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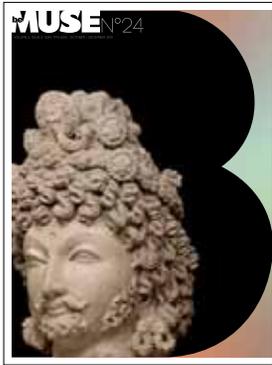
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**front cover**  
*Head of a bodhisattva*  
Gandhara, around 4th century  
Terracotta, height 85 cm

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**20** YEARS of  
**HERITAGE**  
*with YOU*  
1993-2013

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## EDITOR'S MUSEINGS

This issue of BeMuse celebrates, among other things, the 20th anniversary of the National Heritage Board and we have chosen to do by charting 20 milestones, spanning the museums, heritage institutions, exhibitions, trails and festivals that the NHB has launched and nurtured over two decades. Of course, this list is by no means exhaustive and I hasten to add that many other institutions and events rank as equals in significance to the NHB and Singapore's heritage landscape. Memories at Old Ford Factory, for instance, shares with Reflections at Bukit Chandu the indispensable task of reminding new generations of Singaporeans of the tragedy and sacrifices endured by our forefathers during the Second World War.

No less vital to the NHB's remit of developing a thriving and diverse heritage ecosystem are the people who work hard behind the scenes, to curate galleries and exhibitions that illuminate the past, to forge enduring ties with donors and partners, many of whom are honoured during the annual Patrons of Heritage awards, to lend a helping hand to individuals, communities and companies with compelling stories to tell and bright ideas that can bring heritage to life, and to support and encourage the many volunteers, docents and guides whose enthusiasm for learning and sharing is evident to visitors at our museums, community trails and national monuments.

Looking ahead, I believe the NHB will forge on to continue in its role as a flagbearer for Singapore's cultural and heritage sector as well as a choice partner for Singaporeans who seek to re-discover their roots and deepen their sense of nationhood. The story of Singapore, it must be said, is not a single thread, but a wealth of narratives created by countless individuals, groups and institutions, all of which played a part in shaping and building the country we know and love today. This diversity of experiences, stories and perspectives is a living resource of knowledge that the NHB has been tapping on, with the goal of capturing and conveying the memories of pioneers and shedding light on the communities, ethnic districts and social landmarks that made Singapore a melting pot of cultures from all over the region. A recent two-day seminar organised by the Indian Heritage Centre (IHC) embodies this approach, through presentations on the different Indian groups living in Singapore: the Tamils, Sikhs, Gujaratis, Chettiars, Parsis, Chetti Melakans, Indian Muslims, Bengalis, Ceylon Tamils and Malayalees, among others, by long-time researchers and members of these communities, whose narratives will inform and enrich the galleries of the IHC when it opens in 2015 at Campbell Lane in Little India. This opening, surely, will mark another milestone for the NHB, in the year we celebrate the 50th birthday of our nation.

**THANGAMMA KARTHIGESU**  
Editor-In-Chief



be **MUSE**  
N°24







**W**e live in the digital age. Mobile applications, with their ease of access and user-friendliness, help us to learn, organise and keep track of content in quick and effective ways, be it to explore new places, connect to social networks or be entertained on the move. New platforms for managing content have paved the way for exciting opportunities to learn about heritage and relate with the past using handy portable devices. Through the use of augmented reality, 3D-rendered models and digital graphics, technology can influence the way we encounter heritage, allowing for a more immersive and engaging experience. The digital age has created a virtual space for users to interact with elements of the past, thanks to digital tools that were impossible or unimaginable with older, static media.

Smartphones have become ubiquitous in urban societies such as Singapore and mobile applications (apps for short) have become an integral part of our lives. Whether for work or leisure, we often turn to our smartphones to navigate our surroundings and lead us to places of interest. The National Heritage Board (NHB) has seized the opportunity to harness this trend by marrying mobile technology and local heritage content. The result, launched in August 2013, is the NHB's first mobile app, which allows users to explore the historic district of Kampong Glam with the aid of their smartphones. Along with funding support for two other mobile apps, the NHB hopes these initiatives will help bring heritage closer to home and allow the public to make full use of new technologies to enjoy a richer user experience.

# HERITAGE IN YOUR HAND

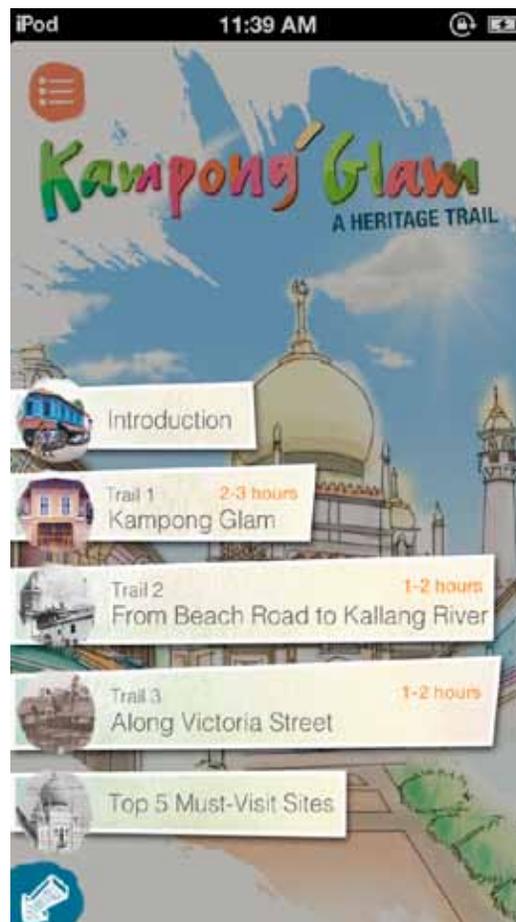
written by STEFANIE THAM

HISTORIC DISTRICTS GO  
DIGITAL WITH MOBILE APPS

## NAVIGATING KAMPONG GLAM

One of a long-standing series of community trails developed by the NHB, the Kampong Glam Heritage Trail was launched in 2012 with the aim of educating and engaging Singaporeans about the landmarks, diverse histories and social memories of this district and its outlying areas. Today, Kampong Glam is a neighbourhood that blends the old and new, where traditional crafts and trades are punctuated by modern shops and boutiques that cater to the contemporary generation. The area has a long history, however, which dates back to 1819 when Sir Stamford Raffles signed his monumental treaty with Temenggong Abdul Rahman and Sultan Hussein to establish a British trading settlement on the island. Sultan Hussein then moved to Kampong Glam, along with his family and entourage, and since then, Kampong Glam has been a centre of Malay and Islamic culture in the city.

The NHB has published a printed trail guide that provides an in-depth account of the history and buildings of Kampong Glam, but the mobile app, which can be downloaded free-of-charge from the iTunes and Google Play websites, offers an immersive and enlivening experience for users on the move and short for time.



ENJOY ART AT ALIWAL STREET AT THE FORMER CHONG CHENG AND CHONG PUN GIRLS' SCHOOLS.



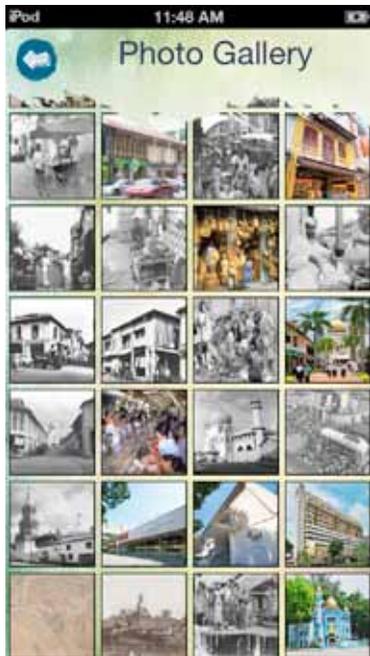
**LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED AND WORKED AT KAMPONG GLAM AS THEY RECALL SCENES FROM THE PAST AND RELATE THEIR MEMORIES OF THE DISTRICT.**

The mobile app is available for users of iPhones, iPads and Android devices, who can launch the software to conduct self-guided tours of the district. It comes with a pre-installed map that uses GPS technology to track the user's whereabouts and point out key heritage sites in the vicinity. Each walking trail can be completed on foot within an average of two hours, but users are free to take their time to go off-track and make little detours to investigate the colourful shops, eateries, cultural institutions that line the streets of Kampong Glam before resuming the trail.

The app offers a choice of three trails: the first route brings you through the heart of Kampong Glam's conserved core, bordered by Bali Lane, Beach Road, North Bridge Road and Jalan Sultan; the second focuses on the former seafront of Beach Road all the way to the Kallang and Rochor Rivers, which was once a bustling port town; and the third leads users to the area between Victoria Street and Rochor Canal Road to visit some key institutions that have played important roles in the lives of Singapore's pioneering communities.

Bundled with the app is a resource bank of images, audio clips and supplementary information, which can be accessed on-site while walking the trail, or at home as reference material. Each designated heritage site in Kampong Glam has its own marker page in the app, as well as features unique to the location. But more than just text, one can access a plethora of additional content on various multimedia platforms. As users journey down the trail, they can listen to snippets of interviews with traditional craftsmen who have lived in Kampong Glam and witnessed its transformation. A Chinese stonemason may recount his encounter with the 1964 racial riots, while cartoonist Haji Ali bin Sanat will share his recollections of coppersmiths who once laboured in the neighbourhood. Drawn from the records of the National Archives of Singapore, these oral interview excerpts offer a chance to hear the former residents of Kampong Glam relate, in their own language or dialect, the past scenes and social memories tied to places and buildings that still exist and are charted in the trail app.

Over the years, Kampong Glam has experienced much change, in tandem with other parts of Singapore. Much of its built heritage has survived, in the shop-houses and other buildings that have been marked for conservation, but the social and economic activities of the district have undergone several shifts. These layers of time and texture can be sampled in a Before/After feature of the app, which captures the scenes of yesterday and shows you how life was like at a location you may come across. Juxtaposed on the screen are past and



## VIEW THE PAST IN YOUR PALM THROUGH ARCHIVAL PHOTOS OF KAMPONG GLAM'S STREETS, HAWKERS AND LANDMARKS.

present views of Kampong Glam's streets, which used to be lined by open drains, trishaws and hawkers but are now neatly paved and plied by modern vehicles. Another example of a marked difference can be seen around Crawford Street near the mouth of the Rochor River, which was once a thriving landscape of kampongs and trading ships but is today a neatly manicured park and a busy highway. At Aliwal Street, you can see how the former Chong Cheng School and Chong Pun Girls' School, which share a site, have been given a new lease of life as an arts centre. Even the physical landscape has changed. Land reclamation has pushed the shore-



line further from Kampong Glam, a gradual geographical shift that can be traced through old maps from the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore.

Also included in the app are heritage-themed fun features such as a traditional Malay game, a virtual *gasing* (spinning top) and a photo sharing component that allows users to capture a snapshot of themselves as characters in an archival photograph. For educators, the app includes numerous new and archival images of Kampong Glam, short write-ups about each site and 'Did you know?' quizzes to engage visitors on an learning journey through the district.



## SUPPORTING INNOVATION FROM THE GROUND UP

Located at the trading and cultural crossroads of Southeast, South and East Asia, Singapore has for centuries served as an intersection for diverse communities that have left their mark in our country. Today, growing numbers of Singaporeans are rediscovering our rich and unique heritage and realising the importance of sharing and imparting this knowledge of the past to present and future generations. This mindset is echoed in *W.I.S.H.*, a mobile app created by software developer Allan Tham, which lets users explore Chinatown via reconstructed 3D views of the district during the early post-war period. Supported by NHB's Hi2P scheme, *W.I.S.H.* (short for 'Walking into Singapore HiStory) takes you down Chinatown in the 1960s using 3D renditions of Telok Ayer's street scenes.

"I wanted the next generation to know how their grandparents lived, worked and helped to build Singapore," shared Allan, who is part of Ink Heritage and Cultural Development, the group behind the *W.I.S.H.* app. "I wanted students who visit these areas on field trips and even visitors to feel that they have stepped back in time and truly know what Singapore was like." Indeed, the app was designed to allow users to explore the various personalities one might have met in Chinatown in the 1960s – the street hawker, soya sauce seller, *ma jie* and even a detective from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), whose headquarters were located along Eu Tong Sen Road. Users can read more about each personality by tapping on a blue information button on the app interface.

Other features of *W.I.S.H.*, which is available free-of-charge from Apple's iTunes website, include a panoramic 360-degree view of three scenes along Temple Street and functions that allow you to "enter" the shophouses to discover what lies within, for example, a tailor's store in Chinatown. Users can also find out more about some of the structures found along the street, such as the *chap buay thiam* (provision shops) and five-foot ways. A toggle button also allows you to compare the archival recreations with the same street in the present day.

ENTER A TELOK AYER SHOPHOUSE AND STEP INTO HISTORY THROUGH A MOBILE APP WITH AUGMENTED REALITY FEATURES.





Allan and his team are now looking to create an educational version of the app, with games and trivia to enhance the experience for students, who would be able to use the app to enrich their learning of Singapore history. Future possibilities for the developers include augmented reality apps covering other heritage sites such as Little India and Boat Quay, and the company is also keen to look into other initiatives to promote local heritage.

Similarly, *CultureKey Singapore* aims to bring the arts and heritage of our city closer to both locals and tourists. Produced by Imagineear, a developer of digital experiences, and touted as the first of its kind in Asia, the app provides an expansive overview of Singapore's cultural and historical hotspots in seven core areas, mostly covering central Singapore. Users can navigate a selection of landmarks by type, location or the distance to where they are. The app provides a multimedia tour of these heritage sites through the use of images and videos. It also allows users to share and comment on these places using social networking platforms such as Facebook or Twitter. *CultureKey* can be downloaded free-of-charge from both iTunes and Google Play.

Together, these various apps provide a fresh and immersive experience of Singapore's history, using vividly rendered images to integrate old and new elements on the same platform, and conveying heritage information in creative and exciting new ways. These novel representations of heritage via mobile technology can help to make our often elusive connections with the past more immediate and tangible.

As we negotiate our identity as Singaporeans in this digital age, more individuals and community groups will turn to technology to document and share what defines local heritage to them. The NHB is excited to support and facilitate dynamic and innovative ways of promoting heritage to the public. Mobile technology, given its growth and increasing prevalence, is one of the many ways in which heritage can be savoured, experienced and brought to life in your hands.

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*Stefanie Tham is Assistant Manager, Community Institutions & Outreach, National Heritage Board.*





# WITH **HONOURS**

469 BUKIT TIMAH ROAD  
// NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE'S  
BUKIT TIMAH CAMPUS

written by MARCUS NG





For more than 80 years, the Bukit Timah Campus has served as “the cradle for tertiary education in Malaysia and Singapore”, a landscape of learning amid wooded hills and elegant halls of study where students matched wits with their professors and mingled with their peers.

Today, the campus forms part of the National University of Singapore, housing the Faculty of Law, Asia Research Institute, East Asian Institute, Institute of South Asian Studies, Middle East Institute and Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. Its origins lie, however, in Raffles College, which was set up at 469 Bukit Timah Road in 1928 as an institution of higher education in the arts and sciences, the long-delayed result of a colonial effort to mark the centenary of the founding of modern Singapore by Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819.

In 1949, Raffles College was merged with the King Edward VII College of Medicine (founded in 1905 on the former Sepoy Lines, now the site of the Singapore General Hospital) to become the University of Malaya. Two other major milestones for the institution came in 1962, when it was renamed the University of Singapore, and 1980, when the University of Singapore was merged with Nanyang University to form the National University of Singapore (NUS).

After NUS shifted from Bukit Timah to Kent Ridge in 1981, the Bukit Timah Campus housed various other tertiary institutions, including the National Institute of Education and the Singapore Management University. NUS returned in 2006, when the Faculty of Law and a number of research institutes moved to the grounds of the old Raffles College.

### **BUKIT TIMAH CAMPUS: AN ARCHITECTURAL PROFILE**

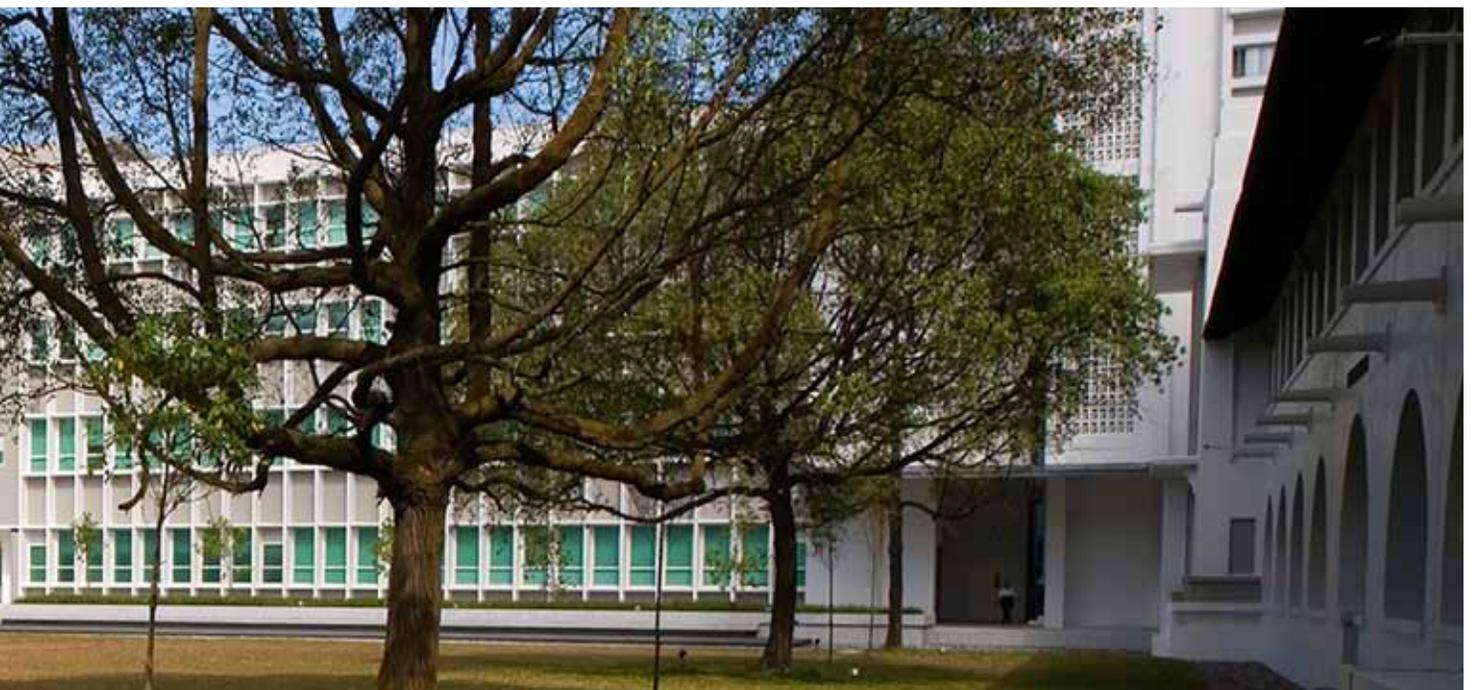
The revival of the Bukit Timah Campus as a centre for higher learning and research also led to a rejuvenation of the buildings that had arisen over the decades. The layout and structure of the original Raffles College was based on a draft by Cyril A. Farey and Graham R. Dawbarn, two Englishmen who won an Empire-wide competition to design the new institution. The core of the college was set on a hill with gentle slopes, with the Botanic Gardens to its rear and a broad plain (where playing fields would later be created) between the buildings and Bukit Timah Road. In outlook, the architecture was a clear departure from earlier, classically inspired structures, combining as it does a modern penchant for simpler yet stately and elegant patterns, with adaptations for tropical heat.

The original complex enclosed two quadrangles, grassy courtyards surrounded by long halls with covered walkways and wide arches on the ground level. The upper storeys had windows with no pilasters (projecting columns) and supported tiled roofs, pitched high for



air circulation. The Manasseh Meyer Building, which bisected the courtyards, featured a pylon-like roof tower and flattened domes or copulas at both ends. Serving as the gateway to the college from Bukit Timah Road was the Oei Tiong Ham Hall, which faced a circular driveway and bore prominent arches that supported a long upper gallery. A new wing, named Block A, was added in the 1940s, followed by a Library in the 1950s and a landmark Science Tower in 1966.

In recognition of their significance and value to the civic and educational development of Singapore, six buildings that make up the former Raffles College were gazetted as National Monuments by the National Heritage Board on 11 November 2009. This status as a site protected from redevelopment encompasses the Oei Tiong Ham Building, former Library Building (now the CJ Koh Law Library), Manasseh Meyer Building, Federal Building, Eu Tong Sen Building and Li Ka Shing Building (formerly Block A). Also included were the two quadrangles of green space located within the complex.



## A STUDIED APPROACH TO A SPACE OF LEARNING

To ensure that the Bukit Timah Campus could continue to serve the needs of undergraduates and researchers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, NUS embarked on a programme to restore and upgrade the former Raffles College facilities. This project, led by Forum Architects, sought to uphold the buildings' architectural legacy as the foundation of tertiary education in Singapore and Malaysia, while adapting the halls and rooms to serve as classrooms and lecture theatres equipped with modern technologies.

In their study and documentation of the campus's architectural evolution, the architects uncovered several modifications and additions to the buildings over the decades. For one, the original doors on most of the blocks had been replaced, while those on the Eu Tong Sen Building had been removed; these doors were painstakingly reinstated to their design detailing and rightful locations. At the Oei Tiong Ham Block, a surprise discovery was the original coffered ceiling above the lobby; the panels were restored with great sensitivity, as was a link between the building and Block A that had been severely altered. These measures helped to revive much of the original soul, details and aesthetics of Raffles College, which many of its alumni would recall with fondness.

Meanwhile, the quadrangles where students traditionally gathered to debate and discuss each other's work had endured insensitive alterations and additions, such as covered structures along walkways that were added with little thought for integration. These changes clashed with the original design intent of the campus. To rectify this, the architects dug into the archival plans to reinstate the original link between the Oei Tiong Ham and Manasseh Meyer Blocks. A minimalist design approach was taken to bring elements of the original architecture to the fore; mature trees in the grounds, including a magnificent *angsana* planted not long after the campus was built, were retained and the quadrangle lawns underwent fresh landscaping to give greater prominence to the surrounding buildings. Along the corridor of Block B (before the upper quadrangle, facing the Federal Building), new decks planted with native sea gutta trees were added to provide a tiered landscape and spaces where students can mingle and relax under natural shade.





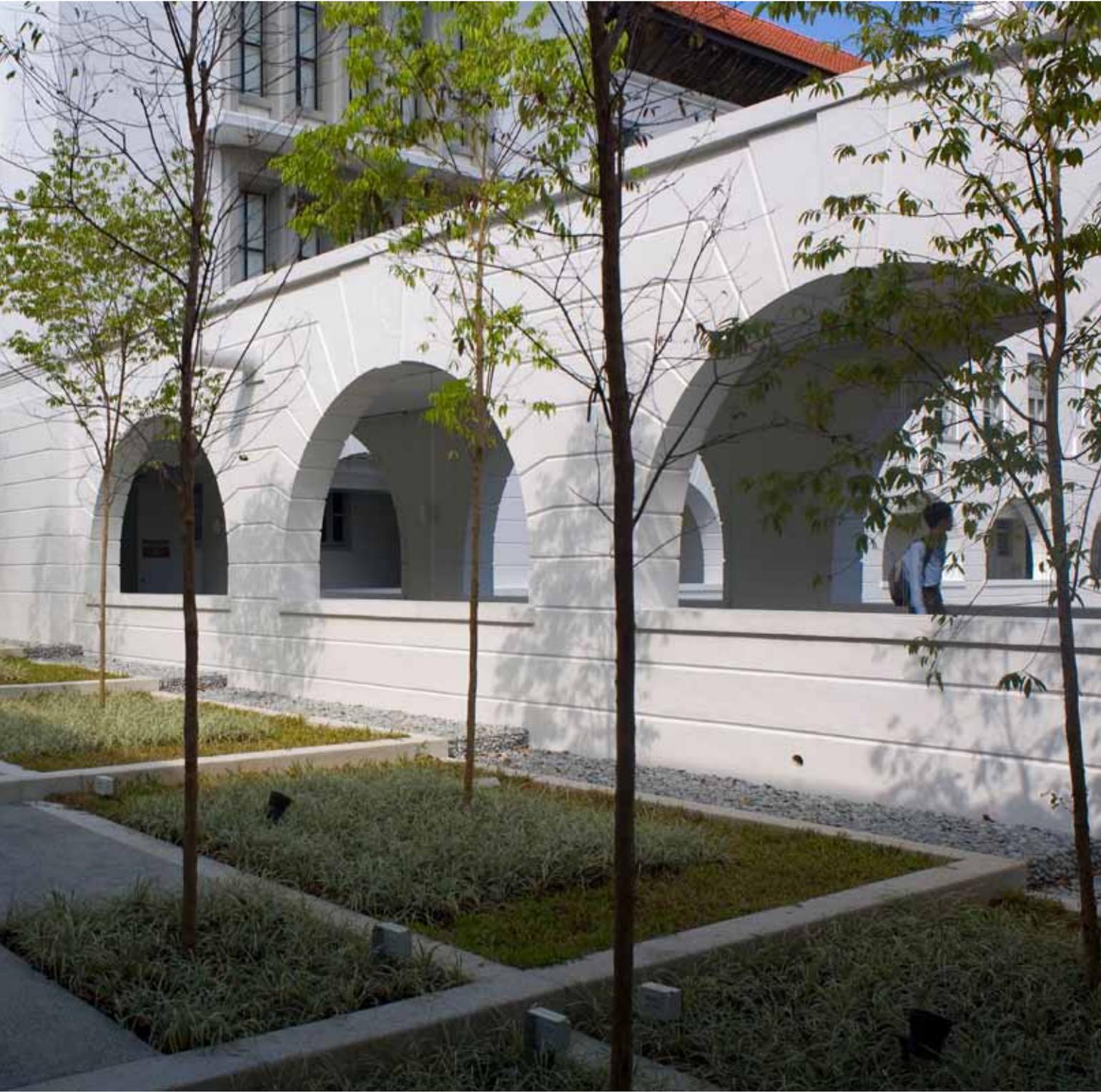
Though naturally ventilated in its early years, the buildings had to be adapted for air-conditioning. This was done with subtle touches; louvered windows were reinstalled and fitted with glass panels to keep cool air indoors, while ductwork and diffusers were carefully hidden from view. The architects also employed new technologies and novel methods to create a sense of greater, column-free space within the graduation hall of the Oei Tiong Ham Building.

In this restoration and revitalisation of the former Raffles College, the architects have captured the spirit of a historic campus and allowed students past and present to discover anew the spaces, layers and details that oversaw learning and life within a cherished national institution. For their effort, the Bukit Timah Campus was named a Category A winner in the Architectural Heritage Awards (AHA) organised by the Urban Redevelopment Authority in 2012. This category recognises outstanding restoration projects involving National Monuments and fully conserved buildings in the historic districts.

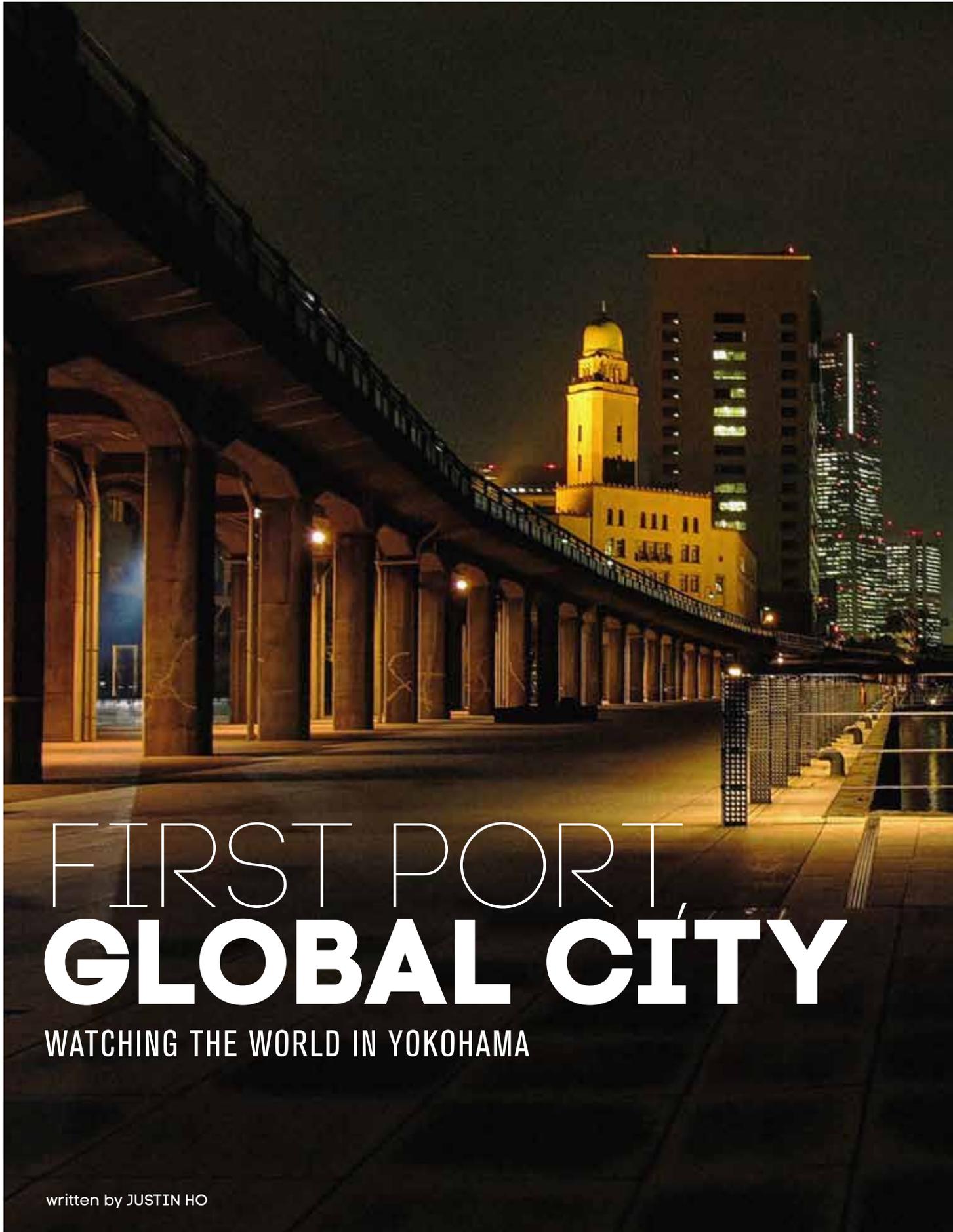
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*Marcus Ng is Editor of BeMUSE.*



**Did You Know?**

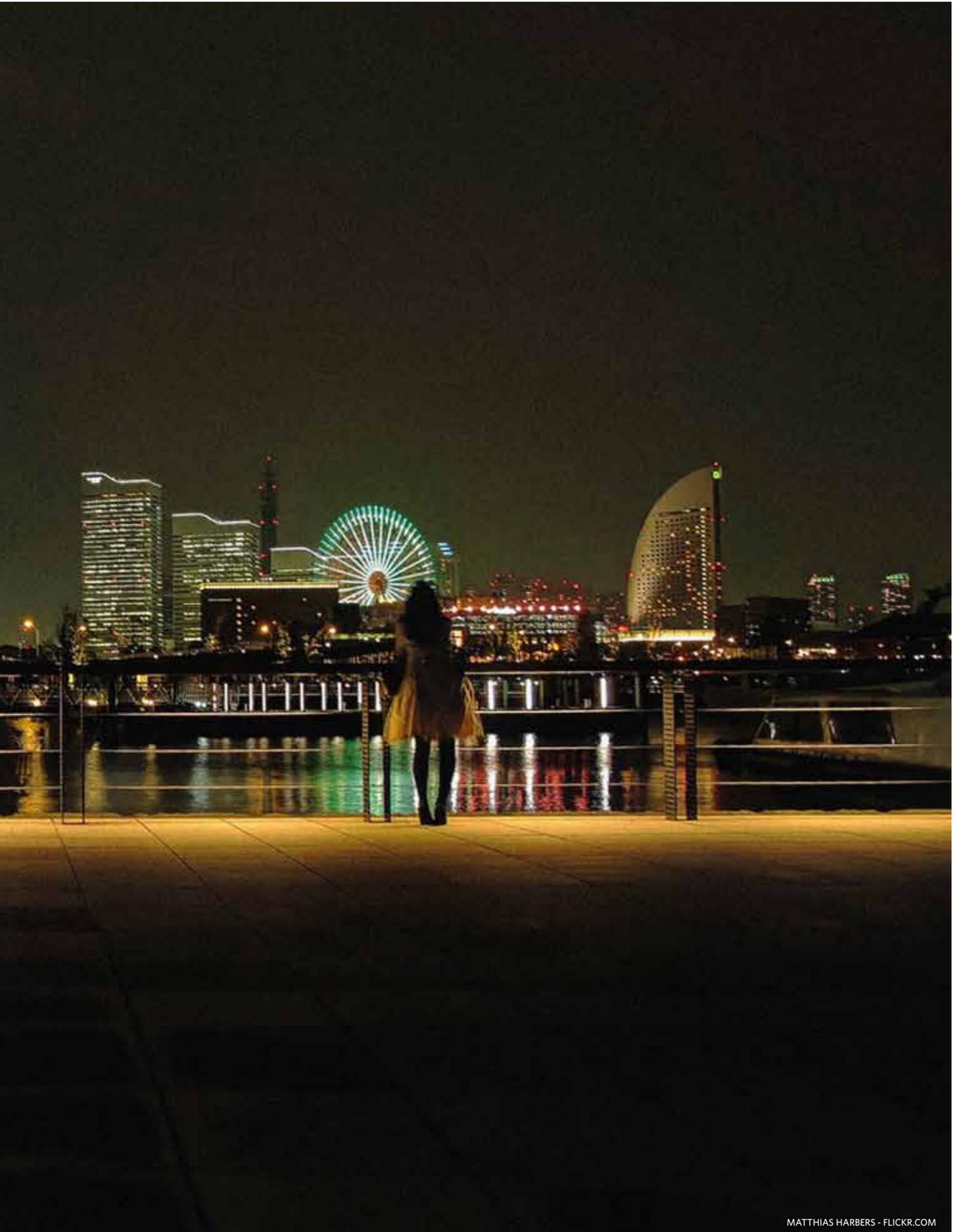
*The Oei Tiong Ham Building, Manasseh Meyer Block and Eu Tong Sen Building were named after major donors to Raffles College. Oei Tiong Ham (1866-1924) was the Semarang-born 'Sugar King of Java' who moved to Singapore in 1920. He gave \$150,000, then a princely sum, towards the construction of the central hall that now bears his name. Oei's contribution was matched by Manasseh Meyer (1846-1930), a Jewish businessman and philanthropist who was also instrumental in building Singapore's two synagogues. Eu Tong Sen (1877-1941), who gave \$100,000, was a Penang-born entrepreneur who established himself in the tin business and traditional medicine (now the Eu Yan Sang company).*

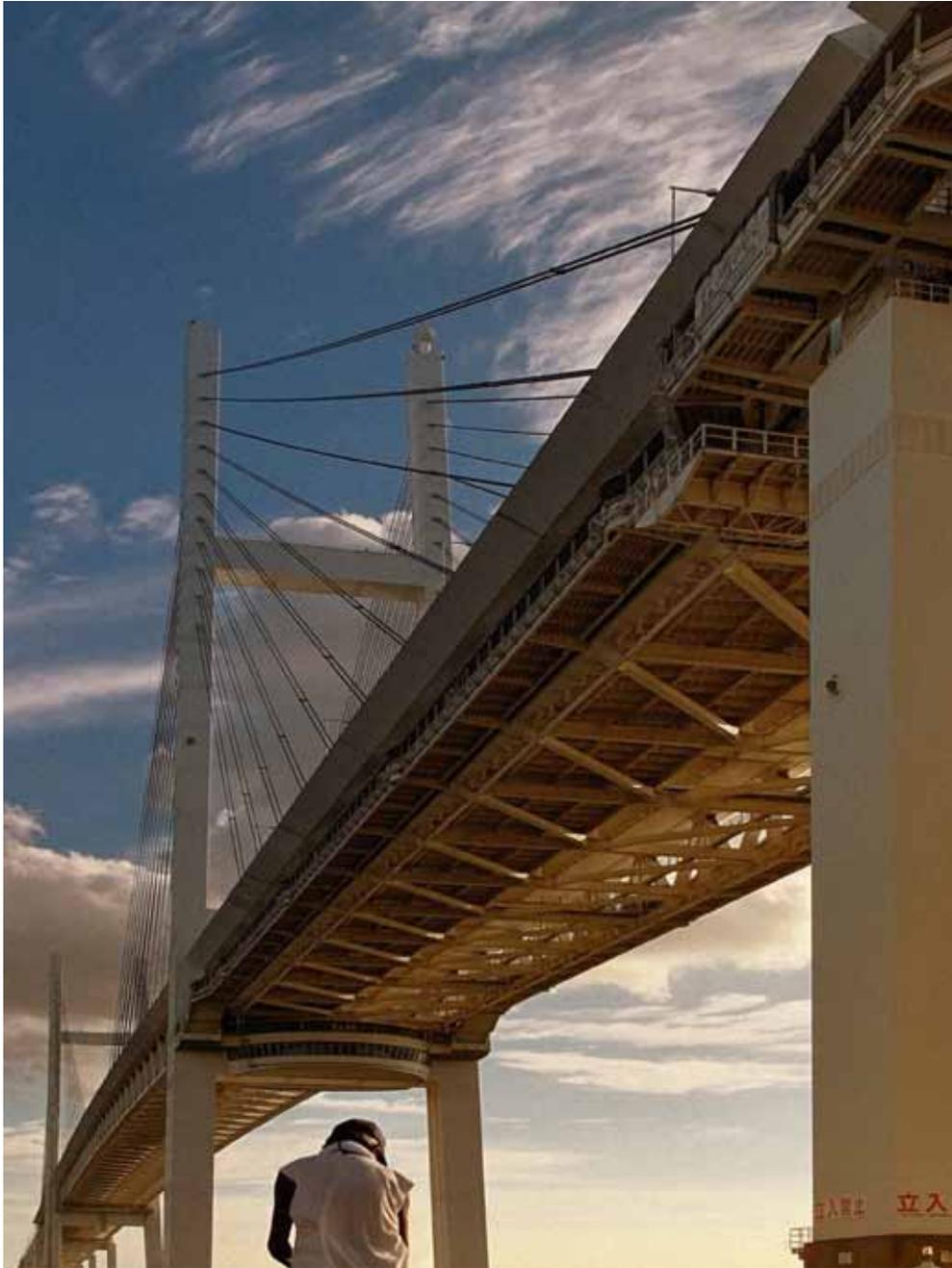


# FIRST PORT, **GLOBAL CITY**

WATCHING THE WORLD IN YOKOHAMA

written by JUSTIN HO





**Y**okohama was one of the first ports in Japan to be opened to foreign trade in 1859, ending centuries of isolation from the world at large. Today, this former fishing village is Japan's second largest city by population after Tokyo, boasts one of the largest and liveliest Chinatowns in Asia, and houses the Yokohama International Stadium, the biggest sporting arena in the whole of Japan. But what really sets Yokohama apart from its glitzier and more well-known neighbour, Tokyo, which is just 30 minutes away by train?

The railway is by far the most popular means of reaching the city, but a casual visitor might not even notice when the train has rolled out of Tokyo and into Yokohama proper. Any true native of Yokohama, however, will be able to point out the precise point where Tokyo ends and Yokohama begins. Spend enough time in Yokohama and you will realise that while the city

is thoroughly cosmopolitan and a bustling centre of trade and commerce, it exudes a laid-back vibe and, for a Japanese city, has an environment that is remarkably airy and spacious. People seem to be nicer and more relaxed, and it strikes you that this might just be a very pleasant place to live in.

Yokohama, at first glance, looks like any other modern metropolis. But like most big cities, it has a unique character and maintains a charm of its own. Having had the distinction (or infamy, depending on whom you ask) of being one of the first cities in Japan to host a foreign population after centuries of self-enforced seclusion, Yokohama retains an international flavour, with a subtle old-world, almost European feel in some districts. Many different communities have left their mark on the city, and traces of these far-flung settlements are especially evident in the area around the Motomachi-Chukagai subway station.

## **YAMATE AND MOTOMACHI: HILLY BLUFF AND HIGH STREET**

In the 1850s, the black ships of American Commodore Matthew Perry (1794-1858) forced, at gun-point, the Tokugawa shogunate to end its long policy of national isolation. An initial agreement between the Americans and the Japanese named the town of Kanagawa-juku as one of the ports designated for foreign trading activities. But the Japanese felt that Kanagawa-juku was too close to the Tokaido, a major traffic artery linking cities on Japan's east coast, and decided instead to base the port facilities at Yokohama, then a quiet fishing village.

This unexpected turn of fortune saw Yokohama growing in leaps and bounds to become a major hub for foreign trade in Japan. With this transformation came attendant traders and their families, who set up shop and established homes away from their homelands as they sought a slice of the commercial pie of a newly opened nation. Merchants who originated from the West tended to end up as residents in Yamate, and a neighbourhood just below it, Motomachi.

The architectural legacy of that by-gone era is still highly visible in both these districts. The hills of Yamate teem with old European-style houses, some of which once served as the offices of diplomatic missions, as well as churches and parks. Yamate remains a functioning, well-heeled residential area, with two international schools and premium addresses for privileged citizens of the city. History is never far away, though, and of particular interest to many visitors is the Yokohama Foreign General Cemetery, which is located at a hilly area known as Yamate Bluff. The story of this graveyard began in 1854 when Commodore Perry negotiated for land to bury a marine who had died aboard one of his



frigates. His special request for a plot overlooking the sea was granted, and shortly afterwards, two Russian sailors were buried at the site as well. The cemetery was officially designated for foreign burials in 1861; today, a section of its 18,500 square metre grounds is open to the public on weekends and national holidays between March and December. The many tombstones provide an intriguing glimpse into the life of pioneering tradesmen and their kin, and hint at the stories of men and women who in many ways were responsible for the growth of Yokohama from a coastal hamlet into the city we see today. The lush green surroundings exude a sense of peace, which belies the often turbulent existence of those interred within the bluff.

A short distance away from the cemetery lies the Harbour View Park, so-named for its splendid vista of Yokohama Harbour; here, views of the city skyline and the Yokohama Bay Bridge can take on an almost ethereal quality, particularly on blustery winter nights. The park is also known for its British and French gardens, which are planted with rose bushes that bloom in the spring and autumn, a reminder of the British and French garrisons that used to be housed nearby.

Just down the hill from Yamate lies the Motomachi shopping district with its cobbled streets and rows of shops built in a quaint Japanese-European hybrid architectural style. This commercial zone originally ca-

tered to the newly domiciled foreigners who stayed in the vicinity, and is credited with the introduction of many Western products and trends to Japan, from the first European bakery to, much later in the post-war era, a new designer fashion style called *Hama Tora* or Yokohama Traditional. In many ways, Motomachi feels like a microcosm of Yokohama, the essence of a city summarised in 500 metres of semi-pedestrianised street. This was one of my favourite places to linger and watch the crowd from the comfort of a streetside French or Italian café on a lazy afternoon, when it would almost feel as if one were in Paris or Milan, but with a Japanese twist.





## YOKOHAMA CHUKAGAI: JAPANESE ORDER, CHINESE FLAVOURS

Sometime after the Americans kicked down the proverbial door of the Tokugawa shogunate, traders, translators and other seekers of fortune started to pour in from China. Although just a short hop away across the East China Sea, the Middle Kingdom was no less affected by Japan's long isolation edicts than the rest of the world. These early Chinese pioneers established enclaves within the districts set aside for foreigners, close to Yamate and Motomachi, which grew over time, surviving the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1922 and two world wars, to become Yokohama Chukagai, or Yokohama Chinatown. But it was only in 1955, with the building of a Goodwill Gate in the form of a traditional Chinese arch or *paifang* that Yokohama Chukagai obtained official recognition; today, this sprawling corner of the city, filled with countless shops, restaurants and streetside eateries, is the largest Chinatown in Japan and one of the biggest in the world.

Chinatowns the world over, where early migrants from China sought refuge and community among their countrymen in often hostile new nations, tend to look

and feel almost identical, as if they were mass produced from the same bale of cloth at a factory in Shenzhen, and it is tempting to adopt the attitude of "if you have seen one Chinatown, you have seen them all." But scratch the surface and you will realise how local cultural elements have infused into the fabric of a foreign outpost – a testament to the resilience and adaptability of the Chinese diaspora.

Yokohama Chukagai is a bona fide Chinatown, but with a distinct yet subtle touch of Japan. There is a characteristically Japanese orderliness about the place, despite the crowds, densely packed shops and armies of waitresses beseeching you to dine at their establishments in strongly accented Japanese. Enter one of these eateries and the menu offers authentic Chinese fare though, with minor modifications to suit the Japanese palate. Wander the narrow streets of Yokohama Chukagai, and one begins to appreciate not just how the early Chinese settlers integrated into Yokohama life while preserving their own culture, but also how their influence has spread to other parts of the city, far beyond the boundaries of the four gates that stand guard at each of Yokohama Chukagai's cardinal directions.





## MINATO MIRAI: FROM SHIPYARD TO MUSEUMS BY THE BAY

For all its history, Yokohama is a fairly young city, compared to Kyoto, Osaka and even Tokyo. Before the groundbreaking events of the 1850s, it was little more than a fishing village. How far Yokohama has come since then is best seen in Minato Mirai. Often referred to simply as MM, Minato Mirai represent the cutting edge, ultra-modern facet of the city, an urban centre created in the 1980s to form one massive central business district flanked by the Kannai and Yokohama Stations. Here rises the tallest building in Japan, the Landmark Tower, along with several other skyscrapers, the Cosmo Clock 21 Ferris Wheel and the Yokohama Museum of Art. Minato Mirai is a smorgasbord of luxury hotels, shiny offices, shopping malls and conventional centres. Collectively, these structures form the contour of Yokohama's skyline, a hallmark of many promotional photographs and postcards, and the district consequently has become the global face of the city.

Built over a formerly industrial area of shipyards and wharves, as well as reclaimed land by the sea, Minato Mirai retains fragments of its past, which have been given a new lease of life. The Yokohama Red Brick Warehouse or *Akarenga Soko*, hails from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and was originally two separate structures, Warehouse 1 and Warehouse 2. Used as custom houses until 1989, Warehouse 1 has been transformed into an event venue for exhibitions, concerts, film screenings and live performances, while Warehouse 2 serves as an off-beat shopping mall with chic restaurants and a popular jazz club.

Another landmark by the Minato Mirai waterfront, facing Tokyo Bay, is *Nippon Maru*, a sailing ship

launched in 1930 as a training ship for naval cadets and now permanently docked in Yokohama Harbour as a floating museum and showcase of the city's maritime heritage. The retired vessel, easily visible with its bright white hull and towering masts, forms part of a circuit of museums dotting Minato Mirai, which cater to the high-brow, geeky and quirky, respectively: in the Yokohama Museum of Art, the Mitsubishi Minatomirai Industrial Museum and the Cup Noodles Museum, which honours the inventor of instant ramen, Momofuku Ando (1910-2007).

## COOL SIGHTS, CONFIDENT CITY

Yokohama isn't a city that screams for attention; instead, this metropolis has a gentle and persuasive appeal that is more of a brisk walk than a stomping run. Sophisticated, urbane and confident, it is a refined embodiment of an uncanny Japanese penchant for mixing and matching seemingly contradictory elements while maintaining perfect harmony – nonchalant yet engaged, contemporary yet deeply connected to its past, a purveyor of foreign goods, trends and ideas yet one hundred percent Japanese in spirit. Yokohama beckons the visitor to Japan, not with loud, flashing neon lights, but with a non-descript, almost camouflaged signboard, like the kind often employed by the best underground, insider-only sushi restaurants and sake clubs, where the essence of a place, shorn of hype and hard-sell, is all that's needed to speak for itself.

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*Justin Ho is Manager, Education and NHB Academy, National Heritage Board.*





# WHAT'S ON

## OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2013

### // NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD

**Our Museum @ Taman Jurong**  
Till 31 December 2013

Our Museum @ Taman Jurong is Singapore's first community museum. Located at the Taman Jurong Community Club, it showcases artefacts and artworks from Singapore's National Collection, as well as creations from the community. Curated by the Singapore Art Museum, the theme of the museum's exhibition is 'Picturing Home' – visitors can view archival photographs of what Taman Jurong used to look like in the past and learn about the unique history of this neighbourhood. Our Museum @ Taman Jurong is a collaboration between the National Heritage Board (NHB), Taman Jurong Citizen's Consultative Committee, Taman Jurong Community Arts and Culture Club and People's Association.

### // ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM

**Devotion & Desire: Cross-Cultural Art in Asia, New Acquisitions of the Asian Civilisations Museum**  
Till 8 Dec 2013

When cultures come together, whether through migration, intermarriage, cultural borrowing, or mixing of ideas, distinctive works of art are created. The Asian Civilisations Museum has always focused on building understanding of the diverse cultures of Asia, their interconnections, and their relations with the world. Many of the new objects on display reveal these connections, which produced art of astonishing variety and beauty. Cross-cultural works of art are powerful indicators that peoples of diverse cultures and faiths have lived together harmoniously for centuries throughout Asia. The themes of this exhibition include the importance of trade, transmission of religions, courtly art, and colonial networks. This is the first time that the public has the opportunity to see many of these new treasures.

**Curator Tour – Devotion and Desire**  
4 October & 6 December 2013  
7.30–8.30 pm

Join the exhibition curator on a tour of this landmark exhibition to learn more about the objects on display and the development of cross-cultural art. A charge of \$15 applies. Booking is essential and may be done by emailing [nhb\\_acm\\_prog@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_acm_prog@nhb.gov.sg)

**Drawing in the Galleries**  
25 October, 15 November &  
29 November 2013 / 6.45–8.45 pm

Discover rich patterns or details in art and train your hand, eye, and mind in this series of drawing workshops.

An instructor will provide insights on drawing techniques based on the Devotion and Desire exhibition. This adult programme is open to participants of all levels. A charge of \$15 applies (\$30 for 3 sessions).

**Afternoon@ACM: Start with Art**  
5 October, 2 November &  
7 December 2013 / 2–5 pm

Families can interact with art and heritage in creative ways on these Saturday afternoons at the museum. Enjoy art from a different perspective through engaging tours, and explore our Cabinet of Curiosities to get up close and personal with our handling collection. Afterwards, create and bring home a craft inspired by *Devotion and Desire*. Free admission for citizens and permanent residents.

**ACM After Dark: Mystic Asia**  
26 October 2013 / 7–11 pm

The Asian supernatural comes to life at the museum after dark. Be thrilled by activities and performances inspired by the objects from the galleries and Asian folklore. Enjoy a ghostly movie screening, hear haunting tales in the galleries, and make your own spooky souvenir to take home. Admission is free.

**Lunchtime Concerts at ACM**  
4, 11, 18, 25 October &  
1, 8, 15 November 2013  
12.30–1.30 pm

Popular lunchtime concerts return in October to the Asian Civilisations Museum with exciting classical and jazz music from winds, strings, brass, and woodwinds. Admission is free.

**Devotion and Desire Festival**  
30 November / 1–5 pm

Meet interesting characters in special tours or enjoy workshops and performances at this fun-filled festival. Free admission.

**Exploring the Cosmos: The Stupa as a Buddhist Symbol**  
Till 10 November 2013

The stupa is the principal architectural form of Buddhism and is found across Asia, including in Thailand. This exhibition features 29 works from the ACM's collection, covering a period from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as a hanging mobile stupa by Thai artist Jakkai Siributr.

**Lacquer Across Asia**  
Till 9 February 2014

Explore the art of lacquer from China and mainland Southeast Asia. A prized commodity traded and presented

to dignitaries, lacquer is a precious material that signifies wealth and social standing. Different decorative techniques and styles were created in response to local needs and tastes. Chinese lacquer fashioned for literati and the imperial court, as well as Burmese and Thai examples made for Buddhist merit-making rituals, illustrate the wide variety of this craft.

**Hearts on Fire**  
27 September 2013 – 5 January 2014

Go on a journey with twelve young artists as they express themselves through art. Admire the thought put into each piece, and feel the love they have for people around them. Be inspired by their passion for art and the fire in their hearts. *Hearts on Fire* is an art collaboration between the Asian Civilisations Museum and Club Rainbow (Singapore), an organisation that supports families of chronically ill children. Using collections from the Asian Civilisations Museum as inspiration, these children were presented with various art challenges which they took on excitedly. This exhibition showcases not just their artwork, but also the process of learning how to be an artist.

**Teochew Opera Movies in the 1960s: An Outsider's Point of View (ACM-NUS China Affair Lecture Series)**  
5 October 2013 / 2–4 pm

During the 1960s, Hong Kong studios produced over 150 Teochew opera movies targeted at the Southeast Asian markets, including Singapore-Malaya, Vietnam, and Thailand. The rapid development of the Teochew opera movie industry was, to a very large extent, attributed to the box office success of the movie *Su Liu Niang* (1960) performed by the Guangdong Chaoju Troupe. The popularity and high demand for Teochew opera movies were also closely connected to the political and cultural policies of China during the Cold War. Focusing on the productions of two Hong Kong movie companies, Sun Luen and Chiu Ngai, this talk by Dr. Yung Sai-Shing, Associate Professor, Department of Chinese Studies, National University of Singapore, examines the political and business interactions between China, Hong Kong and Southeast Asia as reflected in the Teochew movie industry. This lecture is free and will be conducted in Mandarin. Seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis. No registration is required.

**China, Singapore, Assassination: An Untold Story of the Lim Boon Keng Gunshot Incident in 1928 (ACM-NUS China Affair Lecture Series)**  
19 October 2013 / 2–4 pm

Dr Lim Boon Keng was a prominent

figure in Singapore's history. But an incident in 1928, when he suffered gunshot wounds during an assassination attempt, has been hitherto neglected. This lecture by Dr Wong Sin Kiong, Associate Professor, Department of Chinese Studies, National University of Singapore, will talk about the origins and significance of the incident, and the impact of China's politics on Chinese communities in Singapore in the early 20th century. This lecture is free and will be conducted in Mandarin. Seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis. No registration is required.

**The Cult of the Fox in China (ACM-NUS China Affair Lecture Series)**  
23 November 2013 / 2-4 pm

The fox cult has a long history in ancient China. Foxes have been a familiar topic in classical Chinese literature, and a prominent figure in *zhiguai* tales as well as *chuanqi* fiction. Their images range from male to female and from young to old. Foxes are spectral creatures characteristic of possession, metamorphosis and sexual enchantment. How was the cult of the fox developed in ancient China? What historical changes did the fox undergo in its role? This lecture by Dr Su Jui-lung, Associate Professor, Department of Chinese Studies, National University of Singapore, discusses the formation of the fox cult and the roles the fox played in Chinese popular religion and literature. This lecture is free and will be conducted in Mandarin. Seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis. No registration is required.

**Raffles and the Archaeology of Southeast Asia (Friday with Friends Series)**  
29 November 2013 / 7-8 pm

Stamford Raffles contributed much to the study of ancient Southeast Asia. This talk focuses on his role in fostering the study of the past before archaeology existed. It will touch on his History of Java and the document known as Raffles MS 18, the oldest known version of the *Sejarah Melayu*, and one of the most important items that Raffles acquired in the course of his avid collecting of samples of natural and cultural items from Southeast Asia. The talk will also provide some details on what we have learned about the British in Sumatra from excavations in Bengkulu in the 1980s. Raffles was based there at the time he established the first British presence here. The speaker, Dr John Miksic, is Associate Professor at the Southeast Asian Studies Department, National University of Singapore. This lecture is free. Seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis. No registration is required.

**Dispelling the Darkness: The True Story of Darwin, Wallace and the Discovery of Evolution in Southeast Asia (Friday with Friends Series)**  
13 December 2013 / 7-8 pm

Charles Darwin is one of the most famous scientists in history, but he is not alone. Relatively forgotten, Alfred Russel Wallace independently discovered evolution by natural selection through his travels in Southeast Asia, which included Singapore. This talk is based on the most thorough research ever conducted on Wallace's voyage. It turns out the story is very different to what we have been told. The speaker, Dr John van Wyhe, is Senior Lecturer at the Departments of Biological Sciences and History, National University of Singapore. This lecture is free. Seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis. No registration is required.

**// THE PERANAKAN MUSEUM**

**Luminous Depths**  
Till 22 September 2013

A contemporary installation in the atrium of the Peranakan Museum explores the nature of collecting, and asks how a museum develops. Issues of archaeology, memory, connoisseurship, and rebirth are taken up by the artist Lee Mingwei, whose project invites visitors to participate in creating new work. The work was inspired by Mingwei's first visit to the Peranakan Museum. Upon entering, he recalled his grandparents' home, where light cascading from the skylight, with sounds and aromas coming from different floors "became a sort of multisensory symphony in my mind". *Luminous Depths* was designed in collaboration with Desai/Chai Architecture, New York."

**Straits Family Sunday: Bead-dazzle**  
13 October 2013 / 1-5 pm

Get inspired by the beautiful beaded objects when you go on a guided tour of the galleries. Decorate a plastic folder with Peranakan motifs using beads or feel a real beaded shoe from our handling collection. Have a fun-filled Sunday with the whole family at the museum. Admission is complimentary with museum admission fee.

**Straits Family Sunday**  
10 November & 8 December 2013  
1-5 pm

Join us on the second Sunday of every month for this drop-in programme. Craft something to take home with you based on the museum's collection, or go on a special themed tour of the galleries. Dress up with the whole family in a batik shirt or sarong kebaya. See the handling collection up close or

relax with a good book in our reading corner. Enjoy a fun-filled Sunday for the whole family at the Peranakan Museum. Admission is complimentary with museum admission fee. Please visit [www.peranakanmuseum.sg](http://www.peranakanmuseum.sg) for more details.

**// NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE**

**A Changed World: Singapore Art 1950s-1970s**  
25 Oct 2013 - 16 Mar 2014

*A Changed World* explores the development of Singapore art in light of the rapid changes that took place in Singapore after World War II. It charts the artists' own engagement with changes in Singapore's political, economic, social and urban landscape, and how they expressed their responses through their art. The exhibition spans Singapore's immediate post-war period, from which both an artistic and national consciousness began to emerge, to the 1970s, when a Singaporean identity came to be solidified while artists adopted a new pictorial language that was more international. Held in the Basement Exhibition Gallery 2, the exhibition will feature over 120 paintings, drawings, prints and sculptures from the National Collection. *A Changed World* is a parallel event of Singapore Biennale 2013.

**Special Guided Tour with Curator Szan Tan**  
28 Nov 2013 / 7.30pm-9pm

What place does abstract art and Chinese ink painting have in the history of Singapore's visual art and her historical development? And what is the relationship between Western abstraction and Chinese ink painting? What are the sources of inspiration for the works of second-generation artists in Singapore? Join Szan Tan, co-curator of the exhibition *A Changed World: Singapore Art 1950s-1970s* in a special tour as she journeys through their works and analyse their individual responses to the changed world around them in the late 1960s to 1970s. Szan has worked as a curator since 1997 and has an interest in paintings, textiles and folk cultures. Admission is free but registration is required. Limited to 20 participants per tour. Please email your contact details to [nhb\\_nm\\_lectures@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_nm_lectures@nhb.gov.sg)

**The Story of Kong Ngee / 光艺的故事**  
11 Oct - 20 Oct 2013 / Various Timings  
(In Cantonese with English Subtitles)

Amongst the Chinese movie moguls to have emerged from Singapore after the Second World War, Run Run Shaw of Shaw Organisation and Loke Wan Tho of Cathay Organisation are

the most frequently cited examples. Few, however, have heard about the glorious journey of the Ho family's Kong Ngee Company Limited, which went from film distribution to owning cinema halls across Southeast Asia and eventually making films through the Kong Ngee Film Company.

*The Story of Kong Ngee* charts the rise and fall of the Ho brothers' film studio and how they came to dominate the Chinese film circuit with a successful venture into motion picture production. A special showcase of 15 Cantonese films made by Kong Ngee during the 1950s and 1960s, including the famed "Nanyang Trilogy", offers visions and memories of Singapore in the past which continue to resonate in the present. From detective mysteries to melodramas and romantic comedies, Kong Ngee films reflect an exuberant modernity, launching the careers of celebrated movie stars such as Patsy Kar Ling, Nam Hung and Patrick Tse Yin. *The Story of Kong Ngee* offers a glimpse into the studio's distinguished output, with a series of films that exemplify the unique artistic heritage that Kong Ngee sought to contribute to the film industries of Hong Kong and Singapore.

Tickets to this screening at the Gallery Theatre, Basement, cost \$9 (includes SISTIC handling fees; concessions available). For more information and the full film schedule, please visit [www.nationalmuseum.sg](http://www.nationalmuseum.sg)

**Seen & Heard in Singapore Island: Ecologies Today and in the Time of William Farquhar**  
From 29 October 2012

Guest-curated by visual artist Lucy Davis, an Assistant Professor at the Nanyang Technological University's School of Art, Design and Media, this new selection from the William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings invites visitors to explore the sights and sounds of the natural world Farquhar would have encountered when he first arrived in Singapore in 1819. Accompanying the vibrant watercolour drawings are newly introduced audio stations with birdcall recordings, a taxidermy specimen of the common palm civet (a mammal native to Singapore) and Davis' own woodcut animation featuring elements from the collection. Other segments feature the variety of palms native to Singapore, animals and plants of local mangroves, and the secrets of local forest fauna and flora.

**// SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM****Singapore Biennale 2013 –  
If The World Changed**

26 October 2013 – 16 February 2014

**Vernissage**

24 &amp; 25 October 2013

If you could change the world, what would it look like?

The Singapore Biennale 2013 is the country's premier contemporary art exhibition. It returns this year with the title *If the World Changed*, and invites everyone to re-consider or re-imagine the world we live in. Expect a diverse range of works from over 80 artists primarily with links to Southeast Asia, of which more than half are new commissions. The fourth edition of the Biennale draws on the expertise of 27 curators from across the region, presenting a diversity of artistic responses with a distinctive Southeast Asian voice.

Held primarily in the vibrant arts and cultural district of the Bras Basah Bugis precinct, the Biennale will take place at venues such as Fort Canning Park, the National Library Building, the National Museum of Singapore, The Peranakan Museum, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore Management University, Waterloo Centre and Our Museum @ Taman Jurong. The Singapore Biennale 2013 is organised by the Singapore Art Museum and supported by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, National Arts Council and National Heritage Board in Singapore. For more details, visit [www.singaporebiennale.org](http://www.singaporebiennale.org).

**Not Against Interpretation: Untitled**  
Till 27 April 2014

While the appreciation of art has largely been perceived to be a visual affair, it is also a process that is often mediated by text. After all, artistic intentions and artwork subject matter are frequently conveyed to viewers through words, writings, and most of all, artwork titles. If names matter, what can we say about untitled artworks that seem to say nothing, or quite possibly everything? To what extent do text and image attach meaning to art? Without titles and established commentaries, is it yet possible to gain a genuine encounter with art?

*Untitled*, the second edition in SAM's *Not Against Interpretation* exhibition series, draws from a selection of the National Heritage Board collection of works by Singapore artists that are untitled.

While artists' motivations for presenting their works as untitled ones may vary, many untitled works

are frequently meant to allow viewers to discover meaning through their own perspectives. Besides artistic intent, viewers' interpretations of artworks also play a significant role in the definition of an artwork. In this exhibition, visitors are welcome to suggest suitable titles, placed alongside the artwork, as part of the exhibition objectives of opening up new readings in the experience of contemporary art.

*Not Against Interpretation* is an experimental platform aimed at nurturing appreciation for contemporary art, and invites visitors to interpret the artworks in their own way based on their experiences with the artists' works.

**Learning Gallery:  
People and Places**  
Ongoing

The Learning Gallery is the Singapore Art Museum's permanent exhibition dedicated to presenting artworks selected from the museum's collection to promote engagement and discussion of broader issues through contemporary art. The gallery also aims to nurture an appreciation for art, and develop creative and analytical thinking among its visitors, including the young.

*People and Places* showcases twenty Southeast Asian contemporary art works from SAM's permanent collection that looks at the people, places and spaces around us. Revolving around ideas of identity, urbanisation, globalisation and the environment, these works present the artists' visions and interpretations of pertinent issues about urban living in the modern cityscape.

**// SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM****Snakes and Ladders**  
Till November 2013

Did you know that snakes cannot move backwards and they have very poor hearing? With limited eyesight and hearing, snakes have developed a very good sensing tongue. Snakes are reptiles that evolved from lizards. To adapt to living underground, their legs became unnecessary and were lost over time. The movable eyelids became transparent covers and snakes lost their external eardrum. Like all reptiles, snakes have scaly skins to prevent them from drying up. There are about 3,000 species of snakes. They are cold-blooded and depend on external heat to keep alive. So, many snakes are found in warmer tropical areas. Find out other interesting facts and myths of this scaly but not slimy creature in the Children's Gallery of the Singapore Philatelic Museum. The exhibition is held in conjunction with the zodiac year of the snake.

**Spice Is Nice**  
Till May 2014

Touch, feel and smell spices that are commonly used in Singapore such as pepper, cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg. Did you know that some of these spices were once worth their weight in gold? This interactive exhibition traces the voyages of discovery, the history of the spice trade and its impact on Singapore, traditional cures and flavours of regional cuisine. Learn about explorers such as Christopher Columbus, Vasco da Gama and Ferdinand Magellan who made significant contributions to the discovery of the origins of spices, and in the process, discovered new lands and people. Experience life at sea as encountered by early immigrants from Southern China – in a recreated dark and cramped cargo hold of a ship, complete with sound effects and creepy pests.

**Seeing is Believing:  
Unusual Stamps Exhibition**  
5 Dec 2013 – May 2014

Have you seen stamps that are made of materials other than paper? Come and view a display of unusual stamps from the museum's permanent collection from Singapore and overseas. Discover quirky features on these little treasures that tickle your five senses of sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch.

Put your nose to stamps that smell of familiar scents like flower, coffee and chocolate. Feel stamps made of different materials such as flockage, wood, silk and lace. See stamps that glow in the dark and those that feature 3D images. Listen to stamps that can play the national anthem, folk songs or even read a poem. There are stamps that taste of chocolate! Don't believe what you just read? Come see the exhibition for yourself!

**Mailboxes**  
27 November & 12 December, 2013  
10 am–12 pm

Have you ever wondered what the inside of a postbox looks like? View miniature postboxes from around the world, discover interesting facts about postboxes and find out how mail is delivered. You can also paint and decorate your very own tin mailbox! This school holiday programme is suitable for children aged 7 to 12. Charge: \$25 per person. To sign up, contact Lily at 6513 7347 or email [Lily\\_Samuel@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:Lily_Samuel@nhb.gov.sg).

**Overnight Adventure at Singapore  
Philatelic Museum**  
21/22 November & 5/6 December 2013  
6 pm–9 am

Check-in at the museum for a night of adventure, games and craft! Meet new

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friends, learn about the 'King of Hobbies' and enjoy the rare opportunity of sleeping among stamps! Bring along a sleeping bag, jacket, pyjamas, fresh change of clothing and toiletries. Programme includes dinner, supper and breakfast. This school holiday programme is suitable for children aged 7 to 12. Charge: \$80 per person. To sign up, contact Lily at 6513 7347 or email Lily\_Samuel@nhb.gov.sg.

#### Unusual Stamps Workshop

3 & 13 December 2013 / 10 am - 2 pm

Do you know that not all stamps are printed on paper? Some are made of unusual materials like wood, lace, foil, and some even smell like chocolate! Explore these exciting stamps then design your very own unusual stamp! This school holiday programme is suitable for children aged 7 to 12. Charge: \$15 per person. To sign up, contact Lily at 6513 7347 or email Lily\_Samuel@nhb.gov.sg.

#### The Spice Trail

19 November & 4 December 2013  
10 am-12 pm

Visit the 'Spice Is Nice' galleries and learn about early explorers. Find out how spices can be used as traditional cures and in yummy festival food. Go on a walking trail to Fort Canning Park to see spice plants and then create a special spice craft. This school holiday programme is suitable for children aged 7 to 12. Charge: \$15 per person. To sign up, contact Laura at 6513 7348 or email Laura\_Tan@nhb.gov.sg.

#### // SUN YAT SEN NANYANG MEMORIAL HALL

##### Kindred Spirits: Dr. Sun Yat Sen, Singapore and Japan

Till 17 November 2013

This exhibition on Dr Sun Yat Sen and his supporters in Japan and Singapore will highlight the roles the two countries played in Dr Sun's revolutionary activities and showcase close to 90 rare artefacts on display in Singapore for the first time. The exhibition is presented by the Memorial Hall in partnership with the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (Kobe), Miyazaki Brothers Museum (Arao), Nagasaki Museum of History & Culture, Ms Kosaka Ayano and Dr. Nakano Masahiko, with the support of the Embassy of Japan in Singapore and the Japanese Association, Singapore.

#### // MALAY HERITAGE CENTRE

##### Ilham Alam: Nature and Healing in the Malay World (Ilham Alam: Tradisi Perubatan Dunia Melayu)

18 September 2013 - 5 January 2014

The earliest medicines were derived

from compounds of plants and animal parts. In spite of the advances of modern biomedicine, many communities around the world continue to rely on the traditional medical practices of their respective cultures. In fact, many herbal remedies have been lauded for their perceived "holistic" healing benefits, accessibility and affordability. *Ilham Alam: Nature and Healing in the Malay World* examines the ways in which various historical Malay communities have harnessed the bounty of flora and fauna to create both preventive and curative medicines. It also explores the corpus of traditional Malay medicine as a specialised form of local knowledge specially in relation to early Malay conceptualisations of the human body as well as human relationships to the natural environment. In partnership with the Singapore Botanical Gardens, the exhibition will also feature a medicinal plant maze, rare 19<sup>th</sup> century Malay medicinal manuscripts as well as selected tools of trade of traditional Malay healers.

##### Galleries Alive! Kampong Gelam Tales (A Dramatised Tour)

2 November & 25 December 2013  
10 am & 4 pm

Journey through the galleries of Malay Heritage Centre with special characters and learn more about the history of Kampong Gelam and the Malay communities in Singapore! Registration for performances and tours are required. To register, please email your contact details to NHB\_MHC\_Programmes@nhb.gov.sg. Admission to programme is free.

##### Let's Play!

Tuesdays, 9 July 2013 to 25 March 2014  
11 am & 2 pm

Learn more about traditional Malay games at the Malay Heritage Centre! Learn skills you will need for the wau (traditional Malay kites), main lereng (wheel spinning), congkak (traditional Malay board game), batu serembat (five stones) and more! This 45-mins workshop will also invite participants to create and bring home their own traditional games through fun craft activities. Walk-ins are welcome. Registration is required for group bookings. For more information about the games available or registration, please call 6391 0450 or email nhb\_mhc\_programmes@nhb.gov.sg. Admission to workshop is free.

##### Public Lecture Series Satu: Malay in Episodes

Selected Saturdays, 2-3.30 pm

Public Lecture Series Satu: Malay in Episodes is a series of lectures that explore and promote a deeper understanding of Malay heritage,

culture and values. The lectures will feature topics connected to MHC's permanent galleries as presented by academics, community and cultural leaders. Held at the MHC Auditorium, admission is free but registration is required. To register, please email your name and contact details to NHB\_MHC\_Programmes@nhb.gov.sg. MHC reserves the rights to change the schedule of the lectures.

##### Adat (Malay Custom) & Music by Dr Margaret Kartomi (in English)

12 October 2013 / 2 - 3.30 pm

Drawing on her ethnomusicological expertise particularly with regards to her fieldwork in Riau and Sumatra, Dr Kartomi, a Professor of Music at the Faculty of Arts, Monash University, will examine the concept of adat in relation to traditional Malay music. With a particular interest in Indonesia, her research focuses on the representations of identity through music which includes studies on performance, instruments, lyrical texts, sound and visual art as expressive modes of ethnicity, gender, religion, and history. Admission is free but registration is required. To register, please email your name and contact details to NHB\_MHC\_Programmes@nhb.gov.sg.

#### // THE NATIONAL ART GALLERY, SINGAPORE

##### In/sight: Abstract Art by Wu Guanzhong and Artists from Southeast Asia

Till 30 April 2014

How does the abstraction of Wu Guanzhong relate to the abstraction of artists in Southeast Asia? This exhibition presents a selection of abstract works from the National Collection to illustrate the diverse motivations for abstraction amidst distinct and varied backgrounds. Wu Guanzhong (1919-2010), one of the foremost painters in Chinese modern art, was a leading exponent of abstraction in China. Wu saw form as an important component in appreciating a work of art, seeing beauty in formal visual elements like line, shape, colour, texture and composition. These were of critical concern, much more than subject matter and physical resemblance to an object in reality. This focus on form is likewise evident in the abstract works of artists in Southeast Asia. Many artists in Southeast Asia engaged with abstraction as part of their grappling with the modernisation of art in their local contexts. Works by Southeast Asian artists such as Anthony Poon, Latiff Mohidin, Ahmad Sadali and Damrong Wong-Uparaj will also be featured in the exhibition. This exhibition is held at the Singapore Art Museum.



be **MUSE**  
N°24



*Milestones of the National Heritage Board*

# Twenty to Celebrate

written by MARCUS NG

THE PAST HAS NEVER LOOMED SO LARGE IN THE PRESENT.  
AND WITH SUCH VIGOUR, DEPTH AND DIVERSITY.

**T**urn back the clock to Singapore circa 1990, and who could have predicted that an island once derided as a “cultural desert” would be home to more than 50 museums of all sizes, public as well as private, each offering a collection and curatorial direction that sheds light on a unique facet of life in the Lion City. The oeuvre of an artist with deep roots or close ties to Singapore, the origins and culture of one of Singapore’s many ethnic communities, the story of a venerable public body, the biodiversity of local forests or simply an aspect of history that demands and deserves a showcase of its own, from stamps to toys and sports – Singapore today offers an ecosystem of museums and heritage institutions that tell the story of a nation from a wealth of perspectives and cater to a broad spectrum of interests.

What’s more, the stalwarts of the scene, the museums of the civic district that opened under the auspices

of the National Heritage Board and which paved the way to a thriving heritage landscape, are no strangers to reinvention, having recast their halls into warm, welcoming public spaces, with permanent galleries that reward every fresh visit and a regular cycle of blockbuster and special exhibitions that illuminate a theme or offer a chance to peer into ancient civilisations on home ground. These institutions, in creating line-ups that break the mould of tradition, are also challenging long-held notions of what a museum is all about, reaching out to new audiences young and old and partners from all segments of society, and taking history up a notch and more with film screenings, recitals, talks and festivals in which the past comes alive, with substance and style.

History has invaded the heartlands too. The Singapore HeritageFest, now in its tenth year, has become an annual extravaganza that brings a rich and accessible

dose of culture and heritage to Singaporeans, who can plunge into special festival programmes held at participating museums, visit various festival hubs across the island for unique thematic exhibitions and performances, or sign up for talks and walking trails that take one, literally, down memory lane and into neighbourhoods, clan houses and hawker centres to see, touch and taste the flavours of yesteryear. And not to forget, Our Museum @ Taman Jurong, Singapore's first community museum, marks a bold step into a heritage gallery jointly put together by residents of the neighbourhood and professional curators from the Singapore Art Museum.

Heritage is also now in your hands. A growing series of community trails, as well as walking trails charting the Civic District and Singapore River, provide handy launchpads to adventures through time in one's own backyard. A growing number of Singaporeans have also dug into their memories to document personal milestones, trace the histories of favourite stomping grounds, schools and other social landmarks, and pen their stories in print or online, with many of these accounts finding their way to bookstores thanks to funding support from the National Heritage Board, which has also provided grants for heritage-related projects ranging from board games and food guides to fashion lines and mobile apps. Meanwhile, a new generation of artists and designers have drawn inspiration from old school objects to craft items of desire that combine everyday practicality and vintage elements in the Museum Label collection, which includes piggy banks, aprons, t-shirts, tote-bags and traditional games in fresh packages.

From museums to merchandise, the management of monuments to exhibitions on the move, the National Heritage Board (NHB) has plenty of milestones to look back on and much more to look forward to as it celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Few could have thought, when the NHB was founded on 1 August 1993, that a statutory board charged with the oversight and development of a museum precinct and housed in modest shophouses along Armenian Street would come to catalyse an entire sector and nurture a sustained and active interest in the places, artefacts, stories, individuals and communities that make up the Singapore story.

Behind the scenes, the NHB has tackled a gamut of tasks that seldom hog the limelight. Wooing sponsors, donors and Patrons of Heritage, training and equipping an army of volunteers and docents, preserving artefacts for posterity while preparing them for public display, cultivating links with foreign museums and heritage institutions, marking historic sites across the island, overseeing the use of national symbols and monuments, forging ties with schools, community groups and grassroots organisations and supporting their efforts to study, teach and talk about Singapore's heritage with the people around them – the NHB has its hands full and yet continues to fulfil its mandate, finding strength in its ranks and satisfaction in the way its core mission – to foster nationhood, a national identity and a vibrant cultural and heritage sector – is now shared by a growing number of Singaporeans. This is, surely, a sign that the 'heartware' for a country that takes pride in its past is well and firmly installed in the minds of citizens for whom heritage has become a way of life, a tangible connection with one's roots and a source of unity for all Singaporeans, who are still, through their experiences and endeavours, making and writing the history of the nation.

To mark the NHB's 20<sup>th</sup> year, *BeMuse* takes you through the history of the board itself, through 20 selected milestones that make up part of the NHB's legacy, and which we hope have left a lasting impression and fond memories for everyone who has visited, taken part or worked in these landmark events, occasions and institutions.



National  
Heritage  
Board

20

YEARS of  
HERITAGE  
with YOU  
1993–2013



## 1. ALAMKARA

### FIRST NHB BLOCKBUSTER EXHIBITION

Held from 1 July 1994 to 1 January 1995, *Alamkara: 5000 Years of India* was the NHB's first blockbuster exhibition, jointly organised by the Asian Civilisations Museum and the National Museum of New Delhi. Presented at the then Singapore History Museum (now National Museum of Singapore), the exhibition drew a record 165,000 visitors, the highest number for any local museum show at that time. *Alamkara* featured more than 300 artefacts from the National Museum in New Delhi, some of which had never been displayed outside India, including a small stone casket containing the relics of Gautama Buddha, found in 1978 in Piprahwa near the India-Nepal border. The exhibition had a thematic approach, based on the recurrent motif of decoration or *Alamkara*. Starting from the ancient Indus-Sarasvati civilisation and the development of Indian temples and sculptures, it moved on to ornamentation in jewellery, textiles and costumes, with artefacts that recount the role of food, leisure, games, courtly ideals, women and religion in the Indian subcontinent.



## 2. WORLD WAR II SITES

### INSTALLATION OF WORLD WAR II HISTORIC SITE MARKERS

On 15 August 1995, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Pacific War, the NHB marked 14 sites that were significant battlegrounds or landmarks during World War II. The marked locations include major battle sites at Sarimbun Beach, Kranji Beach, Bukit Timah and Pasir Panjang as well as places associated with the Sook Ching atrocities against civilians, such as Changi Beach, Punggol Beach and the Sook Ching Centre Site outside Hong Lim Complex. Later, on 14 February 2012, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Singapore, the NHB added six new World War II markers at the Causeway, Seletar Airfield, Fort Canning Command Centre, Keppel Harbour, MacRitchie Reservoir (Force 136) and the Rimau 10 Execution Site near Dover Road. Complementing the World War II trail is a series of Resilience Trails that incorporate the wartime landmarks as well as nearby elements of Singapore's built and natural heritage. This was also the year in which the NHB began its programme of marking historic sites. To date, 100 historic sites represented by blue plaques have been marked around the island.





### 3. WILLIAM FARQUHAR COLLECTION OF NATURAL HISTORY DRAWINGS

SINGLE LARGEST DONATION TO NHB

The NHB received its single largest donation ever on September 1995, when prominent local stockbroker and heritage enthusiast Mr Goh Geok Khim aka G.K. Goh gave the William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings to the then Singapore History Museum. The drawings, the only surviving set of its kind in the world, consist of 477 exquisite watercolour depictions of the flora and fauna of the Straits Settlements commissioned by William Farquhar, the first British Resident and Commandant of Singapore, while he was Resident of Malacca from 1803 to 1818. A rotating selection of these artworks can be seen at the Goh Seng Choo Gallery (named after the late father of Mr G.K. Goh) on the second level of the National Museum of Singapore.



### 4. SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM OPENS

Housed at the former St Joseph's Institution, the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) was opened on 20 January 1996 by then Prime Minister Mr Goh Chok Tong. Home to one of the world's largest public collections of modern and contemporary Southeast Asia art, SAM has become a leading advocate and presenter of contemporary art in Singapore, Southeast Asia and Asia. SAM has also forged partnerships and alliances with Centre Pompidou, Guggenheim Museum, Shanghai Art Museum and art museums in the Netherlands, South Korea, Germany, America, Japan, India and Australia, giving it the reach and influence to nurture a dynamic and diverse contemporary art scene. Major blockbuster exhibitions hosted by SAM include *Masterpieces from the Guggenheim Museum*, *Fabulous Faberge: Objets D'art from The FORBES Magazine Collection, New York*, and *Trans-Cool TOKYO*, a showcase of Japanese contemporary art. In August 2008, SAM at 8Q opened at Queen Street, providing new spaces for multi-disciplinary, interactive and community-oriented arts programmes.



### 5. ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM'S FIRST WING OPENS AT ARMENIAN STREET

The ACM, which inherited the ethnographic collections of the former National Museum, moved to its first dedicated premises at the old Tao Nan School on 21 April 1997, with an exhibition of Chinese ceramics, paintings and furniture opened by then Deputy Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong. From these humble beginnings, the ACM grew to become the first museum in the region to offer a broad yet integrated survey of pan-Asian cultures and civilisations, with a stunning collection of artefacts from Southeast Asia, China, South Asia and West Asia.



## 6. NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE MOVES TO FORT CANNING RISE

The National Archives of Singapore (NAS), which together with the National Museum and Oral History Department formed the original nucleus of the NHB, celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 30 August 1998 by moving to new premises at Fort Canning Rise. The facility, formerly the Anglo-Chinese Primary School, provided much-needed custom-built environmentally controlled repositories, a reference room with multimedia kiosks for the public and visiting researchers, and a mini-exhibition space by the entrance foyer. NAS was later transferred to the National Library Board in 2012 to place the bodies handling Singapore's documentary, literary and official archival records under one roof.

## 7. FIRST NATIONAL HERITAGE TRAIL: THE CIVIC DISTRICT

Singapore is more than just a shopping paradise. So for locals and tourists alike who want to learn about the communities, monuments and parks that make up the nation's heritage, the NHB has produced a series of National Heritage Trails that offer handy guides to different parts of the island. The first such trail, covering the Civic District where the history of modern Singapore began, was launched on 29 August 1999, the 180th anniversary of Sir Stamford Raffles' landing in Singapore. The trail offers a choice of two walking routes through the heart of the city that bring one through buildings, parks and other landmarks, which are accompanied by permanent storyboards and information markers about their origins and histories. Other National Heritage Trails that followed the Civic District include the Singapore River, Chinatown, Little India, Kampong Glam, Labrador Nature Reserve and Kent Ridge Park.





## 8. THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION CENTRE OPENS

Located far from the city in the industrial district of Jurong, the Heritage Conservation Centre (HCC) is a little-known but vital part of the NHB's effort to preserve and protect the artefacts under its custodianship. Opened on 15 September 2000 by then Minister for Information and the Arts Mr Lee Yock Suan, the HCC had humble origins as a small museum support division under the then National Museum in the 1980s. Following the formation of the NHB in 1993 and the development of new museums, there was a need to expand the Collection Unit (as the division was known then) and the decision was made to establish a custom-built centralised repository with fully equipped conservation laboratories. The HCC is the first facility of its kind in the region and a centre of expertise that has become an indispensable partner to local museum professionals and a regional leader in the treatment, conservation and care of heritage materials.

## 9. SINGAPORE DEBUTS AT THE VENICE BIENNALE

Few arenas in the world of contemporary visual art enjoy the prestige and passionate following of the Venice Biennale, and Singapore's rising prominence in this field received a heartening nod when the Republic was invited for the first time to take part in the 49<sup>th</sup> edition of Biennale held from June till November 2001. Led by curators Ahmad Mashadi and Joanna Lee, and commissioner Kwok Kian Chow, from the Singapore Art Museum, four Singaporean artists – Matthew Ngui, Salleh Japar, Chen KeZhan and Suzann Victor – represented the nation in a pavilion titled *Singapore*. For Biennale visitors, this was a timely introduction to contemporary art practices in Singapore, through installation pieces, paintings and videos that tackled issues of identity in a modern city, relationships between self and the physical and social environment, and responses to the urban condition and life in a globalised city-state.

## 10. REFLECTIONS AT BUKIT CHANDU OPENS

Reflections at Bukit Chandu is a restored colonial bungalow at Kent Ridge Park that houses a World War II Interpretative Centre focusing on the last battle of the Malay Regiment in Singapore. Opened on 15 February 2002 by then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Dr Tony Tan to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fall of Singapore, Reflections at Bukit Chandu ('Opium Hill', an old name for the hilly area) is located close to the site of the Battle of Pasir Panjang, in which Lieutenant Adnan Saidi (1915-1942) led 1,400 soldiers from the Malay Regiment in a last stand against 13,000 invaders from the Japanese Army on 14 February 1942.





## 11. THE ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM OPENS AT EMPRESS PLACE

After its initial years at the former Tao Nan School in Armenian Street, the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) moved to the Empress Place Building on 2 March 2003, occupying the refurbished former government offices overlooking the mouth of the Singapore River. This flagship facility, officially opened by then Prime Minister Mr Goh Chok Tong, provides more than 14,000 square metres of space for eleven thematic galleries showcasing more than 1,300 artefacts. Apart from curating its own collection, the ACM has hosted blockbuster visiting exhibitions such as the *Terracotta Warriors of China*, *Treasures from the Forbidden City*, *The Nalanda Trail of Buddhism in India, China and Southeast Asia*, *Treasures of the Aga Khan Museum* and *Buddhist Art from Thailand*.



## 12. LAUNCH OF THE SINGAPORE HERITAGEFEST

The inaugural Singapore HeritageFest (SHF) kicked off in 2004, marking the start of a concerted annual programme to bring heritage to the masses, beyond the museums and into the everyday spaces frequented by the public. Held from 17-25 July 2004, the first SHF occupied two festival hubs, at Suntec City and Parco Bugis Junction, which featured exhibitions, cultural shows and stage performances, handicraft demonstrations, educational talks and movie screenings to get Singaporeans, as the theme went, 'Hooked on Heritage'. Over the years, SHF has grown in scale and substance, moving into the heartlands to make heritage even more accessible, inviting Singaporeans to contribute their stories and skills, and encouraging people to rediscover their identities, neighbours, heroes and the *kampung* spirit that is what we love about our home.

## 13. NHB LAUNCHES FIRST COMMUNITY HERITAGE TRAILS

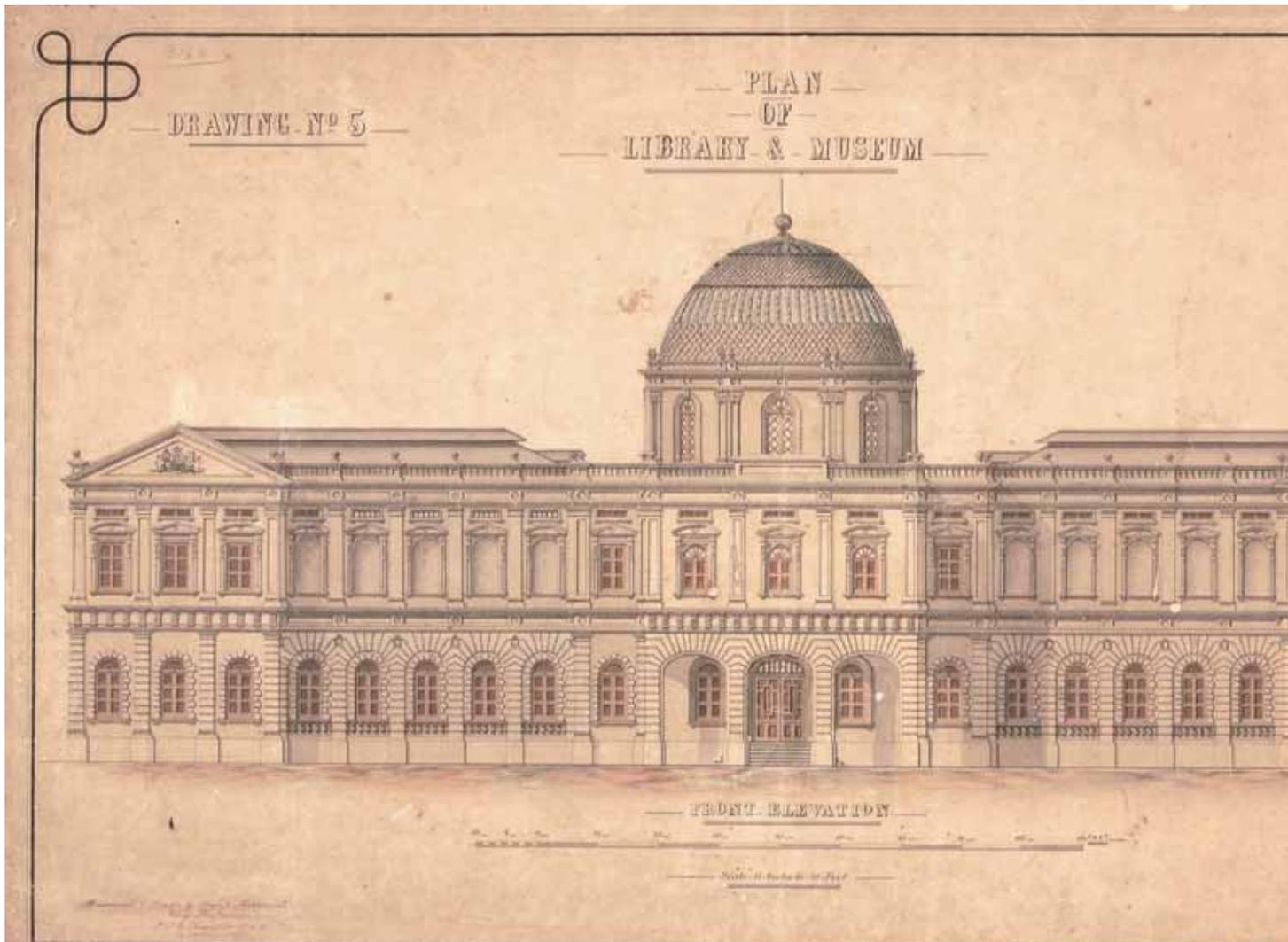
Tired of battling the downtown crowds and visiting the same old shopping malls? Why not explore your own backyard and discover the surprising and often fascinating secrets of neighbourhoods with histories of their own and rich traces of the past in the temples, mosques, churches, shophouses and traditional trades that continue to thrive in these districts? To this end, the NHB launched Singapore's first community heritage trails on 22 July 2006, offering an annotated guide, through marked sites and detailed trail brochures, to Balestier Road and Jalan Besar. The trails were the result of an inter-agency effort to engage the community, which readily responded to calls for information and stories, as long-time residents and business owners shared personal insights about the heritage of these streets. Since then, the NHB has produced community heritage trails covering Bukit Timah, Yishun/Sembawang, Queenstown, Ang Mo Kio, Kampong Glam and Tiong Bahru, giving residents and visitors alike a means to appreciate these areas and strengthen their sense of rootedness with the past.





## 14. THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE RE-OPENS

Old yet brand new. This sums up the re-opening of the National Museum of Singapore (NMS) on 7 December 2006, after a three-year facelift. Declared open by His Excellency Mr S.R. Nathan, then President of the Republic of Singapore, the NMS has played a major role in redefining the museum experience for a new generation of Singaporeans. With a new and near-transparent rear wing of glass and concrete housing interactive galleries on the history of Singapore as well as spacious halls for special exhibitions, the NMS has become an architectural icon and a space for the public to gather, not just to view its displays but to create their own memories and experiences of an institution that now hosts diverse talks, performances, screenings and festivals. At the same time, the NMS has distinguished itself on the global stage with landmark exhibitions on local and international history, from Impressionist masterpieces and ancient Egypt to the plays of Kuo Pao Kun and the classic appeal of the cheongsam.





## 15. THE PERANAKAN MUSEUM OPENS

On 25 April 2008, the world's first national museum to focus on Peranakan culture opened at the old Tao Nan School in Armenian Street, which had undergone a three-year renovation to turn its halls into a boutique museum dedicated to one of Singapore's most distinctive and colourful communities. Declared open by Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong, the Peranakan Museum traces the origins and histories of the Peranakan communities that emerged in Southeast Asia in the wake of traders and travellers who married local womenfolk and established a unique hybrid culture of their own. Conceived and developed by the Asian Civilisations Museum, the Peranakan Museum is a 'living museum' that houses not just artefacts from the past but organises activities and festivals that bring Peranakan culture to life with the help of members of the local Peranakan community.



## 16. LAUNCH OF THE NIGHT FESTIVAL

The Night Festival, launched by the NHB with bang and flair on 18 July 2008, has since become an annual carnival and street party of art, culture and heritage in the heart of the Civic District. The premiere Night Festival, featuring spectacular light installations at both the National Museum of Singapore and Singapore Art Museum, drew close to 60,000 visitors over two weekends. The line-up include airborne acrobatics by Italian performing group Studio Fešti, energetic music gigs at the grounds of the Singapore Management University, a bustling night bazaar, open-air film screenings and nocturnal walkabouts through the two museums – an experience that was new to many and a thrill that never loses its magic.



# Twenty to Celebrate

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## 17. HERITAGE INSTITUTIONS AND PRESERVATION OF MONUMENTS BOARD JOIN THE NHB

On 11 March 2009, the NHB signed a Memorandum of Understanding to manage three community heritage institutions: the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall (SYSNMH), Malay Heritage Centre and Indian Heritage Centre. Located at Tai Gin Road, the SYSNMH charts the revolutionary activities of Dr Sun Yat Sen in Southeast Asia and highlights Singapore's role in the Chinese Revolution of 1911. The Malay Heritage Centre occupies the Istana Kampong Glam at Sultan Gate, with nine galleries on the history and material culture of Singapore Malays. To be opened in early 2015 at Campbell Lane, the Indian Heritage Centre will serve as a museum and educational space tracing the history of the Indian and South Asian communities.

The Preservation of Monuments or PMB, formed in 1971 as a statutory board under the Ministry of National Development, joined the NHB family on 1 July 2009. The PMB is responsible for the care and regulation of historically significant monuments and sites, including research, education and outreach about these places, and providing guidelines on their restoration, preservation, protection and use. PMB was renamed Preservations of Sites and Monuments (PSM) on 1 July 2013 to more accurately reflect its remit spanning 64 gazetted National Monuments and 100 historic sites marked by the NHB.

## 18. BABA BLING GOES TO PARIS

A major stride into the international scene came in 2010 when the Peranakan Museum set up an exhibition of about 500 iconic Peranakan artefacts at the Musée du quai Branly in Paris. This was the first time a Singapore museum had presented a display of such depth and scale in Europe, and the first time the NHB had undertaken the programming role at a foreign museum. Held from 5 October 2010 to 30 January 2011, *Baba Bling: The Chinese Peranakans of Singapore* welcomed more than 103,000 visitors and kicked off with a *Peranakan Week* featuring Peranakan wedding processions, cultural and cooking demonstrations, lectures and art and craft workshops.







## 19. SINGAPORE BIENNALE 2011: OPEN HOUSE

The third Singapore Biennale, held from 13 March to 15 May 2011, was the first to be organised by the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) under artistic director Matthew Ngui and curators Russell Storer and Trevor Smith. With the theme *Open House*, reflecting the local tradition of welcoming visitors and neighbours during festive days, the Biennale invited visitors to challenge the boundaries between public and private, and think about how differences could be bridged through interaction and exchanges. Spanning four exhibition venues – SAM, the National Museum of Singapore, Old Kallang Airport and Marina Bay – the 2011 Singapore Biennale presented 161 works by 63 artists from 30 countries. This was also the first Singapore Biennale in which more than half of the participating artists display brand new works, many of which were site-specific and drew upon the dynamics of their surroundings which range from HDB flats, shopping centres, night markets to an airport, the Merlion and the Marina Bay seafront.



## 20. FIRST COMMUNITY MUSEUM AT TAMAN JURONG

To tell the story of a well-established community while introducing residents to the art of museum-making and the world of art, the NHB developed Singapore's first community museum, Our Museum @ Taman Jurong, at the Taman Jurong Community Club at Yung Sheng Road. Opened on 12 January 2013 by Deputy Prime Minister Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, the community museum is the joint effort of the NHB, Taman Jurong Citizens' Consultative Committee, Taman Jurong Community Arts and Culture Club and People's Association. The first exhibition at the community museum, *Picturing Home*, offers a selection of artworks that capture what 'home' means to local artists and also featured artefacts from the National Collection. Residents, who shared their stories of Taman Jurong, had the chance to work with filmmaker Sanif Olek and visual artist SpeakCryptic aka Farizwan Fajari, as well as learn about contemporary art with the aid of *Walter the Rabbit*, an installation piece by artist Dawn Ng. From these encounters, they created artwork and photographs that were exhibited at the community museum.





be **MUSEE**  
N°24



# CROSSING CULTURES

**DEVOTION AND DESIRE: CROSS-CULTURAL ART IN ASIA**

written by Clement Ong  
images : Asian Civilisations Museum

**T**he Asian Civilisations Museum displays over 170 new acquisitions in the special exhibition *Devotion and Desire: Cross-Cultural Art in Asia*. Objects acquired over the last five years are mounted in the exhibition, most for the first time. Many of these works of art reveal the surprising connections between Asian cultures, and between Asia and the wider world. The exhibition highlights a new direction for the museum, which has recently focused on collecting objects that have resulted from these interconnections.

The themes of the exhibition include the importance of trade, transmission of religions, courtly art, and colonial networks. For thousands of years, the cultures of Asia have traded, interacted, and exchanged ideas. These encounters have shaped our world, and they affect the way objects look. Religions moved from region to region, special objects were eagerly sought in lands far away, and new works of art were created by the blending of different traditions.

### **WHAT IS CROSS-CULTURAL ART?**

Defining cross-cultural art is complicated. Trying to understand, through our contemporary eyes, why an object looks the way it does often requires a supple mind and a familiarity with various artistic traditions. Many works of art were made by people who lived a world away from their intended consumers – and, therefore, did not necessarily share a language, religion, or aesthetic. Meaning and context are generated in unexpected ways, with crucial roles played by traders, agents, and consumers of various types. Art historians sometimes try to pinpoint the earliest occurrence of a motif or style in order to identify the “original” source of influence. Although this may be a useful starting point, it can also obscure the influence of creativity by later artists.

Cross-cultural art can result from an artist using ideas and styles from a foreign culture in order to produce new work. Whether the process is called copying, borrowing, emulating, or appropriation is of no importance. What is important and exciting is the process – the exchange of influences, whether facilitated by networks of trade, migration, pilgrimage, diplomacy, or any combination of these – and, of course, the resulting works of art.

## DEVOTION AND DESIRE

Desire for wealth, hard-to-obtain commodities, adventure, and objects of beauty has driven trade and the movements of people for a very long time. Devotion to gods, principles, charismatic leaders, and indeed, craft and art-making, has been and still is a major driving force in civilizations around the globe. The objects in the exhibition are products of these forces, and tell fascinating stories of the past.

Peranakan art embodies this cross-cultural blending of ideas. As the descendants of foreign traders who settled and married local women, they adopted traits from their new home in the Malay world, while retaining much of their own culture, whether from China, India, or Europe. Peranakan art reflects diverse influences – it incorporates a complex mixture of styles and objects made in different parts of the world, which were commissioned or collected, and displayed together in a new context. The Peranakans provide an example for looking at the world: they remind us to look beyond the strict notions of nationality and ethnicity to discover the value of diverse communities.

Many regions around the globe have been sites of exchange and blending. As peoples and religions spread to new lands, new adherents incorporate local customs into new belief. A spectacular example is the monumental head of a bodhisattva (fig. 1). Both the style and the religious significance of the work can be traced to other lands: it is a Buddhist figure, made in a style borrowed from Hellenistic art. It was made in the ancient kingdom of Gandhara (in what is today northern Pakistan), an important crossroads between East and West. Like the Malay Peninsula, it was a point of exchange for trade, religion, and art.

Fig. 1  
*Head of a bodhisattva*  
 Gandhara, around 4th century  
 Terracotta, height 85 cm





Alexander the Great conquered parts of the Gandhara region in the 4th century BC. The state later transferred to the Indian Mauryan dynasty, whose King Ashoka (272–237 BC) converted to Buddhism. A succession of Greek and Bactrian rulers followed, until a long period of stability began under the Kushan kingdom (late 1st century until around 450 CE). These waves of influences left two profound effects on Gandharan art: Buddhism; and the realistic depiction of the human form influenced by Greek and Roman art – a mixture that gave rise to some of the earliest depictions of the Buddha and bodhisattvas.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, and Sikhism are all represented in works of art in the exhibition. Many of these objects are the result of varied artistic influence. For instance, Hinduism and Buddhism were transmitted from India to Southeast Asia in the first centuries of the Common Era. Imported ritual objects provided inspiration for local work, and Indian artists and merchants settled in towns along the trade routes and contributed to the creative process.

Three images of the Virgin and Child show varied responses to Christianity in Asia. A porcelain model made at Dehua, China, with a base of swirling Chinese-style clouds, melds elements of Guanyin with the Virgin Mary (fig. 2). An ivory sculpture shows the extraordinary skills of Sri Lankan carvers who worked for both Christian and Buddhist patrons (fig. 3). And a wooden Virgin and Child crafted in Timor-Leste is an example of a local artist's interpretation of a Western sculptural style (fig. 4). The three sculptures all depict the same subject, but the stories of how they came to be are worlds apart.



(From left)

Fig. 2  
*Virgin and Child*  
China, Dehua, Fujian province, late 17th or 18th century  
Porcelain, height 39 cm

Fig. 3  
*Virgin and Child*  
Sri Lanka, late 16th century  
Ivory, height 32.5 cm

Fig. 4  
*Virgin and Child*  
Probably Timor-Leste, 19th century  
Wood, pigments, height 73.7 cm



Local religions dominate another section of the exhibition. In many cultures, ancestors are deeply respected and venerated. If properly attended to, ancestors would shower blessings upon the community and ensure bountiful harvests. In ancient China, vessels cast of bronze were used to offer food and wine during rituals dedicated to ancestors and the gods. Ritual vessels like a *gui* (fig. 5), richly decorated and exceptionally well preserved, were used by the elite. An array of impressive ritual bronzes was a display of power and prestige. These bronzes were often later buried in the tombs of their owners. Ancestor rituals not only showed respect but also emphasized the source of a ruler's political authority.



The Austronesian peoples of Southeast Asia often represented their ancestors by producing figures made from wood, stone, or metal. Some are extremely simple – others grand and beautifully carved. A *Hampatong* guardian figure from central Borneo takes the form of a colonial-era soldier in Western-style military uniform (fig. 6). This shows that the Dayaks would even use powers from the world outside their community to ward off intruders from the spirit world.

The desire to obtain money and goods through commerce has spurred the movements of people around the world for millennia. Much of the trade through the Indian Ocean centred around textiles from India and spices from Southeast Asia. A fine cotton textile (fig. 7), probably made for use as a bedspread or wall hanging, was produced on the Coromandel Coast of India. The bold floral patterns were popular in Europe at the time, and it was surely designed to appeal to that market.

(From left)

Fig. 5  
*Ritual food vessel (Gui)*  
China, Shaanxi province, early Western Zhou dynasty,  
late 11th or 10th century BC  
Bronze, 22.1 x 27.6 x 18.6 cm

Fig. 6  
*Hampatong guardian figure*  
Central Kalimantan (Indonesia), early 20th century  
Ironwood, height 170 cm

Fig. 7  
*Hanging: Large flowers and cartouches*  
India, Coromandel Coast, early 18th century  
Cotton; drawn and painted, resist and mordant dyed,  
277 x 170.6 cm





(Top)  
Fig. 8  
*Hong bowl*  
China, around 1785  
Porcelain, height 15.5 cm, diameter 36 cm



(Above)  
Fig. 9  
*Casket*  
India, Gujarat, 16th or 17th century  
Mother-of-pearl, wood, gilded silver pins, engraved metal mounts, 15.5 x 23.5 x 13 cm

(Left)  
Fig. 10  
*Portrait of Madam Wellington Koo*  
By Charles Tharp (British, 1878–1951), 1921  
Oil on canvas, 197 x 100 cm  
Gift of Lim and Tan Securities Pte Ltd in memory of Johnny and Nancy Lim

Porcelain and other goods from China were also coveted by much of the world, and for a time, the trade was strictly controlled. On display is a large bowl decorated with scenes of the lively waterfront at Guangzhou (Canton), the busiest trading port by the mid-18th century (fig. 8). Western trading companies were restricted to the “hongs”, as they were called, offices and residences abutting the port. Hong bowls like this were produced by Chinese artisans as souvenirs for wealthy foreign merchants.

Luxury goods made from tortoise shell, ivory, mother-of-pearl, silver and gold – even exotic woods – drove markets for art in many places. A small chest covered with iridescent mother-of-pearl plaques mounted with silver pins was produced in Gujarat in western India (fig. 9). Collectors in Renaissance Europe were dazzled by such objects, which could be found in princely collections throughout the region.

It is perhaps appropriate to return to Peranakan art to complete the circle. A full-length portrait painted in oil of Madam Wellington Koo embodies the shifting identities of Peranakans in the modern world (fig. 10). Born at the turn of the century into a wealthy family in Java, Oei Hui-lan (1899–1992) grew up there and in Singapore, speaking multiple languages, and learning to negotiate the colonial society of the day. She married Wellington Koo, an American-educated Chinese diplomat, and they lived at postings in Europe and America. Madam Koo moved easily through high society in the East and the West. Featured in *Vogue* magazine, she was equally comfortable in haute couture or the sarong kebaya; the shops of Paris, or the dusty streets of Java. And thus, we might view her as another in a long line of adventurers, traders, and negotiators along the many paths that combine cultures around the world. These interactions can produce works of great beauty. Some of them are on display here in Singapore in the current exhibition at the Asian Civilisations Museum.

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*Clement Onn is Curator, Cross-Culture, Asian Civilisations Museum.*

***Devotion and Desire: Cross-Cultural Art in Asia*** is on view at the Asian Civilisations Museum through 8 December 2013. The exhibition presents new acquisitions of the Asian Civilisations Museum from 2009 to 2013. We are grateful to the donors of objects and funds, especially the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth for supporting our efforts. A fully illustrated catalogue, aimed at the general reader, was published by the ACM to accompany the exhibition. It is on sale at Museum Label and major bookstores islandwide.

SINGAPORE BIENNALE 2013:  
IF THE WORLD CHANGED

# IF YOU COULD CHANGE THE WORLD,

WHAT

written by Joyce Toh

WOULD IT  
LOOK LIKE?

The Singapore Biennale 2013 is the country's premier contemporary art exhibition. The fourth instalment of the Biennale returns this year with the title *If the World Changed*, and invites everyone to re-consider or re-imagine the world we live in.

Audiences coming to this year's Singapore Biennale can expect to see the works of 82 artists and artist collectives from the region and beyond, of which more than half are new commissions. Open to the public from 26 October 2013 to 16 February 2014, the Singapore Biennale 2013 features a distinct Southeast Asian identity. To harness the energy of the region, the Singapore Biennale 2013 also adopted a bold new collaborative curatorial structure comprising a team of 27 co-curators. Based in the capital cities as well as regions outside of the metropolitan centres, these art professionals brought on board their distinct local knowledge of diverse regional art practices.

Held in the vibrant arts and cultural district, the Bras Basah Bugis precinct – including the premises of the Singapore Art Museum, National Museum of Singapore, The Peranakan Museum, National Library and other venues – the Singapore Biennale 2013 is organised by the Singapore Art Museum and supported by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, National Arts Council and National Heritage Board.

## IF THE WORLD CHANGED

THE RICH CULTURES AND GEOGRAPHIES OF THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN REGION HAVE HISTORICALLY BEEN THE CORRIDOR OF THE WORLD'S MAJOR CIVILISATIONS. THE EBB AND FLOW OF THESE COMPLEX CULTURAL INTERACTIONS HAVE YIELDED RESPONSES OF ACCOMMODATION AND RESISTANCE, LEAVING LEGACIES OF LAYERING AND SEDIMENTATION WITHIN THE VARIED COMMUNITIES.

IN THE 21ST CENTURY, THE SPEED OF TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA IS PERHAPS BEYOND ANYTHING EXPERIENCED BY PRECEDING GENERATIONS. THIS CHANGE IS PROMPTING MULTIPLE CONCEPTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF TIME AND OUR WORLDS, BOTH THE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL.

AGAINST THIS BACKDROP OF PAST AND CONTINUOUS CHANGE, ARTISTS HAVE BEEN REFLECTING, MEDIATING, ENVISIONING, AND MAKING PROPOSITIONS. IF THE WORLD CHANGED, THE TITLE OF THE 4TH SINGAPORE BIENNALE, IS AN INVITATION TO ARTISTS TO RESPOND TO AND RECONSIDER THE WORLDS WE LIVE IN, AND THE WORLDS WE WANT TO LIVE IN.

# SINGAPORE BIENNALE 2013: IF THE WORLD CHANGED



## EKO PRAWOTO

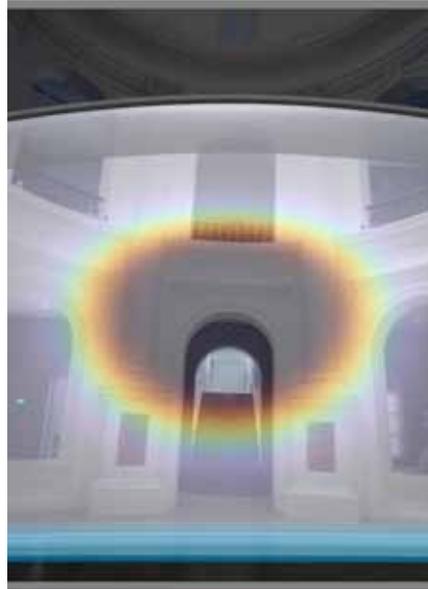
b. 1958, Purworejo, Indonesia  
Lives and works in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

*Wormhole*, 2013  
Bamboo installation  
Dimensions variable  
Collection of the Artist  
Singapore Biennale 2013 commission

Image Courtesy of the Artist

*Wormhole* punctuates Singapore's cityscape by pitching three bamboo mounds in front of the National Museum of Singapore. Prawoto's installation resembles a range of mountains – natural forms familiar in Indonesia, but wholly alien to Singapore. In Indonesian folklore, the mountain is regarded as an axis which mediates between the earth and the heavens; this idea is echoed in the title of this work, which refers to a theoretical opening in the galaxy which allows one to traverse time and space, as well as to the insignificant passage through earth created by a burrowing earthworm. Inside the installation, the slow passage of time and clouds as seen through the skylights, as well as the smell and texture of bamboo, recall a time when we may have lived more intimately with these sensations and natural materials.

With support from: JPL Consultants



## SUZANN VICTOR

b. 1959, Singapore  
Lives and works in Sydney

*Rainbow Circle: Capturing a Natural Phenomenon*, 2013  
Mixed media installation: sunlight, water droplets and modified heliostat  
Dimensions variable  
Project engineer: David Marsh  
Collection of the Artist  
Singapore Biennale 2013 commission  
Co-commissioned with the National Museum of Singapore as part of its Art-On-Site series

Image Courtesy of the Artist

*Rainbow Circle* is a work of unexpected contradictions and surprises: an outdoor natural spectacle 'induced' to reside within the stately National Museum of Singapore. Modified green technology and the ancient science of optics are applied to nature's elements, creating an 'artefact of vision' – a spectral ring whose changing form can neither be fixed nor traced back to any point of origin. Symbolically, the rainbow is widely associated with luck and happiness, but its ephemeral nature also points to the darker side of pursuing dreams – of 'chasing rainbows'. The metaphorically loaded work thus considers a world where change and hope are entwined with inertia and futility. Apropos, *Rainbow Circle* remains as elusive and unpredictable as the weather, ultimately contingent on the presence of sunlight to manifest.

With support from: JPL Consultants



### LE BROTHERS

b. 1975, Bình Tri Thiên, Vietnam  
Live and work in Hue, Vietnam

*Into the Sea*, 2011

3-channel video

Duration 21:00 mins

Collection of the Artists

Image Courtesy of the Artists

This work was inspired when the artists revisited their birthplace in Bình Tri Thiên and attempted to trace the landscape of their childhood memories. The Nhat Le River runs through Bình Tri Thiên and witnessed several wars involving the Kingdom of Champa and the Vietnamese dynasties of Trinh and Nguyen. Thanh and Hai chose to set their video at the river, echoing their concerns about the never-ending 'war' between Hanoi and Saigon. *Into the Sea* engages Vietnam's warring histories like a mirror of many mirrors. This is most obvious when one reads the actions of the twin brothers, who in the video wrestle on a fishing boat, bind each other treacherously with red fabric, and at moments, traverse the landscape as if resigned to ill fate.



### NIPAN ORANNIWESNA

b. 1962, Bangkok, Thailand  
Lives and works in Thailand

*Hope Brings Us Here*, 2013

Mixed media installation with video and sculpture

Dimensions variable

Collection of the Artist

Singapore Biennale 2013 commission

Image Courtesy of the Artist

Much of Oranniwesna's work can be said to be the artist's attempted reconstruction of facts and fictions surrounding issues related to globalisation, historical memory, nationality and the politics of identity and migration. This work follows from his earlier work *Narrative Floor*, an interactive wooden platform with miniscule resin beads embedded with photographic images that compel visitors to discover these near invisible realities through chance encounters. By weaving urban and rural cartographies into his work, the artist creates layers of subtle narratives which characterise the often ambiguous terrains of identity and nationhood.

# SINGAPORE BIENNALE 2013: IF THE WORLD CHANGED



## KEN + JULIA YONETANI

Ken Yonetani: b. 1971, Tokyo, Japan

Julia Yonetani: b. 1972, Tokyo, Japan

Live and work in Australia

*Crystal Palace: The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nuclear Nations, 2012–2013*

*Metal, UV lights, uranium glass, 31 pieces*

Various dimensions

*Crystal Palace: [Armenia], 2012, Paulsen Collection, Sydney*

*Crystal Palace: [Pakistan], 2012 and [Germany], 2012, The Gene & Brian Sherman Collection*

*Crystal Palace: [Japan], 2012, Collection of Belinda Piggott & David Ojerholm*

All other pieces Collection of the Artists

Image Courtesy of the Artists

The Singapore Biennale 2013 marks the completion of this series and its world premiere in Southeast Asia, a region without nuclear power plants. Conceived in response to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011, the work consists of 31 chandeliers. Antique chandelier frames have been refitted with uranium glass and UV lighting; once switched on, the UV bulbs cause the glass beads to glow with a haunting green. The 31 pieces signal the 31 nuclear nations of the world, and the size of each chandelier corresponds to the number of operating nuclear plants in that nation. The title of the work references the grandiose building designed for the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, hinting at the tension between human ambition, technological development, and its costs and consequences.

With support from: The Australia Council



## NGE LAY

b. 1979, Mandalay, Myanmar

Lives and works in Yangon, Myanmar

*The Sick Classroom, 2013*

27 wooden sculptures and classroom furniture

Dimensions variable

Collection of the Artist

Singapore Biennale 2013 commission

Image Courtesy of the Artist

This replica of a classroom in the village of Thuye'dan is a culmination of Nge Lay's investigative studies into Myanmar's education system since 2009. In collaboration with a local craftsman, she sculpted in wood students from the village school's Grade 1 class. For the artist, Grade 1 represents an individual's first foray into formal education and the option of social mobility. Since General Ne Win's military coup in 1962 and the university student-led demonstrations in 1988, Myanmar's government has deployed its education system to regulate thought and behaviour. *The Sick Classroom* therefore casts a wider lens on the state of surveillance in Myanmar and expresses the artist's anxieties and concerns towards the uncertainty of the future.



### TAN WEI KHENG

b. 1970, Marudi, Malaysia  
Lives and works in Malaysia

Voices of Hope, 2013  
Oil on canvas, [9 pieces]  
274 x 335 cm [total]  
Collection of the Artist  
Singapore Biennale 2013 commission

Image Courtesy of the Artist

Tan expresses the modern-day perils faced by tribal communities in Sarawak, Malaysia. Fast-paced deforestation is razing the natural landscape and endangering the lives and cultures of its native inhabitants. This modernity is represented twice by the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur: in the top-centre of the composition, the towers are upright, emblazoned on the back of a man walking away from the viewer towards a *pua* [pattern] symbolising trees on a flattened land; at the bottom-centre, the towers are imprinted as repeated patterns, face down, on the feet of a female tribe member. At the centre of the composition is Along Sega, a recently deceased Penan tribal leader, prompting the question of who will lead the tribe, amidst the nation's economic quest.



### SIETE PESOS

Established 2013, Cagayan de Oro, The Philippines

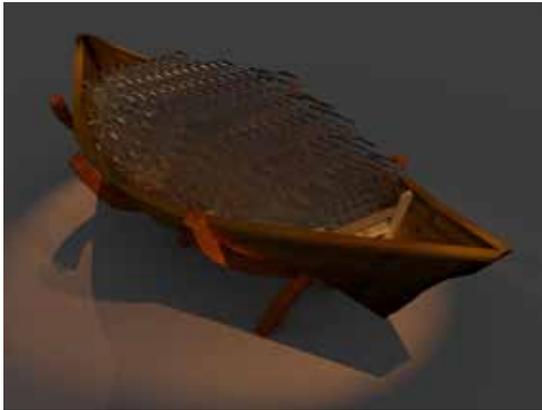
2243: *Moving Forward*, 2013  
Mixed media with refurbished motorela, banca with life jackets, pop-up cards, video  
Motorela: 200 [h] x 155 [w] x 320 [d] cm  
Collection of the Artists  
Singapore Biennale 2013 commission

Image Courtesy of the Artist

The 2243 hybrid vehicle is a testament to the resourcefulness, wry humour and resilience of the Kagay-anons (residents of Cagayan de Oro, Mindanao). The number refers to the patent number for the motorela, registered in 1964 by its inventor, Rafael D. Floirendo, Sr. Today, it is a common mode of public transport which costs only *siete pesos* (seven pesos or S\$0.20) for a ride. Running through the city's streets, this particular vehicle seeks to be a catalyst for healing after the devastation Cagayan de Oro experienced during Typhoon Sendong in 2011. The project also includes workshops for child survivors. Moving forward to face the future, this motorela also comes equipped with a banca boat and survival kits – a reminder that the previous storm will not be the last.

With the participation of Balulang Elementary School and Consolacion Elementary School

# SINGAPORE BIENNALE 2013: IF THE WORLD CHANGED



## AHMAD ABU BAKAR

b. 1963, Melaka, Malaysia  
Lives and works in Singapore

*Telok Blangah (artist impression)*, 2013

Installation with paint, varnish, glass bottles, decals,  
traditional wooden boat

300 x 450 cm

Collection of the Artist

Singapore Biennale 2013 commission

Image Courtesy of the Artist

This work features a *kolek Melaka* (traditional fisherman's boat from Melaka) filled with a thousand glass bottles inscribed with messages from male prison inmates in Singapore. These messages describe the inmates' hopes and aspirations while serving their sentences and upon their release. Ahmad's work amplifies and connects the inmates' aspirations to the public with the *kolek*, a vessel which is rarely seen today and a reminder of the artist's ethnic roots. Ahmad is a Malaysian citizen, although he grew up and lives in Singapore, and a major thread in his practice addresses questions of land, identity and faith. The title *Telok Blangah* references the area where Malay royalty used to live in colonial Singapore, as well as the neckline pattern for the *baju kurung* (traditional Malay men's attire).

With support from: Bloomberg L.P.



## ZNC

Established 1988, Singapore

*Gardens, By the Way*, 2013

Mixed media installation

Dimensions variable

Collection of the Artist

Singapore Biennale 2013 commission

Image Courtesy of the Artists

Responding to the Singapore Biennale 2013 theme "If the World Changed", pioneering graffiti collective ZNC (Zinc Nite Crew) pays homage to the changes that will come to Singapore's landscape, predicting spurts of blossoming gardens that will grow all over the city. This foliage appears instantaneous, devised and urgent, reflecting today's pace of rapid change and the need for instant gratification. At the same time, ZNC's artwork is ecologically friendly, incorporating recycling with craft and aerosol art. Participants were invited to collaborate with ZNC to create a flourishing garden, crafted from thousands of recycled plastic bottles, in the heart of the Singapore Biennale.

Key Sponsor: Credit Suisse

With support from: JPL Consultants



## Choped! Umbrella

At crowded coffeeshops and hawker centres, Singaporeans habitually leave an umbrella or any less-valuable personal belonging on the table to “reserve” the seats for themselves while they are away ordering their food. The unspoken rule is to keep clear, as the table is choped – an endearing local slang which means “reserved”.

Leaving an umbrella on the table marks “mine!”, like a stamp of ownership. The Choped! Umbrella celebrates the ingenuity of this local social quirk. Try it with this Choped! Umbrella the next time.

Available at Museum Label Shops



THE PAST HAS  
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