



European Union
Delegation to Singapore



Inaugural European Union Writers Festival (EUWF) – 25-26 May 2017



Deepening EU Cultural Relations through a literary feast

1. Reviewing EU's cultural programmes in Singapore for #EU60

In line with the EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations adopted in June 2016, the EU Delegation to Singapore expanded its cultural programmes with a new literary festival - the European Union Writers Festival (EUWF). The celebration marking 60 years of the European Union this year (2017) offered a timely opportunity to review and deepen EU's cultural ties with the local arts scene through literature, and to showcase European authors based in the city state. The intent of EUWF was to create a vibrant platform for European and Singaporean authors to engage in a dynamic dialogue as the EU marked 60 and the EU and ASEAN celebrated the 40th anniversary of the establishment of their relations.

The EU Delegation to Singapore worked in partnership with leading arts college, the LASALLE College of the Arts, an established higher-education arts school, to launch the inaugural edition of the EU Writers Festival on May 25-26 2017. LASALLE agreed to host and back the festival, as it tied in with its inaugural MA in Creative Writing launched earlier this year.

In keeping with the new guidelines on EU Cultural Diplomacy, this partnership was a fitting opportunity for the EU to deepen its cultural relations with the city-state while putting European literature in the limelight.



LASALLE College of the Arts campus

2. EUWF Opening Night

In a nod to the open embrace of literature and its ability to travel beyond borders, the EUWF opening ceremony was held in the Frasse, an open area at the LASALLE campus. Over 150 guests including members of the diplomatic community, artists, writers, journalists, publishers, cultural programmers and academics attended the opening night. In their remarks, both LASALLE President Professor Steve Dixon and EU Ambassador to Singapore Dr Michael Pulch commended the excellent platform and bridge this festival was setting out to create. They highlighted also what this augurs for European cultural ties in the city-state.



Highlights of the opening night of the EUWF

The night included lively readings by two European authors and two Singaporean poets who had travelled to Europe. The two European writers read excerpts from their upcoming works, while the latter presented poems they had written in response to their travels through Europe. Presented together both readings provided an overview of the many cultural connections in the creation of literature and how the journeys writers make often influence, impact and find direct references in their creative writing. Guests got a chance for a relaxed conversation with many of the authors present.

The opening ceremony was well-received, as the exchanges took place in a relaxed, informal setting encouraging extended conversations. It also created a networking platform and opened up avenues for future cooperation between European and Singaporean authors, publishers and artists.

3. Stimulating Conversations & Discussions

The next day saw a series of stimulating conversations bringing together nine European wordsmiths, artists and publishers based in Singapore. Epigram Books CEO Edmund Wee, Singapore Film Society Chairman Kenneth Tan, and Singapore Literature Prize-winning poet Joshua Ip, three leading figures of Singapore cultural scene joined them.

This medley of hour-long conversations created a platform for the audience to take part in a rich and dynamic dialogue on literature in all its guises. The authors and audience explored together a wide range of literature-related topics, such as art writing, cross-cultural

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EVENTS

Join us for a celebration of culture and literature that has the natural potential to travel beyond borders.

Schedule:

10:00am – 11:00am
In Conversation: Michael Schindhelm with Darryl Whetter

11:00am – 12:00pm
Art Writing and Its Challenges

12:00pm – 1:00pm
The Craft of Film Writing

1:00pm – 2:00pm
The Fine Art of Publishing

2:00pm – 3:00pm
Writing in the Age of Social Media

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European Union Writers Festival

dialogue, publishing, as well as the diverse literary formats and materials, such as writing film scripts and online platforms while addressing also the many challenges writers face.



In conversations with the authors

The festival saw a committed audience who stayed from the beginning until the end of the festival, since the conversations got a full house during the whole day. While the audience composition changed through the day, at least 50 participants were in attendance in each session reflecting a broader interest in the arts and in words.

4. An Inclusive Festival: When Words Connect Beyond Language



Sign-language interpreter during the first panel on day 2

For this inaugural edition, the EU Delegation partnered with the British Council in an effort to support inclusivity in the arts. As part of their wider Inclusive Arts Campaign, the British Council introduced a sign-language interpreter during the day 2. This initiative has proven successful during the festival, as it allowed members from the Singapore Association for the Deaf to take part in the literary dialogue. This partnership allowed the EU Delegation targeted a broader audience to broaden its engagement through the arts.

5. Media Coverage: Outreach On The Right Arts And Culture Platforms

The festival was picked by the media and promoted on the right platforms and arts blogs in the weeks ahead of the event. The EUWF was cited in several expat magazines (e.g. *Expat Choice*; *Le Petit Journal*) and shared by the writers themselves. The EU Embassies promoted it on their websites, and re-tweeted it. The EUWF was also covered by ASEF Culture360, Asia-Europe Foundation's portal on cultural initiatives and projects in and between Asia and Europe.

Most notably it was picked up by Singapore's leading daily The Straits Times. In addition, an interview with the organisers of EUWF was conducted on the margins of the festival and featured on the *Asian Books Blog* (www.asianbooksblog.com)

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Connecting Asia & Europe Through Arts & Culture

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EUROPE, GERMANY, SINGAPORE FESTIVALS

MEETINGS
Contributed by: Judith Shaffer
Date Posted: Tuesday, 26 May 2017

Date: May 25, 2017 - May 26, 2017
Website: <https://culture360.org/2017/04/25/the-european-union-and-lasalle-college-of-the-arts-launch-inaugural-european-union-writers-festival/>

  

The European Union and LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore launch the inaugural European Union Writers Festival (EUWF) – Celebrating European literature.

As the European Union marks 60 years, the European Union Delegation to Singapore deepens its cultural connections with Singapore through a partnership with LASALLE College of the Arts to launch the inaugural **European Union Writers Festival (EUWF)**. EUWF will take place from 25-26 May 2017 and will include a keynote discussion with German writer and theatre director Michael Schindhelm (Lampolis, 2014) and LASALLE's programme leader for MA in Creative Writing, Dr Darryl Whetter.

European Union Writers Festival 2017 @ LASALLE College of the Arts

- * 25 May, Thurs (6-7pm) Opening Night
- * 26 May, Friday: Full-day Festival Programme

o 10am-11am: In Conversation, Michael Schindhelm with Darryl Whetter

ASEF Culture360 coverage of EUWF

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EUROPEAN UNION WRITERS FESTIVAL 2017

The inaugural European Union Writers Festival, organised by the European Union Delegation to Singapore in partnership with Lasalle College of the Arts, showcases European authors working here. They include German writer and film-maker Michael Schindhelm (above), who will speak about his new book, *Happy Tropics I*, on the changing cultural landscape of Singapore, at 10am; and Vladimir Todorovic, associate professor at the Nanyang Technological University's School of Arts, Design and Media, who will speak about literature in the age of social media with Singapore writer Joshua Ip at 2pm.

WHERE: Lasalle College of the Arts, 1 McNally Street MRT: Rochor WHEN: Today, 10am to 3pm **ADMISSION: Free INFO:** www.europe.sg

EUWF featured in the *Straits Times* on 26 May 2017

Asian Books Blog

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Wednesday, 31 May 2017

Lion City lit: European Union Writers Festival



Asian Books Blog is based in Singapore. Our regular column Lion City Lit explores in-depth what's going on in the City-State, lit-wise. Here **Lucia Damascena** talks with the organisers of the City's first European Union Writers Festival, which took place on May 25 and 26, at Lasalle College. An initiative of Dr. Darryl Whetter, programme leader of Lasalle's MA programme in creative writing, and Deepika Shetty, press and information officer for the European Union delegation to Singapore, the event was sponsored by the European Union, in partnership with Lasalle College.

The Festival featured arts professionals from Europe and Singapore, such as writer and theatre director Michael Schindhelm, curator and writer Melanie Pocock; curator and publications manager Anca Rujoiu, writer, researcher and curator Kathleen Ditzig; curator Silke Schrickl, writer, editor and lecturer Benjamin Slater; film director and professor Sebastian Grobler; film and television executive Kenneth Tan, publisher and designer Edmund Wee; poet Joshua Ip; filmmaker, multimedia artist and professor Vladimir Todorovic; and artist and professor Gilles Massot.

In his opening address, Dr Michael Pulch, the European Union Ambassador to Singapore, said that culture has become a fundamental pillar of EU external action. This commitment to exploring the variety of synergies available in arts and culture gave birth to the European Writers Festival, a project that adds to the rich and long established cultural dialogue between Europe and Singapore, a key cultural hub in Southeast Asia.

In a written statement, Darryl Whetter said: "As my last novel points out, 'Neither the tomato

Interview on Asian Books Blog

Comment: The festival delivered on its intent – to create an indie platform that could connect European authors based here and allow them to reach and connect with a broader Singaporean audience. Themes covered brought European literature closer to the Singaporean audience and strengthened EU's cultural relations with the local arts scene. Its format was perfect and allowed for dynamic and intimate discussions with a committed audience made up of both Singaporeans and Europeans. Significantly, this was an inclusive festival that welcomed hearing-impaired readers who had access to writers through a sign language interpreter. This cross-cultural dialogue fostered mutual understanding on many levels – including that of inclusivity - and set the tone for strengthened bilateral cultural cooperation. This inaugural edition is a promising start for a festival that can only grow further in the future as it has received excellent feedback and support from a wide range of stakeholders.

Report By: Ariane Combal-Weiss, Press section, European Union Delegation to Singapore