



Media Release

Benesse Prize Makes Asian Debut at Singapore Biennale 2016

The Singapore Art Museum and Benesse Holdings, Inc. partner to spotlight and award Asian artists in the 11th edition of the Benesse Prize

Singapore, Naoshima, 4 October 2016 – Singapore Art Museum (SAM) and Benesse Holdings, Inc. (Benesse) today announce their collaboration on the inaugural Asian edition of the Benesse Prize. Organised in conjunction with Singapore Biennale 2016 (SB2016), the 11th edition of Benesse Prize will award an outstanding SB2016 artist whose art practice embodies an experimental and critical spirit, and for his/her potential to develop a reflection around the theme of “Benesse” (Well-Being). This will be the first time that the Benesse Prize, awarded at the Venice Biennale for the last ten editions, is presented in Asia. The winner will receive a commission to create a work to be exhibited at Benesse Art Site Naoshima and a cash prize of JPY 3,000,000 from Benesse. The shortlisted artists will be announced at the opening of the Singapore Biennale, and the award presentation will take place during Singapore Art Week 2017.

Established at the Venice Biennale in 1995, the Benesse Prize aims to recognise the artistic activities of an outstanding artist (or artist collective) while supporting the winner’s future artistic practice. Renowned Chinese artist Cai Guo Qiang was the first recipient of the Benesse Prize, and has subsequently realised a permanent site-specific work at Benesse Art Site Naoshima. Past Benesse Prize recipients also include Olafur Eliasson, Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller and Rirkrit Tiravanija, to name a few. Cardiff and Miller unveiled their site-specific work *Dreaming Naoshima* in March 2016 in one of the guestrooms at the Benesse House hotel on Naoshima island, and the work of the 10th Benesse Prize winner Anri Sala, a site-specific installation in an old house by the sea will be shown from October 8th this year on Teshima island.

The 11th Benesse Prize is open to all artists whose artworks are being exhibited at SB2016. The prize seeks to recognize Asian artists, whose bodies of work demonstrate the potential to engage with some of the key underlying concepts explored at Benesse Art Site Naoshima. The idea of “Using what exists to create what is to be” lies at the core of the art site, implying that shortlisted artists should have the capacity to dialogue with the nature, history and culture of the region or envision alternatives to current societal trends, exploring the archipelago’s memories and narratives and participating in the revitalization of the local communities through their artistic practices.

An international jury has been jointly appointed by SAM and Benesse to select the shortlisted artists of the 11th Benesse Prize. The final winner, to be announced in January 2017, will be chosen by Benesse Holdings and Fukutake Foundation.

The jury consists of (in alphabetical order):

- **Luckana Kunavichayanont**, Director, Bangkok Art and Culture Centre
- **Dr. Susie Lingham**, Creative Director, Singapore Biennale 2016
- **Akiko Miki**, International Artistic Director, Benesse Art Site Naoshima; Co-Director, Yokohama Triennale 2017
- **Fumio Nanjo**, Director, Mori Art Museum
- **Suhanya Raffel**, Executive Director, M+

Ms. Joyce Toh, Curatorial Co-Head, SAM, says, "Singapore Art Museum has always featured and championed contemporary artists from Southeast Asia and wider Asia, and the art of this region took on special focus when the Museum organized the past two editions of the Singapore Biennale. Thus, we are delighted to collaborate closely with Benesse Holdings, Inc. to present the inaugural Asian edition of the prestigious Benesse Prize at the Singapore Biennale, as the Art Prize recognises the rich and exciting artistic developments of this region, as well as offering the winning artist an important opportunity to further his or her practice."

Ms. Akiko Miki, International Artistic Director, Benesse Art Site Naoshima, says, "During the two decades since the establishment of the Benesse Prize in 1995, the contemporary art scene in Asia became much more active and diversified. Benesse Art Site Naoshima has been working with Asian artists for different projects to date, and we are delighted that with this shift to Asia and through our collaboration with the Singapore Biennale we are able to further deepen our involvement in the development of contemporary art in Asia, as well as to enhance interregional exchanges and networks in the field. Recognizing Singapore Art Museum's unique focus on Southeast Asian contemporary art, we hope that the Benesse Prize will contribute to the understanding and development of contemporary art in Asia by offering a plurality of perspectives."

SB2016 will be anchored at the Singapore Art Museum on Bras Basah Road and Queen Street. Venues include Singapore Art Museum and 8Q at SAM, Asian Civilisations Museum, de Sautio Gallery at SMU, National Museum of Singapore, Stamford Green, The Old Parliament House, and The Peranakan Museum. Taking place from 27 October 2016 to 26 February 2017, the four-month long international contemporary art exhibition is organised by SAM and commissioned by the National Arts Council of Singapore.

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About the Singapore Biennale

The Singapore Biennale was established in 2006 as the country's pre-eminent platform for international dialogue in contemporary art. It places Singapore's artists within a global context, and fosters productive collaborations with the international arts community. In this way, the Biennale provides new opportunities for local visual artists, arts organisations and businesses. It further cultivates deeper public engagement with contemporary visual arts through a four-month exhibition, and its accompanying public engagement and education programmes that include artist and curator talks and tours, as well as school visits and workshops. It complements achievements in other areas of arts and culture, collectively enhancing Singapore's international profile as a vibrant city in which to live, work and play. The 2006 and 2008 editions of the Biennale were organised by the National Arts Council. As with the 2011 and 2013 editions, Singapore Biennale 2016 is organised by the Singapore Art Museum, and supported by the National Arts Council.

To learn more, visit www.singaporeartmuseum.sg/SingaporeBiennale

About the Singapore Art Museum

The Singapore Art Museum (SAM) is a contemporary art museum which focuses on art-making and art thinking in Singapore, Southeast Asia and Asia, encompassing a worldwide perspective on contemporary art practice. SAM advocates and makes accessible interdisciplinary contemporary art through research-led and evolving curatorial practice. Since it opened in January 1996, SAM has built up one of the most important collections of contemporary art from the region. It seeks to seed and nourish a stimulating and creative space in Singapore through exhibitions and public programmes, and to deepen every visitor's experience. These include outreach and education, research and publications, as well as cross-disciplinary residencies and exchanges.

SAM occupies two buildings: the old St Joseph's Institution on Bras Basah Road, built in 1855 and now a National Monument; and SAM at 8Q, a conservation building across the road on Queen Street that was the old Catholic High.

In 2011, SAM was the venue organiser of the Singapore Biennale, becoming the main organiser in 2013 and 2016. SAM was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee on 13 November 2013, operating under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. To learn more, visit www.singaporeartmuseum.sg

About the National Arts Council, Singapore

The National Arts Council champions the arts in Singapore. By nurturing creative excellence and supporting broad audience engagement, we want to develop a distinctive global city for the arts. With a nod to tradition and an eye to the future, we cultivate accomplished artists and vibrant companies. Our support for the arts is comprehensive – from grants and partnerships to industry facilitation and arts housing. The Council welcomes greater private and corporate giving to and through the arts so that together we can make the arts an integral part of everyone's lives. For more information on the Council's mission and plans, please visit www.nac.gov.sg

About Benesse Art Site Naoshima

Benesse Art Site Naoshima is the collective name for all art-related activities conducted by Benesse Holdings, Inc. and Fukutake Foundation on the islands of Naoshima and Teshima in Kagawa Prefecture and on Inujima island in Okayama Prefecture. Our fundamental aim is to create significant spaces by bringing contemporary art and architecture in resonance with the pristine nature of the Seto Inland Sea, a landscape with a rich cultural and historical fabric. Through contacts with art and nature, sceneries and inhabitants of the Seto Inland Sea region, we seek to inspire visitors to reflect on the meaning of Benesse's motto - Well-Being. In all our ongoing activities, we are committed to foster a relationship of mutual growth between art and the region, aiming to make a positive contribution to the local communities. To learn more, visit www.benesse-artsite.jp/en/

About Benesse Holdings, Inc.

Guided by the corporate philosophy, "Benesse = Well-Being", the Benesse Group conducts business in the fields of education, language/global leadership training, lifestyles, and senior/nursing care, helping every customer to nurture their desire to learn and to solve problems throughout their lives. Group companies include Benesse Corporation which runs *Shinkenzenmi*: correspondence courses for children from preschool to high-school ages, Shinken Simulated Exams and student pocketbooks ; Benesse Style Care Co., Ltd., Japan's leading operator of senior and nursing homes; and *Berlitz*, the world's largest language school. To learn more, visit www.benesse-hd.co.jp/en/

About the Benesse Prize

The Benesse Prize was established in 1995 on the occasion of the TransCulture exhibition, organized by Japan Foundation and the Fukutake Science and Culture Foundation (since 2012, Fukutake Foundation) with the sponsorship of Benesse Corporation and under the patronage of the 46th Venice Biennale. The Benesse Prize at the Venice Biennale was inspired by the idea of creating a link between Venice and Naoshima, two very different places that are united by a similar environment, being both surrounded by water and aiming to promote visual arts connecting local and global contexts.

Two decades after its inaugural edition, the Prize now moves to Asia, with the aim of strengthening ties with the continent in which Benesse is rooted, and acknowledging the drastic changes in the circumstances and environment defining contemporary art production today.

Past Benesse Prize Winners (awarded at the 46th to 55th editions of the Venice Biennale)

1st Benesse Prize (1995):	Cai Guo-Qiang (China)
2nd Benesse Prize (1997):	Alexandros Psychoulis (Greece)*
3rd Benesse Prize (1999):	Olafur Eliasson (Iceland / Denmark)
4th Benesse Prize (2001):	Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller (Canada)
5th Benesse Prize (2003):	Rirkrit Tiravanija (Thailand)
6th Benesse Prize (2005):	Tacita Dean (UK)
7th Benesse Prize (2007):	Adel Abdessemed (France, Algeria)
8th Benesse Prize (2009):	Hans-Peter Feldmann (Germany)
9th Benesse Prize (2011):	Adrian Villar Rojas (Argentina)
10th Benesse Prize (2013):	Anri Sala (Albania, France)

**selected by the Venice Biennale official jury*

Message from Soichiro Fukutake

President, Benesse Art Site Naoshima / Honorary Adviser, Benesse Holdings, Inc.

“Imagining, fostering and developing Benesse Art Site Naoshima has been a lifelong endeavor, which I have conducted hand in hand with the business expansion of Benesse Holdings over the years.

The region in which our art project unfolds, despite being designated as Japan's first national park and a repository of some of the country's most beautiful landscapes, was devastated by the negative consequences of the modernization and industrialization of Japan. The pioneering use and transformative power of contemporary art explored here to revitalize an entire region and bring happiness to its senior inhabitants is now widely referred to as the *Naoshima Method*.

Believing in the universality of our ideas, we launched the Benesse Prize in 1995, at an early stage of our activities, to engage with promising artists and as a stepping stone of our presence on a global scale. With this shift from Venice to Singapore 20 years after the Prize's inception, we celebrate the relationships built between Benesse Art Site Naoshima and the world, and ambition to create new ties with countries throughout Asia, hoping for an even broader transmission of our achievements.”