeks to expand these efforts in presenting an exciting and fast-growing region where we can collectively nurture an ASEAN identity that will showcase the many opportunities that the region has to offer one another and to the world at large.

In commemoration of Singapore's Chairmanship of ASEAN this year, this third issue of *Cultural Connections* explores the historical and cultural links that have brought the 10 nations of ASEAN together. The rich heritage of ASEAN is described through selected star pieces from the National Collection of Singapore.

Through an exchange of cultural knowledge, expertise and skills, we can foster deeper appreciation of the great diversity in this region of ancient civilisations and contemporary artistic expressions. Our shared heritage as Southeast Asian nations brings us together while we celebrate our distinctive identities and cultures.

I hope you enjoy reading these fascinating aspects of ASEAN in this issue of *Cultural Connections*.

Rosa Daniel (Mrs)
Deputy Secretary (Culture)
Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth

Editor-in-Chief's Note

It has been 51 years since the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formed on 8 August 1967. From the five founding member-organisation in 1967, it has since grown to ten. ASEAN has also become a strong regional body that many nations want to do business and engage in cultural exchanges with, and even have their citizens visit, work and live in.

On the occasion of Singapore's Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2018, this third volume of *Cultural Connections* is dedicated to everything ASEAN from the arts and cultural front.

The essays are published in two sections – the first features essays on how Singapore's arts and culture scene has been influenced by Southeast Asia and vice versa, and highlights the long and deep, people-to-people, country-to-country, and organisation-to-organisation relations Singapore has enjoyed with her regional neighbours. The second part is a collection of essays written by our curators from the arts and culture sector using an artefact from their respective Southeast Asian collection to showcase an aspect of each of our fellow member nations from ASEAN. From stamps to textiles, to sculptures and artworks, we hope to showcase the rich artistic tradition of ASEAN and the commonalities we share. We have used pieces from Singapore's national collection to explore and celebrate the uniqueness, beauty and richness of Southeast Asia, from historical and trade links to culture, heritage, and economic and political ties.

We hope that you will enjoy savouring every essay in this volume as much as we have enjoyed putting it together.

Thangamma Karthigesu (Ms)
Director, Culture Academy Singapore
Editor-in-Chief