

**OPENING REMARKS BY DR LEE BOON YANG  
MINISTER FOR INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS  
AT THE PRESIDENT'S DESIGN AWARD  
ON MONDAY, 1 DECEMBER 2008, AT 6:45PM  
AT LASALLE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS**

His Excellency, President S.R. Nathan;

Minister for National Development, Mr Mah Bow Tan;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Evening.

1 It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the President's Design Award Ceremony 2008. Mr President, thank you for honouring us with your presence to present the President's Design Awards to outstanding designers and designs.

**Growing Momentum in Design Industry**

2 The design sector in Singapore has continued to do well in the past five years. From 2003 to 2007, it enjoyed Compound Annual Growth Rate of 6.1%. It is contributing 1.2 per cent to the GDP and provides 1.4 per cent of jobs. While these statistics may not sound dramatic, what is more important is the potential for the design sector to support Singapore's transformation into a creative and innovation-led economy.

3 Singapore design has grown organically and designers have creatively cut across the traditional design disciplines. They are expanding their design horizon through multi-disciplinary collaborations to create new value. For example, we have fashion designers like Ben Wu working with product designers like Jason Ong on a joint project exhibited at the Milan Fair this year; and architects like DP Architects working with interior designers like Colin Seah on the New Majestic Hotel. Such collaborations have resulted in distinctive and outstanding designs that have

garnered attention in Beijing, London, Milan, Seoul and Venice.

4 Internationally, Singapore has been moving up the Design Competitiveness Ranking, from 22<sup>nd</sup> position in 2002, to 16<sup>th</sup> in 2005 and the latest to 15<sup>th</sup> in 2007. Singapore design and designers have also gained wider international recognition. In 2007 alone, they collectively received more than 80 awards which is 57 per cent more than in the year 2000. Singapore design businesses such as WOHA, Eubiq and Air Division have also achieved commercial success in international markets with their creative and exciting designs.

5 At home, the 2007 National Design Awareness Study showed that our enterprises and the general public are also becoming more design-aware and savvy. The awareness index had increased from 4.53 in 2006 to 5.13 in 2007, indicating that from the business and consumer points of view, design is fast emerging as a defining factor.

### **Initiatives to Develop Professional Design Capabilities**

6 Unfortunately Singapore like many other countries is feeling the impact of the global financial and banking crisis. We expect the economy to slow down next year. The design sector cannot be insulated from such adverse impact. Designers and design companies must reformulate their strategies to weather this crisis.

7 To help the design sector ride through this downturn and to be in a better position for the upturn, the government is implementing additional programmes for the sector.

8 Just last week, I launched the “Design for Enterprises Programme” jointly initiated by DesignSingapore, IE Singapore and Spring Singapore. This is a \$12 million programme over three years to help enterprises to tap design as a business catalyst and to enhance their competitiveness.

9 This evening, I am pleased to announce the enhanced “Design Capability Development Programme”. This is a programme by DSG to assist designers, design

practices and design industry associations. DSG will earmark \$10 million over the next two years, to provide grants and co-funding for mentorship, overseas promotion, participation in competitions and awards, scholarship and other capability development schemes. A part of this fund will also be used to support Design R&D on improving the user interface of products in the Education, Healthcare and Manufacturing sectors.

10 The enhanced programme will also support designers seeking to achieve international exposure for their works, gain work experience or plug into global design networks. Support can be in the form of overseas internships, work attachments, workshops and school exchanges. Another component is targeted at helping practising designers to upgrade their skills and design management expertise through seminars, training courses and workshops. DesignSingapore will also provide design enterprises with support to engage renowned designers to conduct in-house training for their staff, to keep them abreast of the newest design developments, capabilities, technologies and even the latest thinking and concepts in design management and entrepreneurship.

11 We are confident that the design sector has the creativity, determination and resourcefulness to navigate the stormy waters ahead of us. Our programmes are there to provide an additional pair of helping hands. DSG looks forward to working closely with design practitioners to tackle the downturn. Now is the time to prepare for the opportunities which will come with the recovery.

12 We are also confident that Singapore is well-positioned to become a key international design hub. Our culturally-diverse design community will provide us with unique design perspectives. Today we have an opportunity to grow the design sector by harnessing the creativity of all our designers and leveraging on government's sustained encouragement and support for this business.

13 The recognition accorded by the President's Design Awards is an important element in our national strategy to become a design hub. I urge all Singapore designers, including the recipients of the 2008 President's Design Award to continue your creative journey to develop new value, offer compelling and desirable user

experiences and explore every opportunity for new businesses.

### **President's Design Award**

14 This evening, we are delighted to recognise and commend three Designers of the Year and seven Designs of the Year by conferring upon them the President's Design Award. Tonight's presentation is testament to the quality of Singapore design and design talent across the various design disciplines - from architecture and urban design, to furniture, graphic, industrial, interior and landscape design.

15 I would like to congratulate all the recipients of this year's President's Design Award. Your bold and innovative designs have pushed the boundaries and set new benchmarks for your peers. Your works have unambiguously demonstrated the strategic role that design plays in everyday life and will inspire fellow designers to strive for creative excellence. Your works will also play a key role in shaping the perception of people on design, enhance the quality of life for consumers and raise Singapore's standing as a globally attractive and competitive city.

### **Conclusion**

15 In conclusion, I would like to thank Mr President for your strong personal encouragement and support for the design sector. I also like to thank all the members of the Jury Panels for working so hard to scrutinise the many nominations to come up with the Award winners. I would like to thank the Steering Committee for their continued support in the recognition of Singapore design. I must also thank our valued partner, the Urban Redevelopment Authority, for their strong support to recognise design excellence. Last but not least, I want to commend all the designers and designs which were nominated but did not win awards. Being nominated is a significant recognition of the quality of your work and something for you to be proud of. I hope it will spur you to be even more creative and we look forward to welcoming you back in the future as an Award winner.

16 With that, I wish everyone a wonderful evening as we celebrate the best in

Singapore design.

Thank you.