

**ART STAGE
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MEDIA RELEASE

**JOSEPH BALESTIER AWARD FOR THE FREEDOM OF ART
PRESENTED BY ART STAGE SINGAPORE AND THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA IN SINGAPORE**

Singapore, 1 December 2014 – Art Stage Singapore and the Embassy of the United States of America in Singapore announce the inaugural *Joseph Balestier Award for the Freedom of Art* to be launched in 2015. The Award honours an artist or curator from the Southeast Asian region who is actively committed to the ideals of freedom and liberty, and through his or her work, continually seeks to express these ideals. The award is named after Joseph Balestier, the first American diplomat accredited to Singapore, appointed U.S. Consul to Singapore in 1836, and relative of American patriot Paul Revere. The Award is jointly presented by Art Stage Singapore and U.S. Embassy Singapore and will be awarded annually to a practising artist or curator.

For the inaugural *Joseph Balestier Award for the Freedom of Art* in 2015, Art Stage Singapore and U.S Embassy Singapore will together name one artist or curator from the region to receive this honour. The selection will be made from among a group of regional artists or curators shortlisted by Art Stage Singapore. The *Joseph Balestier Award for the Freedom of Art* will consist of a trophy, certificate and a grant of USD \$5,000 to help the awardee continue his or her work. The Award will be jointly presented by His Excellency Mr Kirk Wagar, U.S Ambassador to Singapore and Mr Lorenzo Rudolf, Founder and Fair Director, Art Stage Singapore on 20 January 2015.

“I am very pleased by this historic opportunity for the U.S. Embassy in Singapore to jointly sponsor with Art Stage Singapore the region’s first award for freedom of art and artistic expression. I am excited to host an event to honor the recipient and welcome Art Stage participants. We hope this will become a yearly gathering of importance to the Southeast Asian artistic community. U.S. Embassy Singapore staff and I look forward to working with Art Stage Singapore to support the arts and recognize freedom of artistic expression across the region,” said U.S. Ambassador to Singapore Mr. Kirk Wagar.

“Art is our lifeblood, it has not only an aesthetic but also moral and socio-political roles. Art is visionary and inspirational, promotes social participation, integration, equal opportunities and personal development for people of all ages and backgrounds. It is the only language that transcends national boundaries and is understood the world over. Consequently, it needs freedom. You can only create something truthful if you can act truthfully. Whoever stands up for it, deserves our respect and gratitude,” says Mr Lorenzo Rudolf, Founder and Fair Director, Art Stage Singapore. “As the flagship fair of Southeast Asia, Art Stage Singapore is pleased to partner with the Embassy of the United States of America in Singapore in jointly presenting the *Joseph Balestier Award for the Freedom of Art*.”

Art Stage Singapore 2015 is the pillar event of the Singapore Art Week and will take place from 22 to 25 January 2015 at the Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre.

About Art Stage Singapore

Art Stage Singapore is the leading Asian art fair connecting the world to the best of Asian contemporary art. With a deep understanding of Asia’s dynamic visual arts scene, Art Stage Singapore presents the diversity of contemporary art rising from the region. Presenting handpicked galleries from Asian and Western countries that complement each other, Art Stage Singapore promotes dialogue not only between Asia and the West but amongst the countries of the Asian region as well. Art Stage Singapore’s consistent support of Asian galleries, artists and art practices positions the fair as the region’s international voice, representing the interests of Asian contemporary art in the global arena. More than a market platform, Art Stage Singapore is the definitive rendezvous point for discourse and exchange of ideas on the ever evolving Asian art scene. For more information, visit

<http://artstagesingapore.com/>.

About the U.S Embassy

The United States Embassy in Singapore consists of 28 U.S. Federal Government agencies working in Singapore and the region. Through the U.S. Embassy, the United States maintains a strong bilateral relationship with the Government of Singapore and stands ready to assist the more than 30,000 American citizens in Singapore, many of whom work for American businesses with offices in this country.

Additional information about the U.S. Embassy in Singapore can be found at

<http://singapore.usembassy.gov>.

About Joseph Balestier

Joseph Balestier was the first Consul General of the United States of America to Singapore, serving between 1836-1852. His wife, Maria Revere Balestier, was the daughter of American patriot Paul Revere. Balestier was officially recognised as the Consul at Singapore in June 1837, when ships from America were permitted by the British East India Company to trade on an equal footing. In the mid-1830s, Joseph Balestier was one of the first men to own a 1,000-acre sugar-cane plantation, known as the Balestier Plantation located on the Balestier Plain. Today, the centrally located Balestier Road runs alongside what used to be his sugar estate in Singapore. His wife, Maria Revere Balestier, was the daughter of Paul Revere, the revolutionary hero during the American War of Independence whose famed midnight ride helped secure America's freedom. She and her husband donated the famed Revere Bell to St. Andrew's Church in 1843. It is now part of the permanent exhibition of the Singapore History Gallery at the National Museum of Singapore.

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