

**光宗
耀祖** **Light and
Brilliance**

*A public exhibition in honour of
the late founding father of Singapore,
Mr. Lee Kuan Yew*

y/x

About the exhibition

The given name of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, 李光耀, means “light and brightness” and “bringing great glory to one’s ancestors”. The late Mr. Lee has not only brought glory to his ancestors but also to Singapore, casting the brightest of lights over Singapore during his years as our leader and even posthumously. Mr. Lee’s brilliance as a most extraordinary man with intelligence, integrity, vision, industriousness, and determination of the highest order wins unanimous global admiration.

This is a show for all viewers to pay tribute to Mr. Lee and appreciate and reflect upon his life’s dedication to Singapore, as well as the legacy and heirloom of the brilliant nation he left us with.

A project 5 years in the making, this exhibition was seeded by the Chinese idiom “光宗耀祖”. Y/X drew inspirations from our founding father’s achievements and ideologies and developed his ideas and works to celebrate the exceptional vision and life of our most committed and extraordinary leader, without whom, in the artist’s words: “Singapore would definitely not be what it is today.”

The artist would like to dedicate this exhibition to his personal hero Mr. Lee and invite all likeminded members of the community to partake in the exhibition by reflecting upon Mr. Lee’s life and contributions to Singapore. The exhibition space has been specially designed to evoke a sense of the outdoors and commemoration.

Mr. Lee’s contributions and sacrifices towards building the solid foundation of Singapore has resulted in our thriving economy from which a cultural and creative society, of which the artist is proud to be a part of, has sprung forth.

There is a strong parallel between the success of Singapore and Mr. Lee’s personal realization of his ancestor’s aspirations from his given Chinese name “光耀”. Mr. Lee has certainly brought the highest honour to his family and ancestors by creating a magical Singapore. His legacy lives on in all Singaporeans today who experience on a daily basis the safety, security and comforts of a first world country where equal opportunities abound for all citizens and residents, permanent or transient, regardless of race or religion.

Singapore is in all senses “an unlikely nation that shines”, and there is no denying that Mr. Lee’s light and brilliance is what created the miracle of this shining little red dot we call home today. Through this exhibition, Y/X hopes that he has succeeded in creating a series of images that amalgamates Mr. Lee’s brilliance and ideologies that live and thrive within the social fabric and collective psyche of Singapore. The artist further wishes that our founding father’s teachings and ideologies may be more ingrained in each visitor and a new thread of brilliant Mr. Lee-inspired Singapore DNA takes root in all our hearts and minds.



光宗耀祖 (Light and Brilliance) - 2014 / 2015

光宗耀祖 (Light and Brilliance)

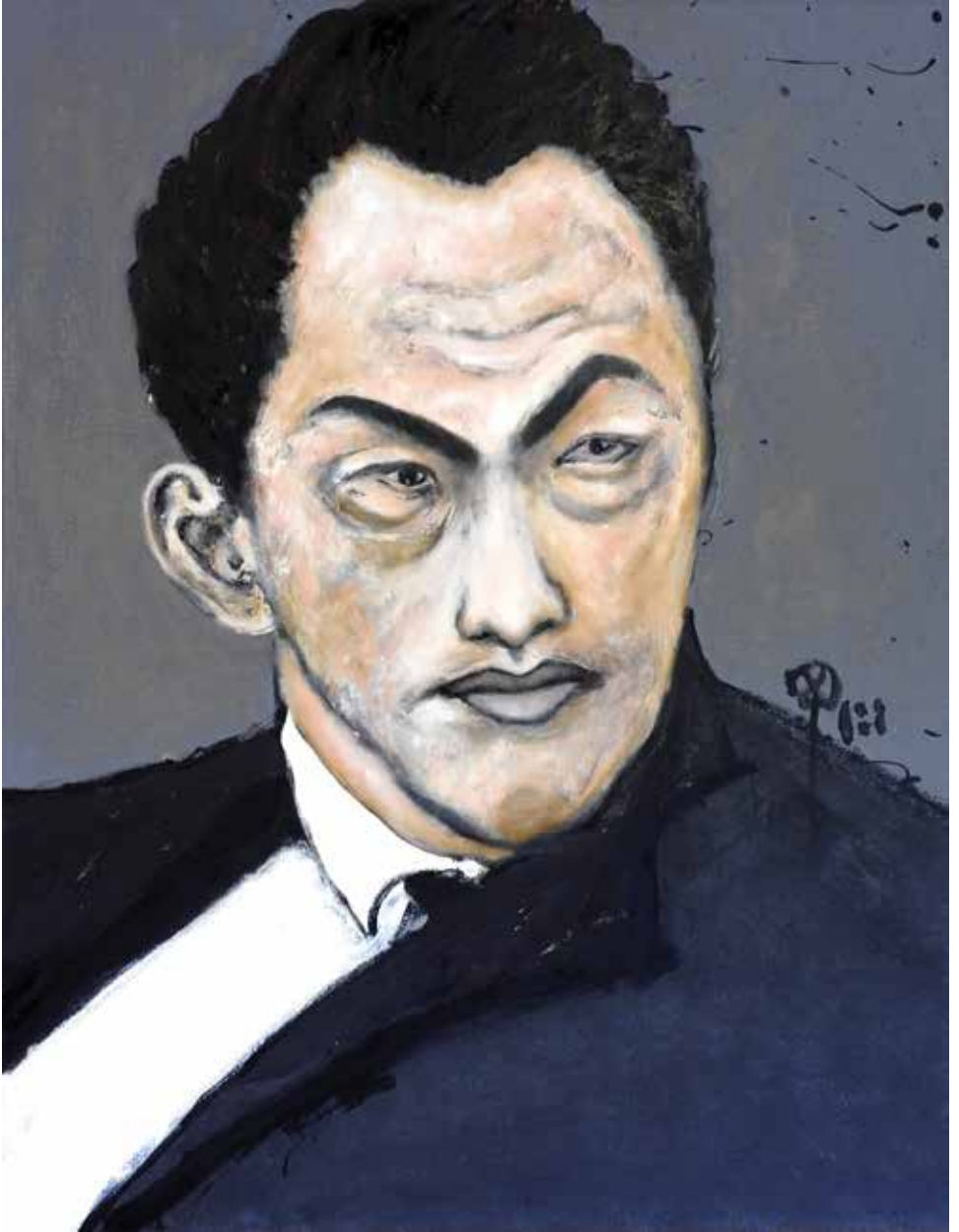
2014 - 2015

Oil and paint on canvas and wood

360cm x 410cm x 7.5cm

The work has been designed as an installation and presented as a free standing large open book with the painting on the left "page" and hieroglyphs of "光宗耀祖" designed by the artist on the right "page". The use of a new hieroglyphics suggests a new language that is unique to Singapore and the birth of a new culture, social fabric and ideology. The open book exhibition format symbolizes the most significant and important chapter of Singapore's social history where a hero stood out and led the nation towards brilliance amidst a challenging environment with little resources other than a steely will, clear and bold vision and a mindset of ever-readiness to face challenges and overcome them.

The image embodies all the qualities of Mr. Lee as a visionary and our Superman hero who led the nation to its success today, while continuing to provide guidance and directions for Singapore through the culture he has instilled within the Singapore DNA of incorruptibility and effectiveness. This mindset of always being prepared for the worse and being vigilant to dangers that can displace our collective success in the midst of a seismic world is a key teaching of Mr. Lee.



Man of Steel - 2014

Man of Steel

2014

Oil and paint on canvas

130cm x 100cm

This work strives to bring out the inner qualities of Mr. Lee through a representative portrait of him adapted from his picture book "A Life in Pictures" and focuses especially on his steely will and unyielding focus to lead Singapore to success.

Mr. Lee's willpower, tenacity, and strength to follow through difficult decisions in the interest of Singapore is truly admirable and certainly helped him realize his visions for our country. Our founding father is indeed a Man of Steel, mentally and spiritually.



The Willing Spirit of a Worthy Leader - 2014

The Willing Spirit of a Worthy Leader

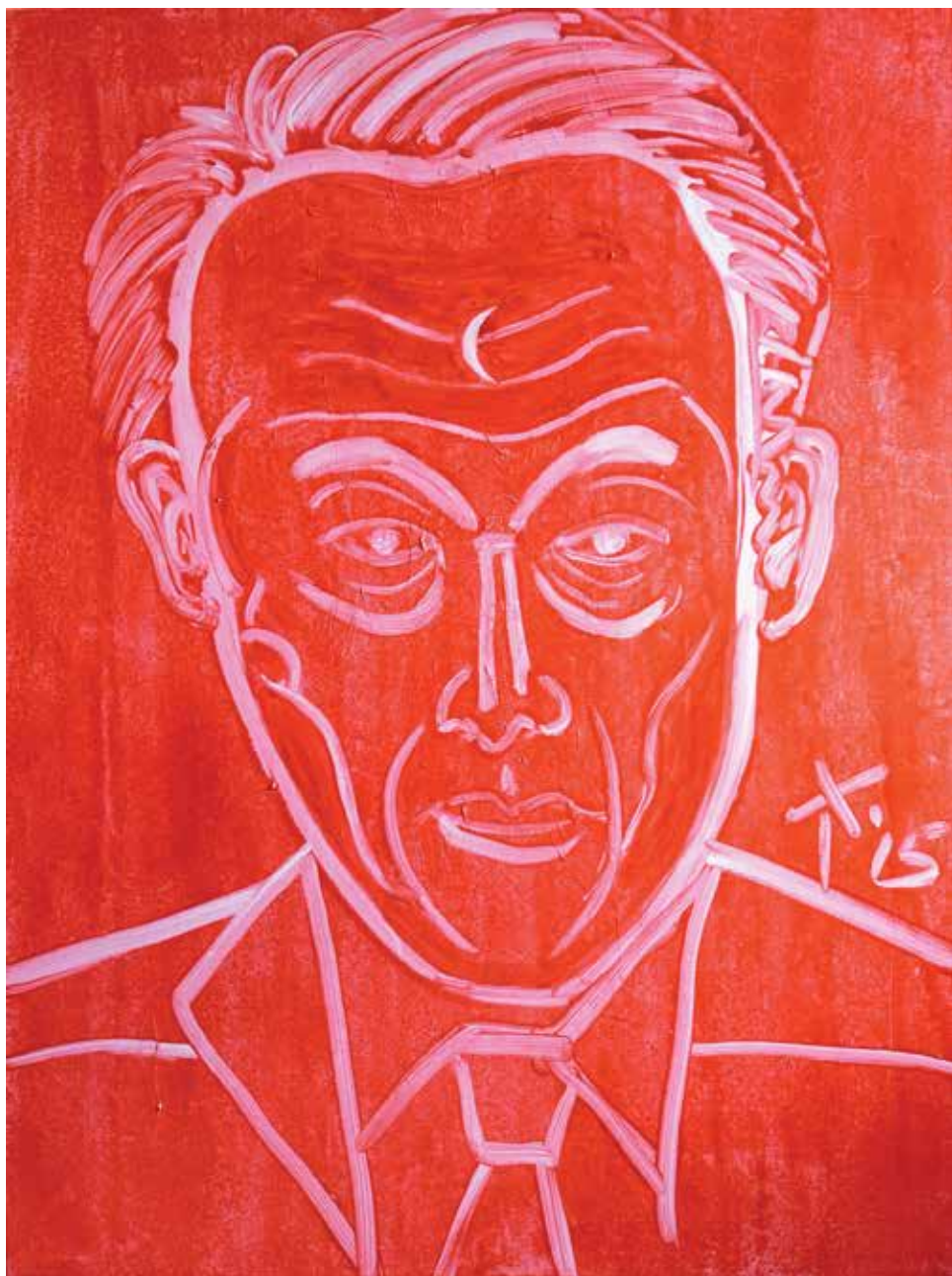
2014

Oil and paint on canvas

130cm x 100cm

How do you capture the essence of a person's spirit in painting?

In this work, the focus is not on representation but on the abstract of what the eyes cannot see but the heart may feel. Mr. Lee is a charismatic and powerful public speaker and this work aims to capture the strength of his spirit when he made all his speeches. When Mr. Lee spoke, you could sense his sincerity and his heart for the country. He is our worthy leader with the most willing spirit of sacrifice in the building of our nation.



Incorruptibility and The Rule of Law (公正清廉, 铁面无私) - 2015

Incorruptibility and The Rule of Law (公正清廉，铁面无私)

2015

Paint on canvas

130cm x 100cm

A painting executed in the style of a wood-cut print of a stern and firm looking Mr. Lee serves to convey his incorruptibility and his belief in the rule of law where no one is above it and every citizen is treated fairly under the same legal system.

The crescent moon on his forehead draws parallel to the Chinese historical figure Justice Bao (包拯) who was famed for his impartiality and commitment to justice.

The image serves to remind all of us the importance and value of a government that is incorruptible and a culture where corruptness is scorned.



英雄有泪不轻弹 (A Hero Tears) - 2014

英雄有泪不轻弹 (A Hero Tears)

2014

Paint on canvas

100cm x 130cm

This image captures one of the most significant moments in the history of Singapore and the long political career of Mr. Lee. The artwork is distilled from the familiar video footage when Mr. Lee broke down in tears while he announced the separation of Singapore from Malaysia on national TV in 1965. The painting was executed in the simplest of strokes, colours, and composition, yet it emotes.

It was a moving moment then. Even today, the visual still carries its full emotional weight. In Mr. Lee's book "Hard Truths to Keep Singapore Going", he shared that his anguish and sadness stemmed not just from his worries about the future of Singapore but also the hard fact that he had to leave the people in Malaysia who placed their faith in him behind. Mr. Lee's sincerity and pureness of heart continues to move and inspire the artist and generations to come.



Architect of The Garden City (前人种树, 后人乘凉) - 2015

Architect of The Garden City (前人种树，后人乘凉)

2015

Paint on canvas

130cm x 100cm

Mr. Lee believed that a bustling urban city could also be a garden city at the same time, and set the perfect example by planting a tree every year during his tenure as Singapore's Prime Minister. One tree at a time, Singapore has become truly a garden city that now aspires towards being a city in a garden.

It is rare to find another city in the world that has this amount of focus on tree planting and maintenance and this is the legacy left behind by Mr. Lee.

This work captures a stylized Mr. Lee in his prime years planting a young tree. What our forefathers toiled on, the current and future generations get to enjoy the fruits of their labour, much like in the Chinese saying: “前人种树，后人乘凉”.



Every Drop Counts - 2015

Every Drop Counts (一滴都不能少)

2015

Paint on canvas

190cm x 135cm

The image of Mr. Lee holding an umbrella upside down amidst a rainy background tells much about the “pragmatic creativity” the artist sees in Mr. Lee; a trait of his that has been much overlooked.

Mr. Lee was not just a pragmatic and intelligent problem solver. He often consulted experts, learned by reading up on subject matters related to an issue and explored all options before devising his plans. This is a form of creativity that is hard earned and rooted in reality and pragmatism. And due to Mr. Lee's foresight and pragmatic creativity, we are largely self-sustainable in providing clean water, the most critical resource, for every Singaporean today.