

MEDIA RELEASE

**The Asian Civilisations Museum Presents The Region's
First Comprehensive Vietnam Exhibition**

[27 May 2008, SINGAPORE] A season of all things Vietnamese has begun at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM). The highlight is the museum's new exhibition ***Viet Nam! From Myth To Modernity*** which explores more than 2500 years of Vietnam's history and its unique cultural identity.

On show from 21 May to 30 September 2008, it features star pieces from museums in Vietnam, private collections and the ACM's collection. To bring Vietnam even closer to home, the museum will be flying in artists, craftsmen and cultural performers for a two-day ***ACM Weekend Viet Fest from 31 May to 1 June***. These events are a highlight of Vietnam Festival, organised by the National Heritage Board and its museums to celebrate 35 years of diplomatic relations between Singapore and Vietnam.

Dr Kenson Kwok, Director of the Asian Civilisations Museum said: "We are excited to present *Viet Nam! From Myth To Modernity* which is first time that such an exhibition has been attempted in Asia. Through our exhibition and programmes, we want to offer visitors an all-round experience of this fascinating country."

Special Exhibition – Viet Nam! From Myth To Modernity
(21 May – 30 September)

Today Vietnam is a culturally diverse country with a population of over 84 million people and more than 50 ethnic groups. The ACM's latest special exhibition *Viet Nam! From Myth To Modernity* explores this unique cultural identity through more than 2500 years of its history. Visitors can trace this timeline from myth – an oral history that describes the Vietnamese as the descendants of the Dragon King and

the Mountain Fairy – to contemporary Vietnam. Important milestones in Vietnam’s history are highlighted, such as the Bronze Age Dong Son culture (500 BCE – 300 CE) of Northern Vietnam which is considered the golden age in Vietnamese history. This early period is represented by large bronze drums which show off locally developed technology and a distinctly Vietnamese style. The exhibition also features treasures from the Hindu Buddhist Kingdom of Champa which developed in Central Vietnam. Such highlights include impressive stone temple sculptures and gold artefacts such as a gold and silver Lokeshvara figure. From Southern Vietnam, highlights such as jewellery and beads used as collateral for trade from as early as the 1st century would have been worn by the predecessors of the Khmer people of Vietnam.

The exhibition features some 200 artefacts of which over 160 are on loan from museums across Vietnam. This extensive loan is the result of new policies in Vietnam which have enabled the ACM to borrow from their national museums.

“Through the show, we hope that visitors will gain an appreciation of how ancient Vietnamese culture is – dating to as early as 5000 years ago – and also its unique diversity. This diversity is a result of the Vietnamese people’s willingness to absorb and adapt new influences, a quality that should stand them in good stead in this increasingly globalised world,” said Heidi Tan, curator of the exhibition and Senior Curator at the Asian Civilisations Museum.

ACM Artist-In-Residence – Le Quoc Viet (20 May – 15 June)

The ACM will also embark on its first Artist-In-Residence programme with young contemporary artist Le Quoc Viet. From 20 May to 15 June, Mr Viet will be at work at the ACM’s lobby in a specially designed studio, inspired by the artist’s own studio near Hanoi. During his residency, visitors can observe the artist as he carves woodblocks and creates calligraphy artworks. Grounded in tradition and armed with a modern outlook, Mr Viet specialises in the ancient technique of woodblock printing and Chinese calligraphy. He also studied classical Chinese



and the Vietnamese Chu Nom script at a temple for many years. An internationally recognised artist, Viet's work is collected by institutions such as the British Museum in London.

Family Fun - ACM Weekend Viet Fest (31 May – 1 June)

From 31 May to 1 June, visitors can soak up the sights, sounds and tastes of Vietnam. Just for this weekend, the ACM will be flying in cultural performances from across Vietnam. These include a lion dance troupe from the South, which performs on stilts. Visitors can also expect to hear performances on stone instruments which are similar to xylophones. Weaving demonstrations will be presented by a Cham weaver from Central Vietnam. In addition, there will be a Vietnamese food and craft bazaar throughout the day and family programmes such as storytelling sessions, craft workshops and a children's art competition.

Film Screenings, Talks and Tours (May – September)

A programme of film screenings, talks and curator's tours round up the Vietnam experience at ACM. Organised in collaboration with the New York University TischAsia, the ***acmfriends Viet Mini Film Series***, will present a three-day film programme including award-winning arthouse favourites like *The Scent of Green Papaya* and *Three Seasons*. The series of four films is curated by Katherine Lindberg, Visiting Arts Professor for Graduate Film, New York University TischAsia School of the Arts and will be screened from 26 to 28 May.

Visitors can further explore the richness of Vietnam through a series of talks and curator's tours organised throughout the exhibition. For the full programme, please log on to www.acm.org.sg.

For full list of activities, refer to Annex A.

About the Asian Civilisations Museum

The Asian Civilisations Museum's mission is to explore and present the cultures and civilisations of Asia, so as to promote awareness and appreciation of the ancestral cultures of Singaporeans and their links to Southeast Asia and the World. The Asian Civilisations Museum first began its operations at Armenian Street in 1997, which closed at end-2005, and re-opened on 25 April 2008 as the Peranakan Museum. The ACM's flagship at the historic Empress Place Building opened on 2 March 2003.

About Vietnam Festival

Vietnam Festival showcases Vietnam's diverse culture and exotic legacy across museums and galleries in Singapore for the first time. Spearheaded by the National Heritage Board, this inaugural integrated festival celebrates the rich and vibrant heritage of Vietnam through a variety of exhibitions, programmes and shows. Participants can enjoy Vietnam's contemporary artworks, unique classical films and rare ancient artefacts. They can also relive the monumental achievements of Vietnam's founding father Ho Chi Minh right at our doorstep.

About National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) champions the development and promotion of a vibrant cultural and heritage sector in Singapore. It makes heritage enriching, relevant and accessible to all through staging innovative programmes and forging collaborative partnerships. NHB leverages on state-of-the-art technology and refreshing new approaches to make heritage more dynamic, alive and exciting for different audiences. It manages both national and public museums, the National Archives of Singapore, and the Heritage Conservation Centre.

Acknowledgements

The Asian Civilisations Museum would like to thank the following for supporting the exhibition:

Principal Sponsor



Supporters





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Opening Hours

Mondays : 1pm – 7pm
Tuesdays – Sundays : 9am – 7pm (to 9pm on Fridays)

Annex A

LISTINGS FOR VIETNAM EXHIBITION AND PROGRAMMES AT THE ACM

VIỆT NAM! FROM MYTH TO MODERNITY

Asian Civilisations Museum

21 May to 30 September 2008

Mon: 1pm - 7pm, Tue to Sun: 9am – 7pm (Friday: 9am-9pm)

Adults: \$8.00, Concession*: \$4.00

*Full time students and those 60 years and above

The history of Vietnam is shrouded in a rich oral tradition of myth and legend - many Vietnamese believe themselves to be the descendents of the Dragon King and Mountain Fairy. Explore the unique Vietnamese cultural identity and marvel at the craftsmanship of impressive Dong Son bronze drums and weapons, imposing Hindu-Buddhist temple sculptures, delicate blue and white ceramics and whimsical woodblock prints. This landmark exhibition will take the visitor through more than 2500 years of Vietnam's history, as seen through more than 200 artefacts on loan from museums in Vietnam, private collections and from the collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum.

Catch Viet Nam! From Myth To Modernity and stand to win free flights to Vietnam!

PRINT! ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE – LE QUOC VIET

Asian Civilisations Museum

20 May to 15 June 2008

Mon: 1pm - 7pm, Tue to Sun: 9am – 7pm (Friday: 9am-9pm)

Admission to the studio space is free.

Admission charges to the galleries apply (see admission charges for *Viet Nam! From Myth To Modernity*).

For four weeks from May to June, the ACM will be hosting one of Vietnam's leading contemporary artists; Le Quoc Viet. Mr Viet specialises in painting and printmaking and will be working on a specially commissioned piece for the ACM's permanent collection. At various times of the day, Mr Viet will conduct interactive demonstrations, where he will be available to answer questions on his work. He will also conduct a series of workshops for adults, children and students.

ACMFRIENDS VIET MINI FILM SERIES

in collaboration with New York University TischAsia

Asian Civilisations Museum

26 May to 28 May

Shows begin at 7pm or 9pm

\$8 acmfriends & guests / \$10 General Public

Tickets can be purchased from ACM front desk during museum opening hours

Sit back and experience Vietnam at this very special three-day programme featuring award-winning films, curated by Katherine Lindberg, Visiting Assistant Arts Professor for Graduate Film, New York University TischAsia School of the Arts.

Films and documentaries include *The Quiet American*, *Daughter from Danang*, *The Scent of Green Papaya* and *Three Seasons*.

For full programme of films with synopses, please log on to www.acmfriends.org.sg.

ACM WEEKEND VIỆT FEST!

Asian Civilisations Museum

31 May to 1 June 2008

11am to 6pm

Free entry to galleries all day from 9am to 7pm.

Experience the sights, sounds and taste of Vietnam at the ACM Weekend Viet Fest. There's something for everyone with activities galore and an all-day food and craft bazaar. Kids will have plenty to smile about with Vietnamese folktales storytelling sessions, craft activities, face painting, balloon art and more! Plus, children inspired by the colours of Vietnam might win a prize in our on-the-spot art competition!

Don't miss special cultural performances all the way from Vietnam! These include exciting lion dance performances on stilts and a spectacular 'stone xylophone' performance. Also, watch Vietnamese artists at work during woodblock and calligraphy demonstrations by ACM's artist-in-residence Le Quoc Viet and weaving sessions by a Cham weaver from Central Vietnam.

CURATOR'S TOURS

Asian Civilisations Museum

6 June, 4 July, 1 August & 5 September

7 pm

Tour charges apply, for registration and details, log on to www.acm.org.sg

Limited to 15 people per tour

Interested in Vietnamese art & culture? Join special curator-led evening tours on the first Friday of every month for the duration of *Việt Nam! From Myth To Modernity*.