

WELCOME SPEECH BY MS CHUA SWEE KEOW AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING FOR THE 'RAINBOW IN THE DARK' ART EXHIBITION ON 15 JANUARY 2015

Mr Hri Kumar Nair, Member of Parliament for Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC,
Chairman of the Government Parliamentary Committee for Home Affairs
and Law,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen

1. Good evening and thank you for joining me at this evening's event. The Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped, SAVH's mission is to promote the needs, interests and aspirations of the visually impaired, our vision being to help the visually impaired help themselves by acquiring new skills and gaining self-reliance to cope with their re-integration into society.
2. This evening's exhibition 'Rainbow in the Dark' is the climatic and fitting end of an intensive art therapy programme envisioned for our clients, and made possible through 'WeCare Arts Fund Clap! On The Move' scheme managed and administered by Central Singapore Community Development Council and sponsored by the National Art Council.
3. The course was conducted from end September to early December last year. The programme consisted of ten sessions of art-as-therapy workshops wherein our clients went through a rigorous artistic process with their art therapist, who aimed to help empower them through the introduction to different sensory-based ways of creating artworks.
4. This exhibition showcases their master pieces, a culmination of their hard work, creative energy and artistic prowess. It hopes to afford them the courage to take the first step to connect with others, experience pride in their accomplishments while equipping them with necessary skills to be gainfully employed.

5. It challenges the 'Do Not Touch' notion; as commonly practised by most visual art displays. The 30 artworks on display are exhibited in a space entirely devoid of light. These were carefully selected from over a hundred pieces, each lovingly crafted by our 24 visually impaired artists. You are invited to experientially journey with the artists to 'see' art through their sense of touch in an intimate setting of virtual blindness. 50 pieces have been selected for publication in our catalogue, a copy of which you will be receiving at the end of your visit.

6. Through 'Rainbow in the Dark' art initiative, SAVH hopes to facilitate more opportunities for social inclusion of the visually impaired and for Singaporeans to draw one step nearer toward abolishing attitudinal and social stigmas against visual impairment.

7. I wish to extend our deepest gratitude to Mr Hri Kumar for officially opening 'Rainbow in the Dark', despite his busy schedule. Our most heartfelt thanks to Ms Loh Wan Ting, for conducting the workshops and being instrumental in arranging RITD. Our deep appreciation to veteran volunteer Mrs Katy Lee for her dedication toward ensuring the workshops ran smoothly. Sincere thanks also to Touch Art volunteers for time spent in staunchly supporting our clients throughout the program. A special mention to National Art Council and Central Singapore CDC in acknowledgement of the WeCare Fund that enabled this programme and made RITD a reality. Last but not least, we gratefully thank *SCAPE for generously sponsoring this venue and for providing logistics support. In conclusion, I wish to thank our 24 beneficiaries for allowing us into their world, to learn from them and their artworks.

8. I hope that you will be imbued with the synergy of our visual arts presentation, and that it will resonate with each of you, leaving a lasting imprint on your combined senses.

9. Thank you.