

MEDIA RELEASE
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Singapore Writers Festival 2009

Presents

UNderCovers

*Find Your Passion and Dive Under Covers at this year's Singapore Writers Festival!
Celebrating new and emerging Asian writing.*

24 October – 1 November 2009

The Arts House

www.singaporewritersfestival.com

SINGAPORE, 17 September 2009 – The Singapore Writers Festival (SWF) goes under covers this year with a host of events and writers that are expected to raise a whirlwind at The Arts House from 24 October to 1 November 2009. While readers can look forward to meeting face-to-face with luminaries such as Neil Gaiman, Taichi Yamada, Qiu Xiaolong and John Ajvide Lindqvist, this year's SWF will also see the launch of new initiatives.

For the first time this year, SWF is putting together several outreach programmes in schools and during the Festival, introducing children's literature and children's writers from Singapore (Adeline Foo and Shamini Flint) and *The Boy in Striped Pyjamas's* John Boyne; and focusing prominently on emerging and established Singapore and Malaysia writers.

Says Mr Philip Jeyaretnam, Chairman of SWF 2009 Steering Committee: "The new initiatives are aimed at showing our young readers that literature is fun and thrilling. At the same time, we are continuing with our mission to promote new and emerging Singapore and Asian writing to an international and wider audience. With such strong emphasis on Singapore and Malaysia writers this year, we are also pleased that for the first time in our history, SWF will be holding a press conference in Kuala Lumpur on 15 October to promote SWF to our fellow counterparts in Malaysia."

The Festival also continues its strong Singapore focus with its *Literary Pioneer* series which will honour Professor Edwin Thumboo from National University of Singapore as the Literary Pioneer for 2009. As one of the early pioneers of Singapore poetry, Professor Thumboo has edited some of the earliest anthologies of English literature

Singapore Writers Festival is co-organised by

from Singapore and Malaysia and written five volumes of poetry: *Rib of Earth* (1956), *Gods Can Die* (1977), *Ulysses by the Merlion* (1979), *A Third Map: New and Selected Poems* (1993), and most recently, *Still Travelling* (2008). He received the Cultural Medallion in 1979 and the Meritorious Service Medal in 2006 in recognition of his contribution to the arts and culture scene of Singapore throughout his career as a lecturer, academic and writer.

Deputy CEO and Director of Literary Arts of the National Arts Council, Mr Khor Kok Wah says: "As an international literary arts festival with an Asian focus, the Singapore Writers Festival is more than just a platform for the most celebrated international and Singapore writers. The Festival also opens channels for emergent literary talent to develop and showcase their creative writings, and for the public to be inspired by the written word. We hope to continue to increase the reach of the literary arts through the various programmes and events SWF 2009 will offer, and establish the Festival as a worthy and meaningful literary festival in the Southeast Asian region."

With its theme of *UNderCovers* and featuring more than 100 writers from Singapore, Asia and the West, SWF 2009 aims to explore a variety of genres that the theme evokes: from horror and thriller through children's literature to emerging writers. Multi-disciplinary events such as film screenings, a dramatised reading and book launches will continue to be a feature of the festival as well.

Says Mr Phan Ming Yen, Assistant General Manager of The Arts House: "Following our successful collaboration in 2007, The Arts House is pleased to work with the National Arts Council again on SWF this year. This is especially so for since The Arts House's opening, literary arts has been a core focus of The Arts House and events such as SWF is very much in line with our mission."

"As such, the theme for the festival this year has allowed SWF to present to readers a rich variety of authors whose works – ranging from horror through crime to 'serious fiction' - are at once accessible and fun but yet also serve as a metaphor for social and humanitarian issues. This in turn we hope will allow the Festival to reach out to a wider audience and share with them the transformative power of the text."

Ms Ginney Lim, SPH's General Counsel and Executive Vice President of Corporate Communications and General Manager of SPH Foundation says: "SPH and the SPH Foundation are proud to be the Official Sponsors of the Singapore Writers Festival once again. As Southeast Asia's leading media organisation, we are pleased that this year's Festival places a strong focus on the region's writers. We believe our sponsorship of the event will create greater recognition and appreciation for the literary arts. We also hope that the SPH-NAC Golden Point Award will discover and nurture a new generation of writers."

Highlights of SWF 2009

Aimed at reaching out to a wider public and creating a greater interest in the literary arts, SWF 2009 will showcase notable writers such as Neil Gaiman whose *The Sandman* series, *Stardust* and *American Gods* have captured the imagination of thousands; the highly respected Taichi Yamada whose *Strangers*, *In Search of a Distant Voice* and *I Have Not Dreamt of Flying in Awhile* with the supernatural; Qiu Xiaolong's award winning Inspector Chen series that combines crime wrapped in

cultural history; and John Ajvide Lindqvist whose highly acclaimed debut vampire novel *Let the Right One In* was also adapted to a film recently screened in Singapore.

In addition to the international line-up, an outstanding group of writers from across the borders: Baha Zain, K.S. Maniam, Mohd Nor Bin Khalid (Lat), Muhammad Haji Salleh and Anwar Ridhwan who have become household names in Malaysia will partake at *Sharing Borders: Singapore/Malaysia Writers Symposium* on Monday, 26 October. The symposium brings together scholars and writers to address the engagement of the two countries' literatures through plenary sessions, workshops and panel discussion.

Another programme highlight in Asian writing and more specifically Singapore writing, *Dissecting the Merlion* will have eight writers from different backgrounds and generations to expound on the topic of the Merlion. Alfian Sa'at, Desmond Kon, Leong Liew Geok, Ng Yi-Sheng, Alvin Pang, Adrian Tan, Teng Qian Xi and Ovidia Yu will be on the panel moderated and hosted by Eleanor Wong. Also to be launched at the event is a poetry anthology inspired by the Merlion across the four national languages.

Aspiring young writers and readers from the ages of 10 to 16 can also look forward to the School Outreach Copywriting programmes and get the chance to meet some of the highly-talented and known writers such as Kate McCaffrey, John Boyne, Wena Poon, Haresh Sharma, Stella Kon and many more.

To find out more about SWF and book tickets to performances and film screenings or to register for talk and symposium, please contact The Arts House Box Office at +65 6332 6919 or email tickets@toph.com.sg. The public can also refer to the festival website at www.singaporewritersfestival.com for regular updates and more information of all programmes. Registration for programmes will be opened on Tuesday, 22 September 2009.

Singapore Writers Festival 2009 is co-organised by the National Arts Council and The Arts House with the generous sponsorship of the official sponsors, Singapore Press Holdings Ltd and Singapore Press Holdings Foundation, major sponsor Lee Foundation, sponsors including MPH Quill, Asia Literary Review and F&N, festival bookstore BooksActually, festival hotel Peninsula Excelsior Hotel and supporters such as Aēsop, Bing, Caran d'Ache, Clear Channel, Embassy of Ireland, Embassy of Israel, Embassy of the United States of America, Embassy of the Kingdom of Spain, G&B Comics, MPH Online and Radio 100.3.

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National Arts Council, Singapore

The National Arts Council (NAC) was established in September 1991 to spearhead the development of the arts in Singapore. To realise its vision of developing Singapore into a distinctive global city for the arts, NAC provides total support to nurture artistic talent, promotes the practice and appreciation of the arts among Singaporeans, builds up capabilities and resources, facilitates internationalization and advocates the value of the arts. Through its holistic range of programmes and initiatives to develop the entire arts value chain, the Council champions the growth of a vibrant arts sector where the arts is accessible to all, and the community of artists, arts groups and arts businesses can innovate, excel and achieve sustainability in the long term. www.nac.gov.sg

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The Arts House

Officially opened on 26 March 2004, The Arts House at the Old Parliament is the only gazetted historic government building which has been designated as an arts and heritage venue. The 182-year-old national monument was originally built in 1827 as a home for a Scottish merchant but subsequently became Singapore's first Court House and former Parliament House. The Arts House is now a multidisciplinary arts centre that offers visitors the opportunity to create their own mix of activities from a broad spectrum of engaging, contemporary arts events, entertainment and lifestyle options. The Arts House is managed by The Old Parliament House Limited, a not-for-profit full-service arts management company limited by guarantee. For further information, please visit www.theartshouse.com.sg

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