

Speech by FS at opening ceremony of "Botticelli to Van Gogh: Masterpieces from the National Gallery, London" Special Exhibition (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the opening ceremony of "Botticelli to Van Gogh: Masterpieces from the National Gallery, London" Special Exhibition today (November 21):

Consul General Davidson (British Consul General to Hong Kong and Macao, Mr Brian Davidson), Dr Finaldi (Director of the National Gallery, London, Dr Gabriele Finaldi), Henry (Chairman of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority Board (WKCDA), Mr Henry Tang), Winnie (Chairman of the Board of the Hong Kong Palace Museum (HKPM), Ms Winnie Tam), Betty (Chief Executive Officer of the WKCDA, Mrs Betty Fung), Louis (Museum Director of the HKPM, Dr Louis Ng), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I am delighted to be here for the opening of the exhibition "Botticelli to Van Gogh: Masterpieces from the National Gallery, London". A very warm welcome to Dr Finaldi and all other guests from London.

I had the pleasure of visiting the UK (United Kingdom) about two months ago on a fruitful business trip, and am pleased to have this welcome opportunity to welcome our friends from London, which will certainly contribute to deepening the close ties between our two great cities.

"Botticelli to Van Gogh" is a spectacular, meaningful and timely exhibition. It spans over 400 years of Western art, featuring 52 masterpieces by some of the greatest artists in European history. It is the first time such a significant group of Western paintings from the National Gallery is exhibited in Hong Kong.

It is very meaningful that these works are presented here at the Hong Kong Palace Museum, which was opened last year with a mission to promote cultural exchanges between East and West through collaboration with cultural institutions worldwide. And under this same roof, you will also find lively discussions on some of the most important Chinese paintings by renowned artists in China's Ming and Qing dynasties from the 14th to the early 20th centuries.

I am sure that "Botticelli to Van Gogh", with its visually stunning and intellectually rich content, will enhance our mutual cultural understanding and stimulate further cross-cultural exchanges.

This is also a very timely event, with Hong Kong embarking on its quest to become an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange, a unique positioning supported by the Central Government. This exhibition is one of the major projects supported by our Mega Arts and Cultural Events Fund, which was launched earlier this year to support international large-scale arts and cultural events in Hong Kong. Through this exhibition and many other significant projects, we aim to foster exchanges and dialogue across world civilisations, making Hong Kong a unique international cultural hub and cultural tourism destination.

I am grateful to the National Gallery, London, for co-organising this exhibition with the Hong Kong Palace Museum. I am sure that our local artists and residents as well as visitors from near and far will enjoy these breathtaking works.

I thank the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority and the Hong Kong Palace Museum for their good work in presenting this important exhibition.

Last but not least, I would also like to thank the commercial sponsors for their generous financial support.

I wish the exhibition a great success and I hope that our friends from London and around the world would have a very enjoyable stay here, in Asia's world city. Thank you.

