

ANNEX A: ABOUT THE CULTURAL MEDALLION AND 2025 RECIPIENTS

About the Cultural Medallion

The Cultural Medallion was instituted in 1979 as an initiative of the late President, then Minister of Culture, Mr Ong Teng Cheong, to recognise individuals who have attained artistic excellence in their fields of artistic practice and made a distinction to the nation's arts and culture.

The Cultural Medallion is conferred by the President of the Republic of Singapore and administered by the National Arts Council. As of 2025, 139 artists have been conferred the Cultural Medallion.

Cultural Medallion nominees are assessed upon the extent to which they have achieved or demonstrated all of the following:

- Artistic excellence and professional maturity manifest through an outstanding and distinctive body of work
- Extraordinary contribution and leadership in shaping the development of Singapore's arts and culture; advancing their field of arts practice; bringing the arts to the local public through educational or community development efforts
- Being an inspiration and role model to other artists
- Good standing and recognition internationally

In 2001, the Cultural Medallion Grant of \$50,000 was introduced to support the artistic pursuits of all CM recipients, and the grant was increased to \$80,000 in 2006. Since 2011, it has been renamed the Cultural Medallion Fund to signify greater flexibility, ease of access and an expanded scope of support of arts-related projects that will positively impact local arts and culture.

Recipients of 2025 Cultural Medallion

Goh Boon Teck (Age: 54) – Artistic Director



Goh Boon Teck (b. 1971) is not just a visionary force in Singaporean theatre, but also a deeply human storyteller whose work has touched lives.

As a director, playwright, designer, and cultural advocate, Boon Teck boasts a career that spans more than three decades of tireless dedication. Mentored by veterans including Wee Beng Chong, Tan Teck Heng, Chua Soo Pong, and the late Kuo Pao Kun, he has shaped the very language of Singaporean theatre, bridging Chinese and English, tradition and modernity, the intimate and the spectacular. From the stage to television, he has brought stories that resonate with local and international audiences.

Few artists embody such versatility: Boon Teck holds the record for directing the most productions at the Esplanade Theatre and Concert Hall, a validation of his prolific creativity and his ability to command Singapore's grandest stages.

His groundbreaking play 'Titoudao' has become an icon of our cultural landscape, adapted for television and stage and shared as far afield as Australia, India, Egypt, Indonesia, China, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the United States, Latin America, and North America. 'The Straits Times' (2024) cited that 'Titoudao' "stands the test of time" with its 30th Anniversary staging, while 'Today' (2015) lauded the production as the "magical bridge that links us to Singapore's vanishing treasures," referring to the lost art of *wayang*, or street opera, of which the show is primarily set in.

His contributions extend beyond his artistic achievements. He is a cultural champion, preserving South-east Asian art forms while embracing innovation. His productions abroad, including the acclaimed productions of 'Glass Anatomy', 'The Crab Flower Club', 'Spirits' and 'Prism', have established him as an ambassador for Singapore's stories, showing the world who we are and what we stand for.

Boon Teck has generously guided and nurtured numerous directors, actors, designers, and production members, inspiring emerging talents through mentorship, collaboration, and example. His quiet, steadfast leadership has cultivated a

generation of theatre-makers who continue to shape the industry.

He believes in the transformative power of creativity, an unwavering commitment to community, and a lifelong devotion to telling stories that matter. His legacy has defined the arts scene here and helped shape the country's identity.

Nai Swee Leng (Age: 79) – Chinese Ink and Calligraphy Artist



Nai Swee Leng (b. 1946) is a distinguished Chinese ink artist known for his Chinese ink paintings and calligraphies.

Swee Leng graduated from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and received mentorship from masters of Shanghai School, Fan Chang Tien, See Hiang To, and leader of the Lingnan School, Chao Shao-An. Integrating traditional brush techniques with subjects of Nanyang, Swee Leng developed his unique, bold and spontaneous freehand *xieyi* style (写意派). The depth, strength and grace of Swee Leng's Chinese ink paintings embodies his pursuit of 真善美 (*zhēn shàn měi*: truth, goodness, beauty). Swee Leng loves painting flora and fauna and Nanyang themes, such as coconuts trees, bamboo, birds, and flowers. He has held solo and group exhibitions throughout his career and has published three art books so far.

Swee Leng's artistic achievements have garnered local and international recognition. Since 1995, he was appointed Overseas Member of the prestigious Xiling Seal Art Society Zhejiang, one of China's most important traditional stone seal engraving art associations; and in 2006, he was awarded the Siaw-Tao Distinguished Art Award by Siaw-Tao Chinese Seal Carving, Calligraphy & Painting Society. Swee Leng's Chinese ink art works were represented at the 2014 and 2016 Singapore Post Stamp Series in conjunction with the President's Charity Art Exhibition, and his Chinese ink calligraphies have been inscribed on many traditional wooden plaques at The Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery, a National Monument.

Swee Leng dedicated a significant part of his career to art promotion. He co-founded the Molan Art Association in 1967 to promote and preserve Chinese arts and heritage, and conducted art classes nurturing many artists for the past five decades. As the Singapore correspondent for the Taiwan First Art Magazine in the 1980s, he wrote about Singapore's fine arts

to overseas Chinese communities. He frequently exhibited his works and was guest speaker at many local and overseas art events, including speaking at the 2014 and 2015 editions of Hong Kong Chinese Ink Art Festival at the Jao Tsung-I Academy.

In March 2016, Swee Leng spoke at the Ink Masters Series – National Gallery Singapore about the development of Chinese ink arts during the Ming and Qing periods. He also conducted engaging live demonstration sessions of his Chinese ink brushwork, where he painted his favourite subjects such as pine trees, and Nanyang landscapes.