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Latiff Mohidin  
*PROVOKE*  
The artist's collection



## PRESS RELEASE LATIFF MOHIDIN PAGO PAGO (1960-1969)

28 FEBRUARY – 28 MAY 2018

SALLE 1, MUSÉE, LEVEL 5

THE CENTRE POMPIDOU HOSTS «LATIFF MOHIDIN. PAGO PAGO (1960-1969)»  
NEW COLLABORATION WITH THE NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE

As part of a new collaboration, the Centre Pompidou and the National Gallery Singapore are presenting an exhibition on the artist Latiff Mohidin, one of the key modernists of Southeast Asia. «Latiff Mohidin. Pago Pago (1960-1969)» is an extension of the innovative project «Reframing Modernism: Painting from Southeast Asia, Europe and Beyond», co-produced with the Centre Pompidou and presented at the National Gallery Singapore in 2016, with a crossover approach to modern creation in Europe and Southeast Asia.

Commenting on the exhibition, Serge Lasvignes, President of the Centre Pompidou, emphasised that «'Latiff Mohidin. Pago Pago (1960-1969)» is further proof of our desire to link up with major institutions all over the world. Our collaboration with the National Gallery Singapore on 'Reframing Modernism' was an important event for us, opening new perspectives on the dialogue of cultures. This new joint project gives our audiences a marvellous chance to see major works by a great contemporary artist from Southeast Asia, within the Centre Pompidou collections.»

Dr Eugene Tan, Director of National Gallery Singapore said, "The Gallery's curatorial efforts have sought to actively engage debates of modernism within a global context. The Gallery is delighted to continue this successful partnership with Centre Pompidou by presenting our first travelling

show on Southeast Asian art. The exhibition showcases Latiff Mohidin's art during the 1960s, which was a decade that marked such significant shifts both in Southeast Asia and Europe. Latiff Mohidin is not only one of Southeast Asia's leading artists, it could be said that he is one of the first artists of the region to imagine 'Southeast Asia' as a distinct aesthetic realm. Curatorially, the Gallery continues to be driven by its mission in enabling a greater understanding of Southeast Asian art internationally."

«*Pago Pago: Latiff Mohidin (1960-1969)*» is conceived by the curators Catherine David of Centre Pompidou and Shabbir Hussain Mustafa of National Gallery Singapore as a micro-history that situates one of Southeast Asia's leading modernists in dialogue with his Western peers. Held in a space adjacent to the permanent galleries of the Pompidou, the exhibition is set in the 1960s when Latiff Mohidin embarked upon his formal study of art at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in West Berlin from 1961 to 1964. Ranging from the emotional states of German Expressionism that Latiff Mohidin encountered during his formative years in Berlin to the ancestral imaginary of his rural upbringing in British Malaya, *Pago Pago* became a way of thinking manifested in a constellation of paintings, sculptures, prints poetry and writings.

In 1964, Latiff Mohidin returned to Southeast Asia from Europe with the hope of reengaging with a region that had been relegated to his subconsciousness. Amidst perceived communist expansionism in Vietnam and insurgencies that raged internally in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand, he remained committed towards initiating his own sense of the region. If the Berlin years were about the ability to translate between cultures, the years that followed presented a different proposition: to think of all matter as eternal cycles. The poetry of the 'Pago Pago' years is in free verse form, while the paintings compositionally rely on thick outlines, controlled brush strokes, jagged and curvilinear edges. The exhibition will feature over 70 artworks and archival materials drawn from leading public and private collections in Singapore and Malaysia.

Mr Shabbir Hussain Mustafa, Senior Curator at National Gallery Singapore and co-curator of the exhibition adds, "This exhibition traces a formative period in the artist's practice in the 1960s as he journeyed across Europe and Southeast Asia. Latiff Mohidin evokes the consciousness that emerged through these travels with a phrase: 'Pago Pago', a manner of thinking and working that complicated Western modernism through the initiation of dialogues with other avant-garde thinkers in Southeast Asia. These included the Indonesian writer Goenawan Mohamad, whom Latiff Mohidin first met in 1967. This exhibition will explore all sorts of interlocking connections in highlighting what constitutes a contribution to 20th century modernism."

Ms Catherine David, Deputy Director, Musée National d'Art Moderne of Centre Pompidou and co-curator of the exhibition said, "This In-Focus exhibition is designed to unravel the complexities of key works that Latiff Mohidin produced in the 1960s, a decade which could be characterized as a moment when Southeast Asia established itself as a locus within the major redraft of Modernism. The exhibition concludes with the 1969 moment of *Neo Pago Pago*, a critical year in the artist's practice as he transitioned from the *Pago Pago* series (1964-68) into a prolific output of literary prose and poetry, yet another understudied aspect of his practice that this exhibition will seek to tease out."

A publication edited by the curators with critical articles on *Pago Pago* is being brought out at the same time as the exhibition.

**Exhibition organized by National Gallery Singapore and the Centre Pompidou**

# ON THE EXHIBITION

PAROLE AUX ARTISTES  
EVENING STUDY  
28 FEBRUARY, 7PM, CINÉMA 2

**Meeting with the artist, with the participation of the writers Goenawan Mohamad, Idanna Pucci et Terence Ward. Free entry**

This study evening will be dedicated to Latiff Mohidin poetical work and to his bonds with several contemporary intellectuals and poets in Southeast Asia.

## BIOGRAPHY

Latiff Mohidin (b. 1941) is Malaysia's leading modernist painter and poet. His passion for painting and drawing was evident at an early age, when he held his first exhibition at the Kota Raja Malay School in Singapore, to which he came to be identified as 'the magical boy with the gift in his hands'. In 1960, he was awarded the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) scholarship for his studies at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in West Berlin, Germany. Upon his return to Southeast Asia in 1964, Latiff Mohidin embarked on an extensive journey into Indochina and the Malay world, establishing affinities and conversations with avant-garde artists and intellectuals of the time. He evokes this period through a phrase, 'Pago Pago', a mode of thinking and working that evokes the specificities of the region as aesthetic. This moment has found a significant place in writings on Southeast Asian art. In 1969, Latiff Mohidin was awarded the French Ministry of Culture Scholarship to study etching in Paris at the Lacourrière-Frélaud, followed by the John D. Rockefeller III Grant for a residency at the Pratt Institute in New York in 1969. Latiff Mohidin has remained connected to leading figures in discussion about Southeast Asian aesthetics, through his conversations with thinkers such as Goenawan Mohamad, whom he first met in 1967.

As a poet, Latiff Mohidin's artistic practice is also often linked to his literary activities. Like his art, his poetry is a methodological wandering that resists ideological or doctrinal writ. Rather, his anthologies offer an extended interrogation of the interior world of the artist. Many of these thoughts are reflected in *GARIS Latiff Mohidin dari titik de titik (LINE Latiff Mohidin from point to point)*, a work of immense literary prowess that appeared in 1988, which grapples with the position of vernacular cosmopolitanism within the story of global modernism, which still considers Europe as its default. Much of Latiff Mohidin's literary and painterly world is also informed by his readings of Jorge Luis Borges, Chairil Anwar and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe amongst others. Often breaking down disciplinary boundaries between the visual and literary, in 2012, Latiff Mohidin published his translation of Goethe's *Faust* (Part 1), a figure that has fascinated him since his encounter with German literature in early 1960s. He first became recognised as a poet when he published his collection of poems *Sungai Mekong* in 1971, with the latest being *Sajak-Sajak Dinihari* (1996). *Sungai Mekong* has been translated into multiple languages, most recently into Spanish. Latiff Mohidin lives and works in Penang Island, Malaysia.



## ABOUT CENTRE POMPIDOU

A PLACE OF ART AND CREATIVITY.

The Centre Pompidou, one of the world's first institutions in the field of modern and contemporary art, has been hosting every creative discipline for the last 40 years. Since its opening in 1977, it has established a powerful image of modernity, quality and cultural innovation throughout the world.

The Centre Pompidou houses an incomparable collection of over 120,000 works. At the crossroads of artistic disciplines, it produces over twenty temporary exhibitions each year, and also lays on dance and theatre shows, performances, films and debates. These programmes are supported by some of the largest audiences in modern and contemporary art.

Each year, their boldness and singularity attract an increasingly large public in quest of artistic discovery and stimulation, eager to seek out well-known works and new experiences alike.

The Centre Pompidou has constantly upheld its original commitment to democratise art, and is a popular venue that seeks to appeal to ever more visitors through its programmes and projects. In particular, it is a pioneer in mediation for younger audiences.

Today, the Centre Pompidou has offshoots in Metz and Málaga, and is continuing its international development with projects in Brussels and Shanghai.

Designed by Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers, this bold and striking building, an iconic piece of 20th-century architecture, is loved and known all over the world. Each year, over three million visitors flock to see its collections and exhibitions.

## ABOUT NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE

National Gallery Singapore is a visual arts institution which oversees the largest public collection of modern art in Singapore and Southeast Asia. Situated in the heart of the Civic District, the Gallery is housed in two national monuments—City Hall and former Supreme Court—that have been beautifully restored and transformed into this exciting venue.

Reflecting Singapore's unique heritage and geographical location, the Gallery features Singapore and Southeast Asian art from Singapore's National Collection in its long-term and special exhibitions. The Gallery also works with international museums to jointly present Southeast Asian art in the global context, positioning Singapore as a regional and international hub for the visual arts.

In 2016, the Gallery won the awards for "Best Attraction Experience", "Breakthrough Contribution to Tourism" and "Best Customer Service (Attractions)" at the prestigious Singapore Tourism Awards for its role in adding to the vibrancy of Singapore's tourism landscape.



# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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**Opening hours**  
Exhibition open every day  
from 11 am to 9 pm  
except on Tuesday

**Price**  
€14  
concessions: €11  
Valid the same day for  
the musée national d'art moderne  
and all exhibitions  
Free admission for members  
of the Centre Pompidou  
(holders of the annual pass)

You can find the entire programme  
on [www.centrepompidou.fr](http://www.centrepompidou.fr)

## AT THE SAME TIME AT THE CENTRE

**MUSÉE EN ŒUVRE(S)**  
**NEW VISIT CIRCUIT OF THE MUSEUM  
AND A NEW DISPLAY FOR THE  
CONTEMPORARY COLLECTIONS**  
Starting from 20 september 2017  
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**CHAGALL, LISSITZKY, MALEVITCH**  
**L'AVANT-GARDE RUSSE À VITEBSK  
(1918-1922)**  
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Moderne of Centre Pompidou,  
Research and Globalization Department

**Shabbir Hussain Mustafa,**  
Senior Curator at National Gallery  
Singapore

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