



# **MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Very Special Arts Singapore partners NAFA to launch certificate for artists with disabilities**

**14 June 2018**

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Very Special Arts Singapore (VSA), a charity committed to offering access and opportunities for people with disabilities through the arts, tonight marked its 25th anniversary by inking a partnership agreement with Singapore's pioneer arts institution, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA). The milestone partnership will see the launch of a top-up certificate in Visual Arts conferred by NAFA Centre for Lifelong Education, allowing artists-in-training with disabilities to get one step closer to becoming career artists.

Aspiring artists who have gone through visual arts training for at least four years at VSA and completed VSA's VOICES programme would be able to apply for the top-up Certificate in Visual Arts. The 20-week long certification programme comprises a curriculum that will focus on sharpening conceptualisation and time management skills, and will see participants complete two projects that will be evaluated by a team of assessors. Each edition of the programme will train between six to eight students, with the inaugural edition kicking off in October 2018. The participants, who will be co-selected by VSA and NAFA in September this year, are artists-in-training who display a high level of artistic and conceptualisation skill, as well as an ability to work independently.

Says Ms. Maureen Goh, Executive Director of VSA: "It is a great honour to partner with NAFA, an institution highly regarded for its quality curriculum and experienced educators. The comprehensive top-up certification programme offers artists with special needs an opportunity to improve their career prospects, and cements the fact that despite their special needs, these artists can produce quality, conceptual works within a given timeline. As VSA celebrates its 25th anniversary, this programme marks a key milestone, and signals positive and continuing support for creating opportunities for artists with disabilities to tell their own unique, and untold stories through the arts."

Commenting on the programme, Mr. Khor Kok Wah, NAFA's Vice President (Industry and Projects) and Dean of its Centre for Lifelong Education, says, "Centre for Lifelong Education at NAFA is pleased to work together with VSA to curate a top-up course leading to certification in the visual arts for VSA's artists-in-training. The programme seeks to further enhance what these artistic talents have been learning



through the serious training and mentorship at VSA, and achieving a certificate would be an endorsement of their talent and hard work. We wish students attending the course success in all their aspirations and endeavours, artistic or otherwise.”

The Letter of Collaboration was signed tonight by VSA Executive Director, Ms Maureen Goh and NAFA’s Dean, Centre for Lifelong Education, Mr Khor Kok Wah, in the presence of Guest-of-Honour, Ms. Linda de Mello, Director (Sector Development, Visual Arts), National Arts Council. Ms de Mello said, “We would like to congratulate VSA and NAFA on the launch of the Visual Art certification programme to nurture the skills of aspiring artists with disabilities. Over the years, we have witnessed an encouraging shift in the arts scene towards embracing diversity amongst us. It is heartening to see our arts institution foster greater inclusivity through this programme.”

The signing ceremony took place at the launch of VSA’s annual visual art exhibition by VOICES artists-in-training and student-artists, *Rhythm and Water* – VOICES Annual Exhibition 2018. The exhibition is supported by the National Arts Council and venue partner The Arts House. It is open to the public and will run from 14 to 19 June 2018 at The Arts House, Gallery 2. (See Annex A for exhibition details)

Please refer to Annex A for more information about *Rhythm and Water*.

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### **About Very Special Arts Singapore**

Very Special Arts Singapore Ltd (VSA) is a registered charity under National Council of Social Service in Singapore. VSA Singapore is also affiliated to VSA International in the United States. Founded by Singapore’s Ambassador-at-large, Professor Tommy Koh, on 27 September 1993, the mission of VSA is to create and provide access and opportunities for people with disabilities through the arts. To achieve this, VSA promotes the educational, social, rehabilitative and therapeutic benefits of visual, performing and literary arts. In March 2018, VSA Singapore produced and presented the inaugural Asia-Pacific performing arts festival, True Colours, which featured disabled dancers and musicians from Asia Pacific and invited performers from other parts of the world and Singapore.



## About Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts

Established in 1938, the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) is Singapore's pioneer arts institution. The Academy is known for its rigorous and high-quality curriculum, innovative and practitioners-led teaching approach, diverse artistic creations and community outreach. NAFA has nurtured 13 recipients of the Cultural Medallion – Singapore's highest accolade bestowed on art practitioners who have significantly impacted arts and culture. Another 14 alumni have been presented the Young Artist Award. Many of the Academy's alumni have gone on to make their mark in the professional arts scene in Singapore and abroad.

The Academy offers full-time diploma and degree programmes across three schools: the School of Art and Design (fine art, design and media, fashion studies and 3D design), the School of Music and the School of Arts Management, Dance and Theatre. Diploma courses are aligned with the degree courses offered in partnership with reputable universities in the United Kingdom.

NAFA's courses are designed and delivered by experienced art educators and leading industry practitioners, NAFA's academic schools regularly review and refine their curriculum to reflect the changing needs of the industry.

Since 1999, NAFA has received polytechnic-level funding from Singapore's Ministry of Education. In 2011, NAFA became the first comprehensive arts education institution in Singapore to be awarded the four-year EduTrust certificate from the Council for Private Education. It received its second four-year certification in 2015.

## Annex A

Very Special Arts Singapore (VSA) is proud to be present *Rhythm and Water*, the 2018 edition of the annual Voices Art Exhibition, from 14–19 June at The Arts House (Gallery 2). *Rhythm and Water* features 28-30 works by artists-in-training and student artists of VSA's VOICES (Visual Art) programme. The VOICES programme nurtures the artistic ability and talent of persons with special needs with the aim of developing them into visual artists, craftsmen or performing artists.

Guided by the lines of a poem, student-artists and artists-in-training created works that best represent the idea of "Rhythm" and "Water". The process of art making can serve to calm these young artists (with special needs and disabilities) and allow them to focus on their thoughts. As such, the artists were encouraged to express their inner, and often hidden, serenity selves through their works, offering audiences an opportunity to experience a different side of them.