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First-ever online Book Illustrators Gallery (BIG) launches in June Initiative of AFCC Digital

Singapore, 3rd June 2020 – While most of us are still stuck at home, one can now take off and travel around Asia virtually through the first-ever online Book Illustrators Gallery (BIG)! Featuring close to 200 illustrations from 13 Asian countries, BIG invites visitors to explore new cultures and the best of picture book illustrations from around Asia.

Launching on 3 June, the BIG exhibition is organised as part of AFCC Digital, an initiative under the Asian Festival of Children's Content (AFCC). AFCC goes fully digital this year as the festival explores the theme of "Voyages", where we traverse physical boundaries and seek new avenues of sharing Asian stories for children and young adults.

BIG has been a popular feature at the annual AFCC, where the exhibition is usually held at the National Library. Presented in a digital format for the first time, the online exhibition will be larger and more extensive than its previous editions. BIG showcases nearly 200 illustrations by more than 80 illustrators from around Asia, which include past AFCC Countries of Focus such as China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Myanmar as well as Singapore. The

works were selected from more than 350 submissions and can be viewed on afcc.com.sg.

Says William Phuan, Executive Director of the Singapore Book Council: “We are very excited to launch the digital version of BIG, as part of our efforts to leverage digital technology to take AFCC online. Due to the pandemic, we had to postpone AFCC to October and quickly find ways to adapt our programmes for the digital space. This shift opened up new possibilities and we are embracing it to explore new avenues and still engage the community, while reaching out to new audiences.”

Complementing the launch of BIG is the [BIG Roundtable](#), an online panel discussion on 6 June (2pm- 3.30pm) that features the guest curators from AFCC's past Countries of Focus. The speakers, include Carolina Ballester from the China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair; Michiko Matsukata and Fumiko Uejima from the Chihiro Art Museum's curation team, as well as Singaporean illustrators Darel Seow and Ben Lai from Illo Picto. The discussion, which will be streamed live on Facebook, will focus on highlights from the exhibition; illustration trends in Asia; and what constitutes a good book illustration.

Visit afcc.com.sg/big to explore the BIG 2020 exhibition. A directory of all the featured illustrators is also available in the online gallery.

For media related enquiries, please contact:

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About Singapore Book Council

The Singapore Book Council (SBC) is an independent charity with IPC status. Established in 1968 to support Singapore authors and literature, SBC aims to Build Our Imagine-nation by developing creativity, imagination, original thought and empathy. Our programmes focus on creative writing, reading, illustration, translation and storytelling. We are committed to developing a multicultural, diverse literary arts sector through our festivals, training workshops and courses, as well as book awards to recognise excellence.

Vision: International recognition for quality, diverse Singapore literature.

Mission: To develop, support and advocate a multicultural literary arts sector.

SBC is currently chaired by Ms Claire Chiang, co-founder of Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts.

The Book Council develops and advocates Singapore's books and literary arts scene by organising a variety of festivals, including the annual Asian Festival of Children's Content (AFCC); giving out prestigious awards such as the biennial national award Singapore Literature Prize; supporting community outreach through the #BuySingLit movement; and building professional capacity through our Academy programmes.

Because it all starts with a story.

SBC is supported by the National Arts Council of Singapore under the Major Company Scheme for the period from 2019 to 2021. For more information, please visit www.bookcouncil.sg.

About Asian Festival of Children's Content

The Asian Festival of Children's Content (AFCC), organised by the Singapore Book Council, is the leading festival in Asia focusing on children's books and stories and young adult (YA) fiction. Targeted at writers, illustrators, translators, publishers, parents, teachers and media producers, this one-of-a-kind festival offers a series of exciting panel discussions, workshops, lectures, masterclasses, pitching sessions, networking events and public activities promoting the creation and appreciation of quality children's literature and YA with a focus on Asian themes. Over the past 10 years, the AFCC has grown to become a key literary event in the region, attracting many local and international speakers, as well as thousands of delegates and participants.

AFCC will run online from 3-4 October.

For more information, please visit www.afcc.com.sg.

About Book Illustrators Gallery (BIG)

The Book Illustrators Gallery (BIG) is a key highlight of AFCC. The popular exhibition showcases a diverse selection of artworks from picture books, comics and graphic novels by illustrators and artists from Southeast Asia, Asia and of the Asian diaspora. For the first time, the 2020 edition of BIG will be presented entirely online and will feature artworks selected by guest curators from AFCC's former countries of focus, including China, Philippines, India, Japan, Indonesia and Singapore.

For more information, please visit

afcc.com.sg/big.

Annex A: BIG Roundtable

BIG COF Curators Roundtable: What Makes a Good Illustration?

Date: 6 June 2020

Time: 2pm-3.30pm (SGT)

Held on: [AFCC Facebook Live](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/events/299660984377487/>

The Book Illustrators Gallery (BIG) Roundtable brings together the guest curators from AFCC's past Countries of Focus where they will focus on highlights from the exhibition; illustration trends in Asia; and what constitutes a good book illustration. They will also share insights on how great illustrations help shape Asian children's content, and explore prospects that the industry can look forward to in these challenging times.

Annex B: Speakers at BIG Roundtable

1. Priya Kuriyan (India)

Priya Kuriyan is a children's book writer-illustrator, comics maker and chronic doodler. She has directed educational films for the Sesame street show (India) and the Children's Film Society of India (CFSI) and has illustrated numerous children's books for publishers like Tulika Books, Penguin, Scholastic and Hachette to name a few. She has contributed to Indian comics anthologies like *Pao*, *This Side That Side*, *Eat the Sky Drink the Ocean* and *First Hand 2* (an anthology of non-fiction comics). She collaborated with the writer Devapriya Roy on a graphic biography of Indira Gandhi for young adults published by Context, an imprint of Westland books. In 2019, she won the 'Big Little Book Award' instituted by the Parag initiative of Tata Trusts to recognize her contribution to children's literature in India. She lives and works in the city of Bangalore and in her spare time makes funny caricatures of its residents.

2. Mira Widhayati (Indonesia)

Mira Widhayati graduated from Bandung Institute of Technology's Visual Communication Design. As a freelance illustrator, her career started from illustrating short stories for children magazine, *Bobo*. Mira is a member of Kelompok Pencinca Bacaan Anak (Society for the Advancement of Children's Literature) and was sent to Bratislava in 2015 as one of Indonesia's representations for UNESCO-BIB Albin Brunovsky Workshop. Until now, she's still illustrating picture books and also finds joy in storytelling.

3. Carolina Ballester (Spain - China)

Carolina Ballester holds a MA in Political Science from the Madrid Complutense University and university degrees in Chinese and Arabic languages and cultures from the French National Institute of Oriental Studies (INALCO). After a few years working as a translator, she was appointed cultural attaché at the Consulate of Spain in Shanghai. Since 2013, she is international programme manager for the China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair. She leads the book fair publishers' fellowship programme and is in charge of inviting international children's writers and illustrators to take part in the fair's programmes. She organises the exhibitions, runs an illustration residence, collaborated in the organisation of the Bologna Illustration Exhibition tour in 2018 and acts as consultant for the Chen Bochui illustration exhibition and collection. She lives and works between Shanghai and Madrid, Spain.

4. Alfredo Santos (The Philippines)

Alfredo Santos is publishing manager for South East Asia of Room to Read, an international non-profit organization that promotes literacy and gender equality in education. He has conducted children's book author and illustrator workshops in the Philippines, China, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Honduras and a number of books developed in these workshops have won international book awards. He is also an award-winning writer and education specialist and holds a Master of Education degree from Harvard University.

5. Chihiro Art Museum Curation Team - Michiko Matsukata, Fumiko Uejima (Japan)

The curators of the Chihiro Art Museum (Tokyo and Azumino) work to promote the artistic value of picture books, diversity of culture and peace and happiness for children of the world. Artists featured in exhibitions curated include Shigeru Hatsuyama, Suekichi Akaba, Shaun Tan, Cho Eun Young. Besides preparing exhibitions which change four times per year, their work also includes writing book reviews, book reading, giving lectures and holding workshops for various audiences.

6. Illo Picto - Ben Lai, Darel Seow (Singapore)

Ben Lai is a multidisciplinary designer in the toy, publishing and entertainment industry, a picture bookmaker and an advocate of play. He draws inspiration from things that enable people to appreciate their relationships with our surroundings and people and he is always curious about how play can make a difference.

Darel Seow is a visual storyteller who illustrates the tales of the natural world through his unique brand of wry wit and whimsy. He believes in the draw of storytelling as a means of engagement, creating experiences that simultaneously excite and educate. Particularly interested in museums and culture, he has worked with art, cultural and educational institutions to encourage learning through the power of imagination and play.

The moderator is Dr Rhoda Myra Garces-Bacsal, Associate Professor (Special Education) at United Arab Emirates University.

Rhoda Myra Garces-Bacsal is an Associate Professor with the Special Education Department at the United Arab Emirates University where she currently serves as the Special Education Master's Program Coordinator, and is in charge of the International Collaboration initiatives for the College of Education. Prior to moving to the Middle East, she served as the Programme Leader of the Masters and Bachelor's Program in High Ability Studies and Gifted Education at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore where she was nominated for an Excellence in Teaching Commendation Award and a Long Service Award in 2019, a recipient of an Excellence in Teaching Commendation Award in 2012 and a Service Commendation Award in 2013. She was also selected by the International Youth Library in Munich as one of their International Fellows in 2016 and 2017. She served as Chair of the Programme Committee for the Asian Children's Writers and Illustrators Conference of the Asian Festival of Children's Content held annually in Singapore from 2011-2019. She has edited five books on Asian children's literature which are compilations of notable presentations from the Asian Festival Children's Content, featuring the Philippines, Malaysia, China, India, and Japan. Dr. Bacsal has a vibrant website on children's literature and young adult fiction (www.gatheringbooks.org) followed by teachers, librarians, artists, writers, and book lovers from over 200 countries and where she shares her Social and Emotional Learning Bookshelf consisting of multicultural and international picturebooks from all over the world.

Images of the speakers can be downloaded [here](#).