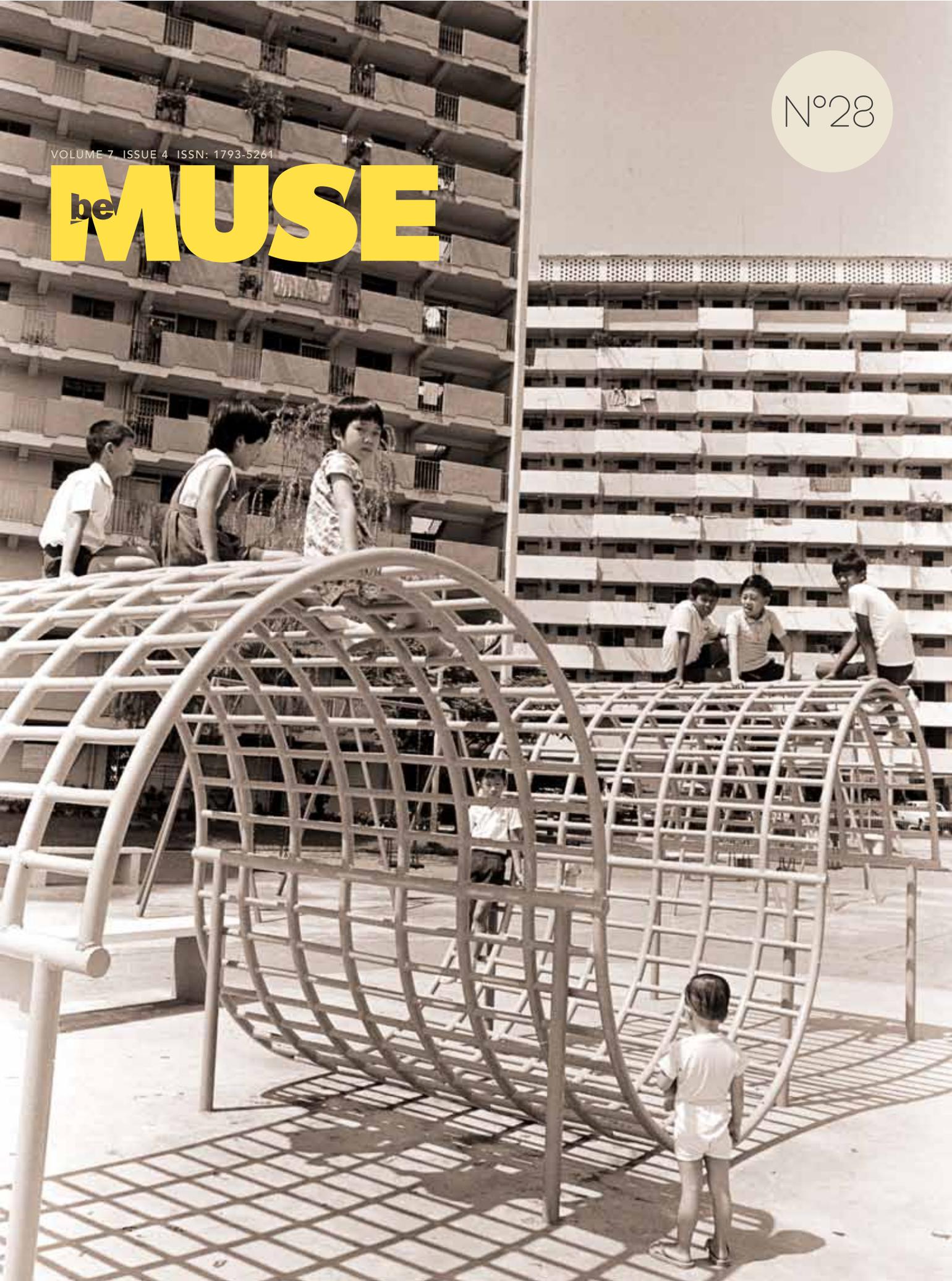


N°28

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be MUSE



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Patterns of Heritage is a series of merchandise inspired by prints of artefacts in Singapore's National Collection, which showcases the historical roots of today's globalised world and the impact of cultural exchanges. Beloved for their beautiful patterns and remarkable history, the artefacts became treasures, passed down from generation to generation. Their popularity and profound influence left an indelible mark on how we dress ourselves and decorate our homes. Their legacy also lives on as the inspiration behind this MUSEUM LABEL collection, reflecting the multiplicity of Singapore's culture.



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Editor's Letter

As the year draws to a close, we celebrate the festive season and reflect on the year gone by. Every holiday season brings with it a spirit of contemplation and hope, as we ponder lessons from past experiences and look forward to new ones.

Indeed, the past is a well of knowledge that we should drink deeply from. This issue of BeMuse shines the spotlight on various slices of our rich history, their stories and the lessons they hold. Take a walk down memory lane as we trace the evolution of Toa Payoh – one of Singapore's oldest housing estates – from its earliest days as swampland to what it is today.

A corner on the third floor of the Bukit Batok polyclinic holds a treasure trove filled with stories of how far Singapore's primary healthcare system has come, evolving from a network of maternal and child health clinics and outpatient dispensaries in the late 19th century to the current system, where polyclinics are at the frontline of healthcare.

On display at the Sun Yat Sen Memorial Hall now are some 100 cultural relics from the magnificent Zhongshan warship, the vessel commanded by Dr Sun Yat Sen during the Protection of Constitution Movement. The exhibits, which include medals, everyday items, weapons and equipment, will give visitors a glimpse into China's naval, economic and social history.

But artefacts alone can only say so much. For a complete picture, one must know how to ask the right questions. Our writers discuss these at length in a piece on how to study memorials and monuments critically, to best understand them.

As we appreciate the work of those who went before us, let us move into the new year knowing that what we do today will have a profound impact on future generations. From all of us here at BeMuse, our heartiest season's greetings.

Tan Boon Hui
Editor-In-Chief



**Silver Medal for Land,
Naval and Air Units**

*Collection of Zhongshan
Warship Museum*

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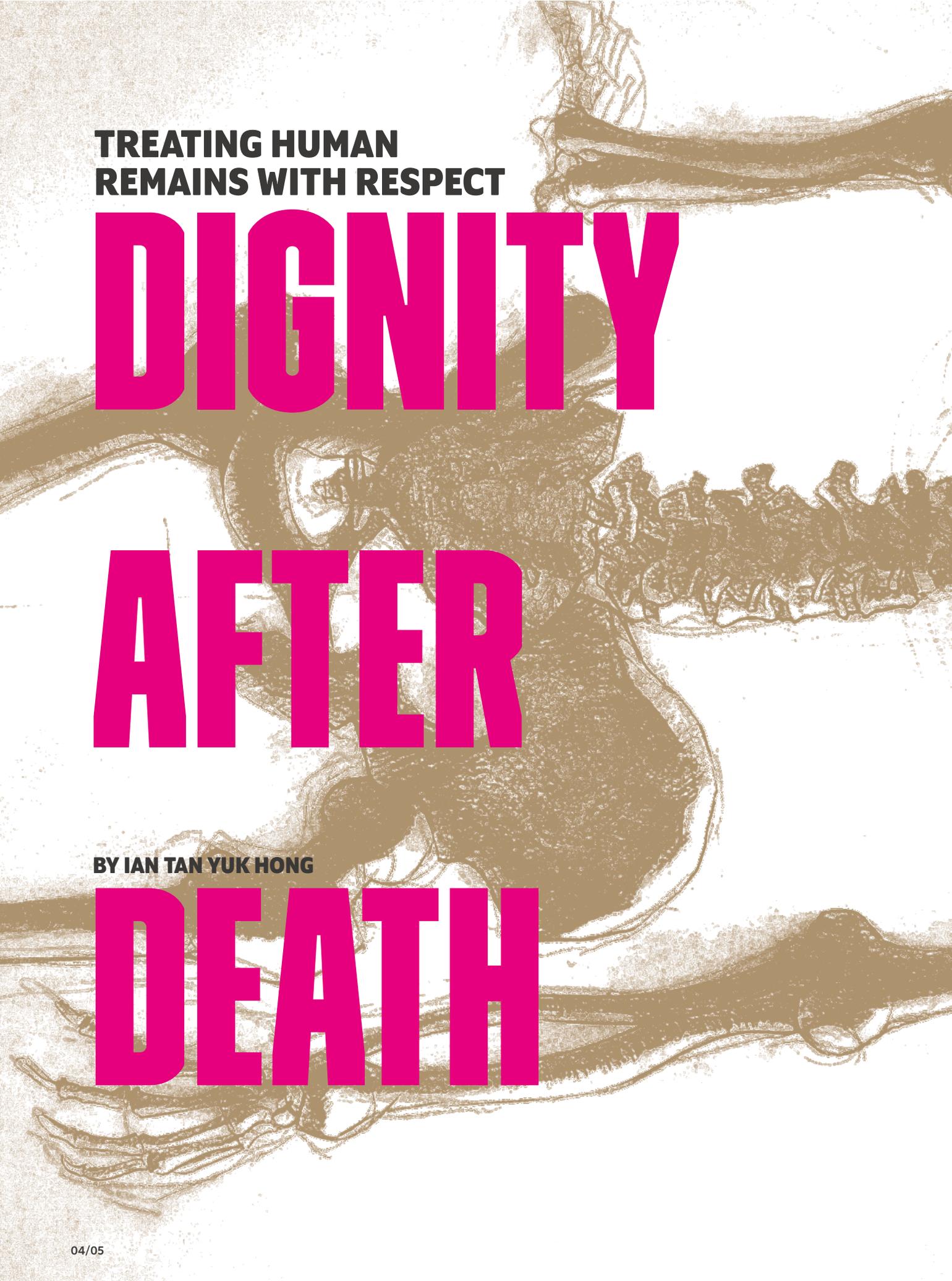
Taking a critical eye to the nation's famous monuments

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Treasures of a Forgotten Warship

Uncover the treasures of a Qing Dynasty warship in a rare exhibition



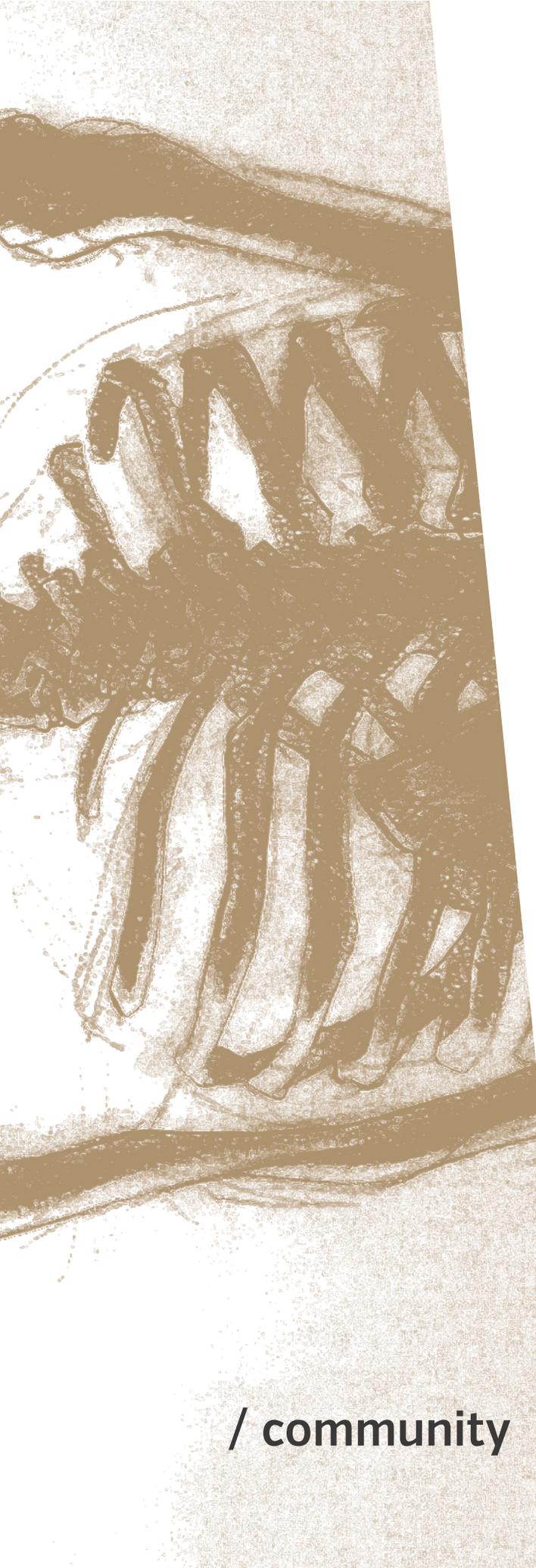
**TREATING HUMAN
REMAINS WITH RESPECT**

DIGNITY

AFTER

BY IAN TAN YUK HONG

DEATH



In recent years, the display of human remains has become a topic of discussion in Western countries, particularly those with a history of colonialism. The Codes of Ethics provided by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the Museum Association UK offer guidelines on how to handle such collections and address questions of claims, but they are primarily intended for Western societies that deal with opposition from “people of origin” – the descendants of the people whose remains are displayed. The guidelines do not specifically address human remains at museums in regions from which they originated.

As a former British colony in Southeast Asia, Singapore assimilates its familiarity with Asian cultures with concepts of museum governance based on western principles. Hence, it is in a good position to reconsider how such artefacts may be treated with sensitivity.

A MODERN FRAMEWORK FOR HANDLING ANCIENT HUMAN REMAINS

Human remains in museums have historically been “implicated in situations of inequality”. In the United States, laws for the repatriation of human remains, such as the Native American Graves Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990, accorded indigenous communities “equal rights regarding their dead”. This paved the way for overseas communities to request for their ancestors’ remains from museums worldwide.

In the United Kingdom, laws allowing museum collections to be held for perpetuity were relaxed after unrelenting campaigning from such groups. Since 1995, the British Museum has received six requests from organisations - including the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and the Museum of New Zealand - making claims on its collections of human remains.

The British Department for Culture, Media and Sports eventually produced guidelines for the care and return of human remains in 2005. Similar provisions were also drafted for the Museum Association UK and the American Alliance of Museums, iterating the need for a formal framework to manage human remains on display in a sensitive and culturally appropriate manner.

The latest ICOM Code of Professional Ethics, revised and adopted in 2004, stated that the display of human remains must “take into account the interests and beliefs of members of the community, ethnic or religious groups from whom the objects originated.” The code also highlighted the possibility of “originating communities” requesting for the removal and return of such remains from public display, and how museums should address these requests “expeditiously with respect and sensitivity”. As the secretariat of ICOM Singapore, the National Heritage Board (NHB) and its member museums in Singapore must adhere to the ICOM Code of Professional Ethics.

/ community

In particular, the way human remains are handled in three of the NHB's member museums in Singapore is note-worthy. The collections in the Asian Civilisation Museum (ACM), the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum, and the Department of Anatomy Museum in the National University of Singapore (NUS) are ethnographical, religious and medical in nature respectively. This allows us to see how different curatorial directions affect the treatment of human remains, and if such approaches may signal a way for other museums worldwide to follow.

A LEVEL-HEADED APPROACH TO A HEADHUNTING TRADITION

The ACM is an ethnographic museum that focuses on pan-Asian cultures and civilisations, including those originating from China, Southeast Asia, South Asia and West Asia. The Dayak Carved Human Skull is the centrepiece of a permanent display showcasing the lifestyle of the indigenous Dayak tribe of Borneo. It is physical proof that the Dayaks engaged in headhunting activities, even though the practice has long been outlawed by Malaysian and Indonesian governments in Borneo.

ACM went to great lengths to assure visitors that headhunting was not a form of brutal tribal behaviour. The catalogue gave a balanced view by explaining how the Dayak tradition of headhunting was an honourable means to "improve the community's well-being" as human heads were "believed to contain a powerful beneficial spiritual essence". In fact human heads were treated respectfully by the Dayaks. Major rituals followed each successful headhunting expedition. Captured heads were honoured and proudly displayed in the ancestral longhouse. Elaborate swirl patterns on the skulls show that these were not merely war trophies, but revered artefacts.

ACM thus framed its curation of the Dayak human skull within an anthropological understanding of the Dayak tribe. The Dayaks are portrayed as an important component of Nusantara (Malay world). The museum also noted similarities in social structures found in some communities in Riau-Lingga sultanates, where Singapore's Malay community draws its ancestry.

Other museums such as Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford and the Pennsylvanian Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (Penn Museum), which also included Dayak carved skulls in its collections, treated these artefacts with similar sensitivity. In a special volume of Penn Museum's Expedition magazine, the tribe's practice of headhunting was described in the social context of "contributing to the prosperity of community through performance of certain important rituals, such as the Iban Dayak kenyalang, which required fresh human heads for their performance"

Right:
Dayak Carved Human Skull
IMAGE BY ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM





CURATING THE RELIGIOUS REMAINS OF BUDDHA

The Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum serves two functions. Firstly, it honours the tooth relic and other Buddhist relics, or sarira, purportedly from Gautama Buddha. Secondly, the temple exhibits these relics and other religious artefacts in a museum setting to impart Dharma and promote awareness of the faith.

The relics from Buddha's remains are venerated and enshrined in elaborate reliquaries housed in the museum's Relics Chamber. In Buddhism, the crystal-like sarira is the embodiment of spiritual energy culminated by Buddha and eminent monks during their lifetimes, and represent a person's "sangha" or Buddhism learning. Buddhists believe that before Buddha's departure, he had said: "...if thou shall see my relics, it would be as good as meeting in person, as good as learning the Dharma and as good as knowing nirvana." Hence, relics associated with Buddha's remains are highly regarded by the religion's devotees.

The centrepiece of the museum, the Buddha Tooth relic, is housed in a 3.6m-high stupa made with 270kg of gold that was donated by devotees. Buddhists believe that "relics can grow and multiply", which may be seen as not only a testament of faith, but also a departure from conventional Asian attitudes in that devotees do not view exhibiting these remains as culturally taboo. Similar beliefs are seen elsewhere: Sri Lankan Buddhists view relics enshrined in the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy as a means of receiving Buddha's blessings and to "procure wishes for economic wealth and health." The translocation of the Buddha Tooth from Sri Lanka to the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple in Singapore is also an example of how Buddhism may be spread via the veneration of these relics.

The Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum and its curation of Buddha's remains are driven by the veneration for the Buddha Tooth and sarira. Its curatorial approach also focuses on how the display of such relics represent the religion's beliefs and their spread across Asia.

RESPECTING A SCHOOL'S "SILENT MENTORS"

At the Anatomy Museum (AM) in NUS, embalmed cadavers hold specific parts of the human body, which are arranged anatomically. The curatorial approach of AM may be described as that of a teaching museum founded on the educational needs of medical students and instructors.

The cadavers on display came from donors who had pledged their bodies for medical use after their deaths. That said, the bodies are only dissected and embalmed after a "claims" period of three years. As some facial features still discernible, AM does not allow its handlers or viewers to take any pictures as a mark of respect. Students are also prohibited from making "Humourous and derogatory remarks" towards the cadavers. Visits to the museum must be booked ahead, and access is usually granted only to medical students and practitioners. Similar guidelines are practised in other pathology museums, including the Wellcome Museum in the Royal College of Surgeons, and The Gordon Museum in King's College in the UK.

Unlike the controversial Body Worlds exhibition that showed plastinated cadavers in positions mimicking horse riding, fencing and swimming, the cadavers on display in AM are treated respectfully. Cadavers come with detailed write-ups of the donors' medical histories which highlight the museum's emphasis on education. The museum also runs a "Silent Mentor" programme that provides information for body donation, and holds an annual ceremony to show its appreciation towards "once living individuals whose bodies are used to impart invaluable anatomical knowledge". These practices demonstrate a unique way for treating human remains with dignity.

PAVING THE WAY FORWARD

Academics argue that exhibiting human remains perpetuates a "construction of otherness within an anthropological discourse that tends to privilege the visual and the spatial". In other words, the once-living person is now viewed with a sense of detachment in the museum – not unlike an exotic artefact. Curation practices in these three Singapore museums thus demonstrate the importance of placing human remains within a larger context. From portraying head-hunting as a unique ritual practised by Dayaks, to the veneration of Buddha's relics as religious devotion, and the role of silent mentors, donated cadavers, play to students of the human body, all three museums have shown a way to fulfil their respective curatorial objectives, while still according the remains with the deepest respect possible. ❁

Ian Tan Yuk Hong is an Assistant Manager/Heritage Planning, Impact Assessment & Mitigation with the National Heritage Board





IN
LOVING
MEMORY
OF
C. WHOBY
BORN 1858
DIED 1918
AGE 61

英界
地安
文德
街
瑞
河

民國
元年
十一月
二十二
日
葬

戊午年十一月二十二日

THE
BELOVED
FATHER
OF
NG KAH CHEN
&
NG SWER CHEE
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CHINESE CEMETERY

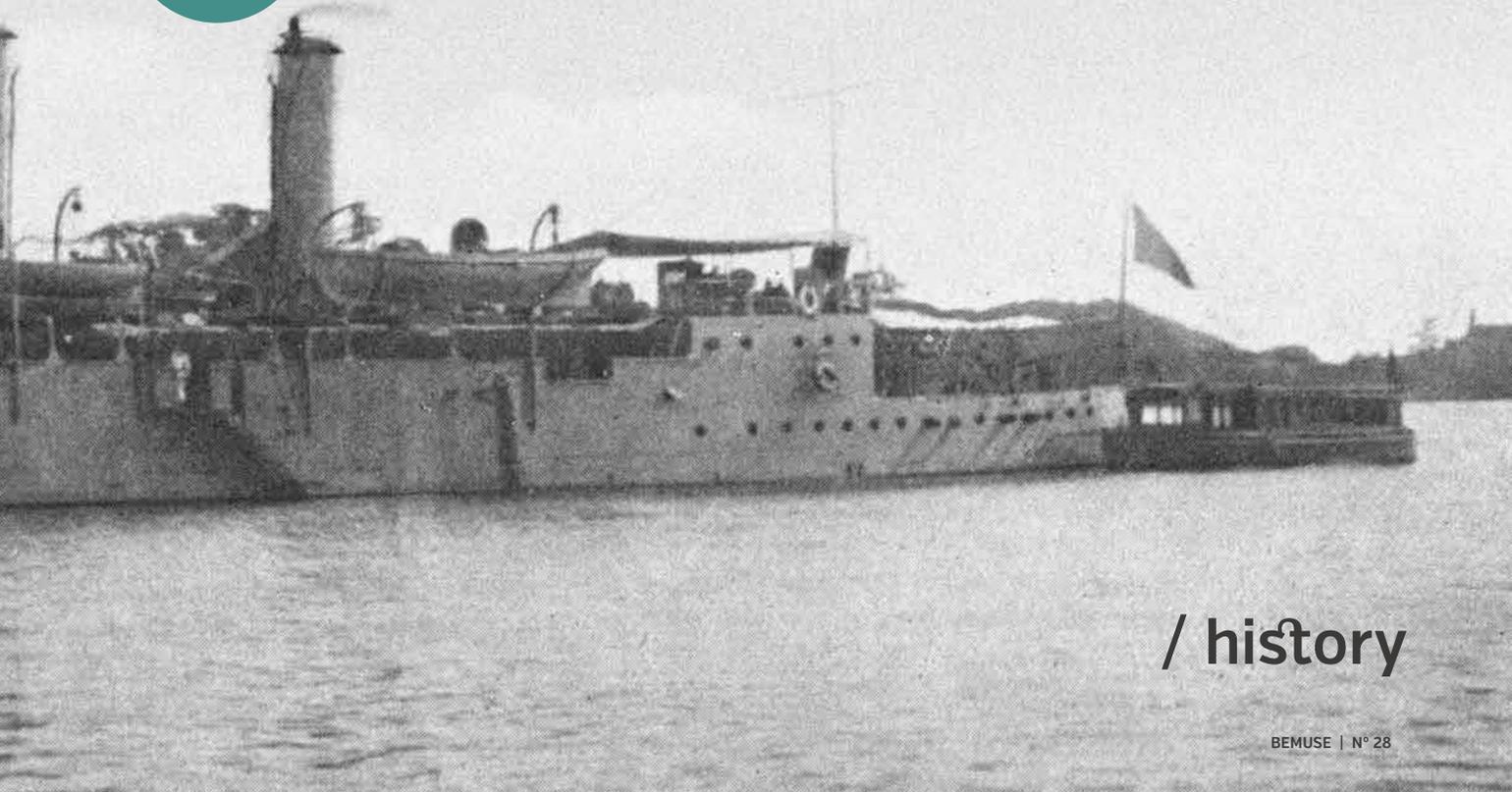


zhongsha

The Zhongshan Warship, originally named Yongfeng Warship, was one of two modernised warships the Qing Government ordered from Japan in 1910. It was completed in June 1912 and joined the Beiyang Government Navy fleet in 1913.

In 1916, the warship supported the Anti-Monarchy War - a civil war that took place in China between 1915-1916. A year later, it headed south to support the Constitutional Protection Movement - a series of movement to resist the Beiyang Government - led by Dr Sun Yat Sen (1866-1925). In 1922, when troops under the command of Chen Jiong Ming (1878-1933) besieged Dr Sun's Presidential Palace, the Yongfeng Warship was the vessel from which Dr Sun commanded his counter-attack. The last time Dr Sun was on board the warship was while travelling to Beijing to discuss the state of national affairs in 1924. After he passed away in 1925, the Yongfeng Warship was renamed Zhongshan Warship in honour of Dr Sun's achievements and contributions.

n warship & its treasures



/ history

By Dr Tan Teng Phee

In 1926, Chiang Kai Shek's fight for leadership led to the historic Zhongshan Warship Incident. After the breakout of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the Zhongshan Warship suffered extensive damage after being attacked by Japanese fighter planes. On 24 October 1938, it sank off the waters of Jinkou, Wuhan, in the Yangtze River. In its 26 years of voyaging, the Zhongshan Warship participated in five major historical events and made a glorious impact on modern Chinese history.

The theme of the exhibition, "Inspiring Spirit", honours the revolutionary spirit of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, as well as the indomitable spirit of the Zhongshan Warship. After 59 years of lying submerged in the waters of the Yangtze, the Zhongshan Warship was discovered in 1997, along with approximately 5000 cultural relics. The exhibition, a collaboration between the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall and Zhongshan Warship Museum in Wuhan, China, presents approximately 100 cultural relics, historical photographs and items, including appliances that reflect the development and evolution of both Western civilization and Chinese traditional culture.

Grouped according to five different themes – plaques and medals, facilities and equipment on board, everyday items, weaponry, and restoration of the Zhongshan Warship – these precious cultural relics will allow visitors to have a better understanding of the famous warship and China's modern naval, economic and social history. ❁

Dr Tan Teng Phee is General Manager of the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall

Zhongshan Warship & Its Treasures

18 October 2014 – 19 April 2015

Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall

Free admission [for Singapore citizens & PR]

Language: English, Chinese



Silver Medal for Land, Naval and Air Units

This medal represents the highest of honours for those in the army, navy and air force. It is circular and adorned with plum blossoms, geometric patterns, a five-pointed star and swirls of flowers. The words Medal for the Land, Naval and Air Units are found on the back. This medal possibly belonged to Captain Sa Shi Jun as it was found in his cabin.

Collection of Zhongshan Warship Museum. Image reproduced with permission from Zhongshan Warship Museum.

“Inspiring Spirit” Silver Plaque

In April 1934, Wang Jing Wei (1883 -1944), then the Premier of the Nationalist Government, accompanied by Navy Minister, Chen Shao Kuan (1889 -1944), boarded the Zhongshan Warship. The words “Inspiring Spirit” were inscribed horizontally on the plaque.

The Yongfeng Warship was renamed Zhongshan Warship in memory of Dr Sun Yat Sen, who led a fleet of warships in a counterattack against Chen Jiong Ming. This renaming also served to commend the soldiers for their bravery.

- In the words of Wang Zhao Ming (Wang Jing Wei).

These words illustrate the reasons why Yongfeng Warship was renamed Zhongshan Warship.

*Collection of Zhongshan Warship Museum.
Image reproduced with permission from
Zhongshan Warship Museum.*



The Zhongshan Warship Emblem

The emblem is rectangular, and inscribed with four Chinese characters on the front which say “Zhongshan Warship”. The back features a patterned design that is a combination of the character “Zhongshan” - in the form of an anchor - and the Kuomintang party logo.

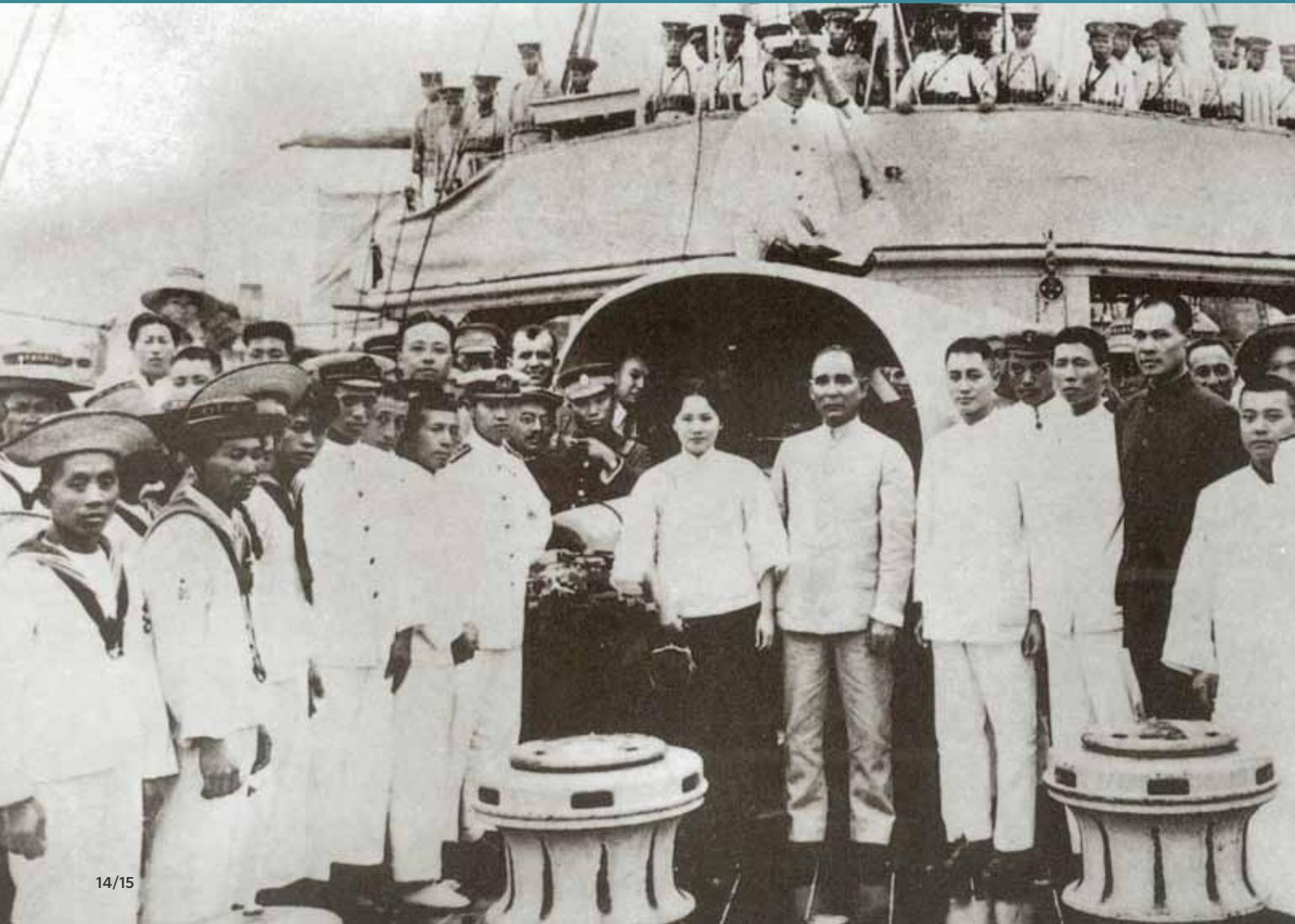
*Collection of Zhongshan Warship Museum. Image reproduced
with permission from Zhongshan Warship Museum.*



Below:

Group photo of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, Madam Soong Ching Ling and the soldiers on board Yongfeng Warship dated August 1923.

*Collection of Zhongshan Warship Museum.
Image reproduced with permission from
Zhongshan Warship Museum.*



Left:

Heavy Machine Gun

This heavy machine gun was produced by the Guangdong Arsenal, which was preceded by the Guangdong Machinery Bureau, the earliest machinery bureau of Guangzhou.

After the founding of the Republic of China, all types of arsenal and manufacturing bureaus were directly administered by The Army Ordinance Department. However, the actual authority and funds were still controlled by the military governors of the provinces.

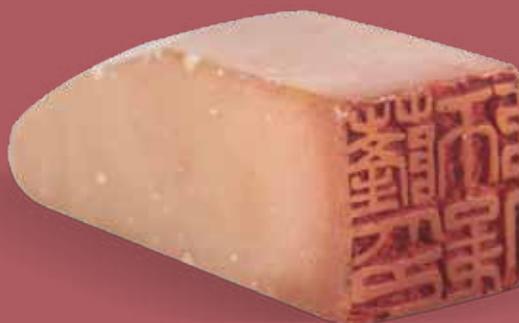
Collection of Zhongshan Warship Museum. Image reproduced with permission from Zhongshan Warship Museum.



Stone Seal Belonging to Sa Shi Jun, the Last Captain of the Zhongshan

This personal seal is carved out of clear white stone, and is smooth in texture. The top of the seal is sloped, while the surface is adorned with cloud patterns. The seal is also carved with the words "Sa Shi Jun's Seal" in traditional Chinese calligraphy.

Collection of Zhongshan Warship Museum. Image reproduced with permission from Zhongshan Warship Museum.



Programmes held in conjunction with the exhibition:

[Conducted in Mandarin]

• Seminar on Zhongshan Warship & Its Legacy

Speaker: Mr. Wang Rui Hua,
Director of Zhongshan Warship Museum (Wuhan)
19 October 2014 [Sunday] | 2.00pm-3.00pm
Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall

• Seminar on Dr Sun Yat Sen, Madam Soong Ching Ling & the Zhongshan Warship

Speaker: Ms Xie Bei,
Researcher of Zhongshan Warship Museum (Wuhan)
19 October 2014 [Sunday] | 3.00pm-4.00pm
Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall

• Documentary Screening [In Mandarin]

» Sun Yat Sen & the Zhongshan Warship
25 October 2014 [Saturday] | 2.00pm-2.30pm

• Curator's Tour [In Mandarin]

» Sun Yat Sen & the Zhongshan Warship
25 October 2014 [Saturday] | 2.30pm-3.30pm

Toa Payoh

HERITAGE TRAIL

BY STEFANIE THAM



/ community

Toa Payoh Central, 1970s.
COURTESY OF TOA PAYOH CENTRAL COMMUNITY CLUB



B

efore the 1970s, no taxi driver would have dared to enter Toa Payoh after dark. Ng Giak Hai, born in 1949 and a lifelong resident of Toa Payoh, remembers the seedier, darker underbelly of the area in its early years when violence and crime were a part of daily life. “In those days,” he says, “police cars did not dare to come into the villages. If they came in, sometimes people might use guns to shoot their tyres.” His reference is to the secret society gangsters who used to prowl the area and possessively – often forcefully – mark their turf. So rampant was the lawlessness that Toa Payoh was called the ‘Chicago of Singapore’ - a moniker that lasted well into the 1970s when a new town was erected there.

Such are the layers that make up Toa Payoh’s history. When we think of Toa Payoh today, many of us conjure up a quiet, matured heartland residential district that was an icon for public housing in the 1970s. Indeed, when the town was first complete, Toa Payoh served as a showcase of Singapore’s impressive and successful approach to public housing and urban redevelopment – an achievement lauded by several foreign dignitaries during their visits to the island.

The story of Toa Payoh, however, runs deeper than this milestone in the making of modern Singapore. A former settling ground for plantation farmers, village dwellers, secret societies, shrines and temples, the history of Toa Payoh is a rich tapestry of stories and voices, set against the backdrop of our country’s nation-building years.

WHERE IT BEGINS

Back in the 19th century, the area where Toa Payoh stands today was a natural swampland. A hint of this can be found in the etymology of the name “Toa Payoh”, which literally means “big swamp”. Swamps were a common sight in Singapore in the past, until plantation owners started settling inland and cleared the area. One of the early pioneers who used to own land in Toa Payoh was Teochew merchant and “king of pepper and gambier” Seah Eu Chin. Seah owned plantations along Thomson Road, and his property at Toa Payoh included a large bungalow named E-Choon.

Early villagers who settled in the area were largely Chinese, although there were a handful of Malays living near Boon Teck Road (in present-day Balestier) and Kampong Pasiran in the Novena area. There was also a small community of Indians who lived in Potong Pasir, where they herded cattle and sold them at the markets in Toa Payoh.



Top:
A portrait of Seah Eu Chin.
COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE

Facing page:
A village market in the 1950s.
COURTESY OF TOA PAYOH CENTRAL COMMUNITY





The 21m-high watch tower that was part of the village fire post at Puay Teng Keng in the early 1960s. COURTESY OF CHEE TIAN KENG TEMPLE

Everyone would take care of one another. During Chinese New Year, [if] you had nothing to eat, you go to your neighbour's house and he would serve you soft drinks, give you cookies to eat...

At that time, villagers belonged to closely-knit dialect-based communities that were centred around their respective temples. The story of Kampong Puay Teng Keng, one of the former kampungs in Toa Payoh, exemplifies this. Consisting of mostly Hokkiens, the village was a self-sufficient community hub that provided the necessary services for its residents, such as help for funerals, religious processions, wayangs (street operas), a large market, early education and even a firefighting team. To keep a closer watch on the attap houses that were prone to fires, the Puay Teng Keng villagers had a fire post erected. The team was also dispatched to help in the 1961 Bukit Ho Swee fires. Ng Giak Hai reflects on the strong kampung kinship: "Everyone would take care of one another. During Chinese New Year, [if] you had nothing to eat, you go to your neighbour's house and he would serve you soft drinks, give you cookies to eat... This August we have a [temple] event, and all our kampung people will come back. Some of them are now Christians but they will still come, they come to visit old friends, come here to reminisce."

But underneath this neighbourly warmth, Toa Payoh had a shadier side. Located at the periphery of the downtown area, villages like Toa Payoh were often unregulated, allowing secret societies to thrive. Residents remember gangs in Toa Payoh making moonshine - illegally distilled liquor - that had very high alcohol content and would make stomachs churn and swell. Gang members would also lurk around the town seeking protection money from shops, which sometimes led to violent quarrels. Former grassroots leader Wong Shou Jui recollects how fierce clashes would occur opposite his house: "At today's Kim Keat Avenue market, there was a big plot of grassland. Many secret societies had their fights there, and we could see from our window that the fights were very intense. [The gangs] would agree on a time and place to battle it out, [and they had] fierce battles, so everyone shut their doors to let them fight."





KAMPUNG DWELLERS MOVING OUT OF THEIR ATTAP HOUSES IN TOA PAYOH, 1963.
IMAGE REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE STRAITS TIMES © SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS.

A lion dance performance at a new HDB estate in Toa Payoh, 1966.

IMAGE REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE STRAITS TIMES © SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS.





CHANGE AND RESETTLEMENT

When plans to create a new satellite town in Toa Payoh were announced in 1961 by the Housing and Development Board (HDB), the idea of staying in high-rise concrete flats was still an alien one. High expectations were laid upon the town – Toa Payoh's HDB estate was one way the ruling authority hoped to alleviate the housing shortage of the post-war period.

For the villagers, however, this change incited great fear. Most of them lived off their small plots of land for a living, and this transition would lead to them losing their source of livelihood. Most of them were also doubtful that they could afford the higher rents of the new flats. Others disagreed with the compensation rates offered by the government. It was unsurprising, then, that efforts to clear the kampungs met with strong resistance from the villagers. As Mr Ng recalls: "At that time the move really would [make us] cry. Everyone was very scared... when they wanted to relocate us, everyone thought, 'we're in trouble this time!'"

These concerns were only appeased after extensive negotiation and compromise, particularly regarding the inclusion of monetary compensation and lower rental rates for affected villagers. Nonetheless, those who underwent this transition had to adjust to an entirely new way of living, which for residents like Tan Kee Seng (b. 1926), meant the beginning of better things to come: "With the public housing, the living environment was better compared to my kampung days at Ah Hood Road. I didn't have many difficulties adjusting to life in the flats."



A village procession across what is today's Toa Payoh Central in the 1950s.



A GREAT NATIONAL EXPERIMENT

Today, modern high-rise flats are ubiquitous. Over 80 per cent of Singapore's population lives in HDB flats. Toa Payoh may not appear very different from most modern heartlands we see today, but, as the second satellite town built entirely by the HDB, Toa Payoh represented a new frontier in public housing. The town had successfully housed a population of 250,000 people, four times the number indicated in the plans drawn up by the original Singapore Improvement Trust (a pre-cursor to HDB). A solution had been found to Singapore's housing problem.

Toa Payoh was also the site of many unprecedented developments: the first Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) station, the first cooperative supermarket in Singapore (the former NTUC Welcome), the first neighbourhood police post system and the first Residents' Association, to name a few. Because of its impressive and modern amenities, Toa Payoh was selected to proudly play host to 1,500 athletes competing in the sixth Southeast Asian Peninsular Games in 1973.

For the kampung folk, Toa Payoh was an also a test-bed; many were unsure whether they could fit into the new town. Former communities had to adapt to a new lifestyle and newcomers from other parts of Singapore. Given the strong sense of neighbourliness in the kampungs, some wondered whether they could experience the same kind of closeness they enjoyed previously. Nevertheless, while interaction between neighbours was understandably more muted in the town's nascent days, new bonds formed over time. As Razali Ajmain (b. 1956) shared, "After a while, I made friends, I went to the coffee shops and mixed with all races and I got used to life in the housing estate. With friends, it began to feel more like life in the kampung."

The community and religious institutions in Toa Payoh today likewise reflect a strong gotong-royong spirit that continues to prevail. A mark of this can be seen in the origins of Masjid Muhajirin. Located along Braddell Road, it was the first mosque to be built with help from the Mosque Building Fund (MBF) and community efforts, which raised funds through food sales. The mosque's roots can be traced back to the Muslim Benevolent Society in Toa Payoh in the late 1960s. The society offered assistance for needy families, provided religious services for the 1,200 Muslim families in Toa Payoh, and also reached out to non-Muslims during events such as Hari Raya.

Other religious institutions such as the Church of the Risen Christ served the Toa Payoh community at large as well. The church organised childcare services and free tuition classes run by volunteer teachers. A small library was also opened for children before the Toa Payoh Public Library was constructed. For those who grew up in Toa Payoh, the town holds a significant place in their memories. Heritage blogger Jerome Lim (b. 1964) spent a few years of his childhood living in Block 53 of Lorong 5. Even today, he still recalls his first friend in the neighbourhood, a young boy from a Sikh family with whom he "play[ed] games like police and thieves, cowboys and Indians... along the common corridors of my block." Others grew up with Toa Payoh, witnessing its coming of age. K. Malathy (b. 1961) reflects on this: "My family moved to Toa Payoh in 1972. I was a child then, and Toa Payoh was young, like me. The town was raw, awkward, and its blocks of flats still held a new, white-washed look... But since then, Toa Payoh has changed. I have watched Toa Payoh grow up with me and mature into a respectable, comfortable town."



Facing page:

A young Jerome and his family in front of their residence at Block 53, 1969.

COURTESY OF JEROME LIM

Bottom right:

A long queue to enter the Toa Payoh Swimming Complex, which was one of the venues for the 1973 SEAP Games.

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GROWING MEMORIES

Indeed, Toa Payoh is constantly evolving and its story continues to develop. These are but a sample of the numerous memories of present and former residents who have come forward to share their recollections of life in Toa Payoh. Their stories are part of the Toa Payoh Heritage Trail launched by the National Heritage Board (NHB) on 17 August 2014. A product of both the NHB and the Toa Payoh community, the trail celebrates the role that Toa Payoh plays in our collective social history and the heritage sites that have become an indelible part of the area's identity today.

There are many avenues for us to celebrate and discover more about the heritage of Singapore. The story of Toa Payoh is a microcosm of the wider shifts in the Singapore Story. While Toa Payoh's sites of heritage are unique to the area, the memories of its residents capture the socio-historical changes that have become a shared legacy amongst Singaporeans who lived through the country's path to maturity in the early decades of independence.

Visitors can pick up the self-guided Toa Payoh Heritage Trail booklet from Toa Payoh Central Community Club or download from <http://www.nhb.gov.sg/NHBPortal/Trails/ToaPayoh>. ❀

Stefanie Tham is an Assistant Manager, Community Institutions & Outreach with the National Heritage Board

Top:
Toa Payoh Town Park in the 1970s
COURTESY OF TOA PAYOH CENTRAL COMMUNITY CLUB

Facing page:
The dragon playground, 1980s
COURTESY OF HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD

NATIONAL
HEALTHCARE GROUP
POLYCLINICS'
OF GALLERY
MEMORIES

BY MELISSA WANG WANYU

Images from Khoo Teck Puat Hospital

It is not meant to be a secret, but few people know that tucked away on the third floor of the Bukit Batok Polyclinic is an archive of the rich history of primary healthcare in Singapore. At the Gallery of Memories, visitors can learn about how Singapore's primary healthcare system has developed over the years, evolving from a network of maternal and child health clinics and outpatient dispensaries in the late 19th century to the present structure where polyclinics are the first line of healthcare providers.

Officially opened in October 2002, the Gallery of Memories was the brainchild of then-CEO of National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP), Dr Shanta Emmanuel, together with NHGP's Nursing Services division. The idea behind setting up the gallery was to commemorate the development of primary care in Singapore as the nation moves forward. To quote Dr Emmanuel, "As we progress into the future, it is important that we honour the contributions that paved the way for our advancement."

/ **community**

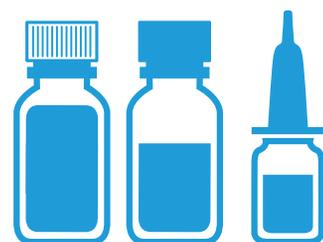


The gallery's artefacts showcase these advancements and the journey through many milestones and changes in primary care. For example, there is a display of different nurses' uniforms throughout the years, and each has a different look and feel - from an older white starched uniform with epaulettes to the current uniform with blue flowers. Even these outfit changes are telling of how health-care in Singapore has transformed towards today's softer approach, where patient care is a core focus.

Also on exhibition are numerous examples of medical equipment and items that were used in the past but are now obsolete, such as glass syringes and platinum needles. This seeks to remind patients and healthcare professionals alike of the advancements in medical technology and how today's tools are safer, easier to use and even disposable. In the past, nurses had to sharpen needles, for instance, as they were not disposable and also not as safe. A veteran nurse, Sister Chow Chor Har, shares that in earlier days, "we encountered several needle pricks when sharpening and packing needles, but thankfully we are alive with no HIV or other infectious diseases. Hopefully this serves as a reminder to current medical staff of how lucky they are!"

Sister Chow also recalls that rain or shine, nurses of the past had to move from house to house to serve patients who were unable to come to the clinics, using improvised medical equipment. The Gallery of Memories also houses some of these items that were carried around by the doctors and nurses.

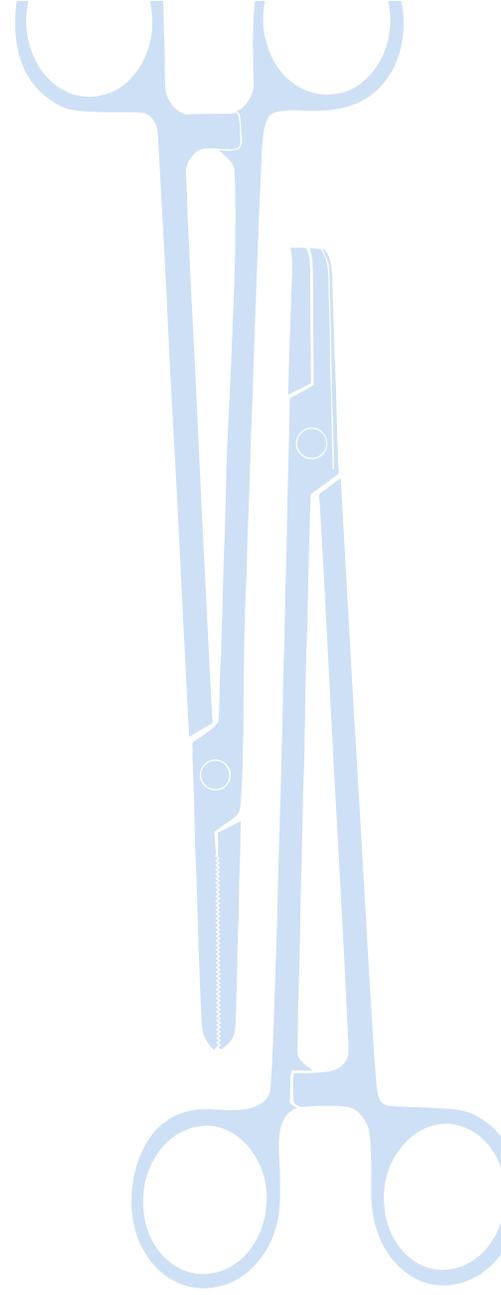
As many of these items were already obsolete by the time the gallery was set up, a work group was established to discuss which of these healthcare artefacts needed to be gathered. Some of the items, including the uniforms, were donated by ex-healthcare staff, while others were purchased from street markets selling second-hand items, such as the one at Sungei Road. Some of the staff even travelled to Malaysia's street markets to gather the items, many of which bring back fond and priceless memories for veteran nurses like Sister Chow.



The Gallery of Memories also showcases old medical records that were handwritten. To Sister Chow, this shows how far Singapore has come in terms of incorporating technology into its healthcare system and especially primary care. She revels in the major improvements that the digitisation of medical records has brought to healthcare; the handwritten records of old were sometimes illegible. Furthermore, patients occasionally had to repeat their medical history to the healthcare staff, which also resulted in duplicate investigations - an added step for both the healthcare professional and patient alike. "It is so much easier and convenient now that all the records are electronic, and accessible with a click of a mouse."

Deputy Director of Finance at NHGP David Kok, whose mother was a nurse involved in the setting up of the Gallery of Memories, says: "I think that we have seen tremendous progression in the development and quality of healthcare in Singapore over time, from a third-world delivery in the early days, to the world-class, first-world healthcare system we have today." The Gallery of Memories sheds light on the advancements and development of primary care over the years and seeks to remind us about the past contributions and hard work put into healthcare. ❁

Melissa Wang is from the National Healthcare Group Polytechnics



The Gallery of Memories is located on the third floor of Bukit Batok Polyclinic, 50 Bukit Batok West Avenue 3, Singapore 659164.

It is open during clinic hours, from Monday to Friday, 8.00am–4.30pm and on Saturday, 8.00am–12.30pm and closed on Public Holidays. Admission is free.

2
A



VX43759 PRIVATE
W.G. KIRK
2/29 INFANTRY BATTALION
24TH MARCH 1942 AGE 39



WASING SAFFER
W.E. BARDSLEY
THE FIELD PARK COMPANY
22ND APRIL 1941 AGE 39



YOUR FRIEND WILL REMEMBER

“READING” MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS OF WAR

Memorials or monuments that commemorate past wars are often intended to remind people of intensely-fought battles for national glory and triumph. At times, they serve as testimony to certain shared experiences fundamental to establishing a common destiny. Oftentimes, these sites – and what they represent – are also used to achieve larger political and social purposes, such as to instill patriotism and foster national identity, create collective memory, as well as imbue a sense of “continuity” of the historical legacies to be imparted to succeeding generations.

War memorials, monuments dedicated to past wars, and statues dedicated to military heroes are excellent historical sites that provide opportunities for young people to critically reflect the history they learn in classrooms, and evoke ideas and feelings they have about war, patriotism, and peace. Historical field trips to these sites can develop students' sense of empathy as they consider how different people were affected, and continue to be affected, by war and the ways war is represented in their cultures.

As history educators, we are frequently designing fieldwork activities to engage students in more critical and empathetic engagements with historical sites. Combined with an inquiry approach to fieldwork, we believe historical field trips can help students become careful and critical readers of artefacts, architecture, sites, monuments, historical markers, and museum displays as visual representations or sources of evidence about the past. The sites that students encounter on such trips can be critically analyzed, interpreted, and evaluated like other historical sources, instead of being passively received.

In this article, we offer guiding questions for historical field trips to help students “read” war memorials and monuments critically and with empathy. We define critical reading of historical sites as questioning how knowledge about the past is constructed and used. This means asking critical questions about why historical sites are created, techniques used to represent the past, and how they try to shape ideas people have about the past. Developing a disposition to empathise requires students to think about how different contexts, events, and issues shaped or affected people's lives and past actions. Empathetic readings require students to infer how people felt and thought in the past, based on evidence that memorials and monuments provide.

**BY SUHAIMI AFANDI,
MARK BILDON &
S N CHELVA RAJAH**

**IMAGES BY
SUHAIMI AFANDI**

A SOLDIER
OF THE
1939-1945
WAR

“READING” MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS

Historical sites that represent particular interpretations or views of the past are often subject to intense debates both within and between societies. Helping students understand that historical sites can be read critically and with empathy is one way students can begin to interrogate different meanings associated with such sites, as well as their own and others' perspectives of these sites and the pasts they represent. Reading monuments for evidence, however, requires that students ask particular questions about the site(s) they are investigating.

We use the following guiding questions to help students critically read historical sites:

- **What does this site tell me about the past?**
- **Describe the people, objects, symbols, actions, etc. that you see.**
- **What information about the past does the site provide?**
- **Who sponsored or created the site, and why was it created?**
- **For what purposes was the site created?**
- **What might they want viewers or visitors to think, believe, or do? Explain.**
- **What techniques are used to influence me as a viewer?**
- **Why are certain objects or people shown or placed where they are?**
- **How are words, symbols or images used to influence what I think or feel?**

An empathetic reading requires students to think carefully about the perspectives others might have about the site and the past it represents. Some empathy-related questions include:

- **What clues does the site provide about what people thought, felt, or did in the past?**
- **What evidence from the site supports my ideas?**
- **What contexts help me understand what people thought, felt, or did?**
- **What values or ideas are expressed through this site?**
- **In what ways does the site help me understand the perspectives people had about a particular part of the past?**
- **What evidence from the site supports my ideas?**
- **What are other ways different people might think or feel about this site and the history it represents?**
- **How might someone from a different country, culture, or perspective think and feel about this site and the history that it represents?**
- **Why might they have different reactions?**

These questions can be tailored more specifically for students to directly engage with the war memorial or monument it was designed to commemorate.

USING CRITICAL AND EMPATHETIC QUESTIONS WITH A WAR MEMORIAL IN SINGAPORE

While any number of war memorials or monuments could be used for this activity, we selected the Kranji War Memorial to demonstrate how these critical and empathetic questions might be used with students. The answers to each question are written as first-person responses that might be typical of a student visiting the site.

WHAT DOES THE SITE TELL ME ABOUT THE PAST?

The Kranji War Memorial has several different areas and features. Each feature of the memorial includes different symbols and information about World War II and Singapore. A large Stone of Remembrance marks the entrance to the site and a gentle slope with gravestones leads up to the War Memorial at the top. The War Memorial columns represent the three branches of the military. The columns symbolise a marching Army; the cover over the columns represents the Air Force; there is a shape at the top of the memorial that resembles a Navy periscope. The memorial's walls making up each column include the names of over 24,000 allied servicemen who lost their lives in the war. There is a memorial cross at the site.

The memorial mainly provides the perspectives of the British Crown and Commonwealth nations that fought on behalf of Singapore and Malaya against the Japanese. It emphasises in bold letters that their deaths were for all free men. It tells me that the war and the great loss of life during the war were for freedom and to protect Singapore and Malaya from military aggression.

JOHN
COOMBS



IN
REMEMBRANCE

In
our hearts
forever.
All our
love Vicky
Maurice
Ruari
Eilish &
Cosey

John
Coombs



IN
REMEMBRANCE

I have
never
forgotten
you.
Your loving
brother
David

WHO CREATED THE SITE AND WHY WAS IT CREATED?

The site has great historical significance. Prior to the war, it was a British military camp and stored ammunition magazines. After Singapore fell, it was used by the Japanese as a prisoner-of-war camp. After the war ended, the site in 1946 was designated as Singapore's war cemetery, and military personnel who had been buried in other areas of Singapore were exhumed and buried at the Kranji site. This provided a central place of rest for the war dead and a focal point for remembrance of the war.

The memorial was designed by a Scottish architect, Colin St Clair Oakes, and was built to commemorate those who sacrificed their lives for Britain and its colony (Malaya) in World War II. These included military personnel from the UK, Australia, Canada, Sri Lanka, India, Malaya, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Singapore. The site is located in the north of Singapore where the Japanese invaded. The creators of the site probably wanted visitors to remember the lives that were lost and feel the loss in very real terms (by the tombs and names engraved on the memorial walls).

WHAT TECHNIQUES ARE USED TO INFLUENCE ME AS A VIEWER?

The phrase "They died for all free men" and the engraving on the Stone of Remembrance that "Their name liveth for evermore" give the military deaths a much greater significance than solely defending Singapore and Malaya. Since the Japanese invaded and occupied Singapore, it connotes that although Singapore fell, the lives of the soldiers were not lost in vain.

The many rows of tombs as well as the names engraved on the memorial walls provide a powerful reminder of the many lives lost during the war. This makes me think of the sacrifice and great loss caused by the war.

The cross with a sword symbolises military might. This is called a cross of sacrifice and it is apparently quite common in Commonwealth war cemeteries. The cross and swords pointing downward represent resting. While the cross of sacrifice suggests a religious focal point of the cemetery (as a symbol of Christianity), the Stone of Remembrance represents all faiths and shows the diversity of those commemorated by the memorial.

WHAT CLUES DOES THE SITE PROVIDE ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE THOUGHT, FELT, OR DID IN THE PAST?

The creators of the site want people to know that the dead commemorated at the memorial gave their lives for freedom. A sign in Singapore's four official languages reminds viewers to preserve the peace and dignity of the site. It reminds viewers that people placed great importance on the war and the loss of life and that it should always remain a significant place of respect for visitors.

The many plaques highlighting key battles during the war also display important information about the war that people should know. Not only is it a place that represents deep emotion for the fallen, solemn observation and reflection, it also is designed to inform. The plaques provide contextual information about the battle that helps viewers understand the historical contexts of the war and the war dead.



12778 GUNNER
C.G. ROBINSON
ROYAL ARTILLERY
5TH APRIL 1942 AGE 23

4000000 PRIVATE
R. RUDD
ROYAL ARTILLERY
5TH APRIL 1942 AGE 23

485545 PRIVATE
W. WALLER
THE LEICESTERSHIRE REGT.
5TH APRIL 1942 AGE 28

394120 SIGNALS
I.S. ARUNDALE
ROYAL SIGNALS
5TH APRIL 1942 AGE 28

5528455 PRIVATE
A.R. TUCK
THE SUFFOLK REGIMENT
5TH MARCH 1942

5831409 CORPORAL
V. BURNS
THE SUFFOLK REGIMENT
5TH MARCH 1942 AGE 28

WHAT VALUES OR IDEAS ARE EXPRESSED THROUGH THIS SITE?

The memorial reminds me of other war monuments or memorials that I've seen that similarly commemorate the war dead. It expresses the tragedy of the devastation and death caused by World War II, but also wants viewers to honour those who died. The inscription of "They died for all free men" makes me think that I should feel a certain indebtedness to those who died. It makes me think that maybe they died so that I might live in freedom. The idea or value of freedom, and that it has to be defended, seems central to the memorial.

By showing the names of every person who died, it marks the individual contributions made on behalf of the defence of Singapore and freedom. The people who constructed this site want future generations to remember the sacrifices made during the war so that Singaporeans and other visitors to the site may appreciate the importance of freedom and the need to defend it.

WHAT ARE OTHER WAYS DIFFERENT PEOPLE MIGHT THINK OR FEEL ABOUT THIS SITE AND THE HISTORY IT REPRESENTS?

Other people may have very different interpretations and reactions to this site. If a member of your family had lost someone in the war, I think there would be a much more emotional reaction to the site. The site's plaques tell me more about the war – why it was fought, who else died, how it ended, etc. – so, it seems to want me to acknowledge the contribution made by the dead supposedly on the behalf of Singaporeans.

I think other people might have very different perspectives of the war, because people usually view war in very different ways depending on their values or backgrounds. Some might be angry at the loss of life caused by the war. Some might feel great sadness, and others might see this as a representation of the British Empire or colonial power, rather than having anything to do with Singapore. I know that many things are missing about the war and that the site wants me to focus only on honoring the dead.

The site also doesn't seem to acknowledge the lives of ordinary civilians who died during the war. There were many civilians in Singapore, for example, who resisted the Japanese and lost their lives. Their deaths are not commemorated at the site.

CONCLUSION

The questions we have proposed can be an integral part of historical fieldwork. They encourage students to consider the purpose of constructing war memorials and monuments, and also encourage students to think about and question their own and others' responses to these sites and to war. These questions can empower teachers and students to more fully understand how the past, present, and future are constructed through the interpretive practices that make up historical inquiry.

By giving students the opportunity to challenge accepted versions of the past (including their own) and develop their own or alternative interpretive accounts, they might better understand the role history education can play during peace-time.

Reading the past with empathy requires students to consider the perspectives and emotions of those affected by war, both in the past and the present. Through empathetic understanding, teachers and students can begin to consider how war impacts different people, the views on war and peace that others may hold, as well as their own responses to war and its consequences. ❁

*Suhaimi Afandi, Mark Baildon & S N Chelva Rajah
are from the National Institute of Education*



WILLIAM BULLIMORE - FLICKR.COM

SCOTT CRESWALL - FLICKR.COM

CUBAGALERY - FLICKR.COM

MEL BOU RNE

/ travel

Melbourne was the city of choice when my friends and I decided to embark on our graduation trip. Known for its hipster cafés, beautiful architecture, and old-world charm, the capital of Australia's Victoria state was exactly where we wanted to be. Melbourne is home to many festivals and events, which include the Melbourne International Arts Festival, the Melbourne Comedy Festival and the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show. What's more, according to travel site ExperienceOz, Melbourne is said to have a higher number of restaurants and cafes per capita than any other city in the world. Like every Singaporean traveller, I was certain that food-hunting was a must-do in the land down under. We were ready to sample what Melbourne had to offer – gastronomically and otherwise!

We arrived in the city during the winter solstice, the coldest and shortest day in the year. But our spirits were not dampened. The first sight that greeted us was a contrasting array of traditional Victorian-styled cottages and modern converted warehouse shop-lots, which separated different areas of the city into what the locals affectionately call “villages”. Each village displays a culture unique to that particular street. We kicked off our tour at one of the Asian villages located in Richmond, a street with strong Vietnamese influences. As we joined the locals in savouring the Vietnamese cuisine (I Love Pho 124), we were pleasantly surprised by the authentic flavour of the various dishes. If I hadn't known better, I would have thought I was in Vietnam. Melbourne is actually one of Australia's most multicultural cities, a melting pot of up to 140 ethnicities. This is evident not only in its restaurants and other eating places but also in its vast range of markets and gourmet events. For instance, the touristic Little Italy area along Lygon Street in Carlton offers Italian cuisine, gelato, coffees and a selection of sweets. Authentic Italian dining can be experienced at La Porchetta, run by genuine Italians, while Brunetti's cake shop is a popular choice for desserts. Melbourne also has the biggest Greek population outside of Greece, so it wasn't difficult for us to find good Greek food along Lonsdale Street. We definitely ate our fill that night.

BY EUNICE PNG



ANDY H. - FLICKR.COM

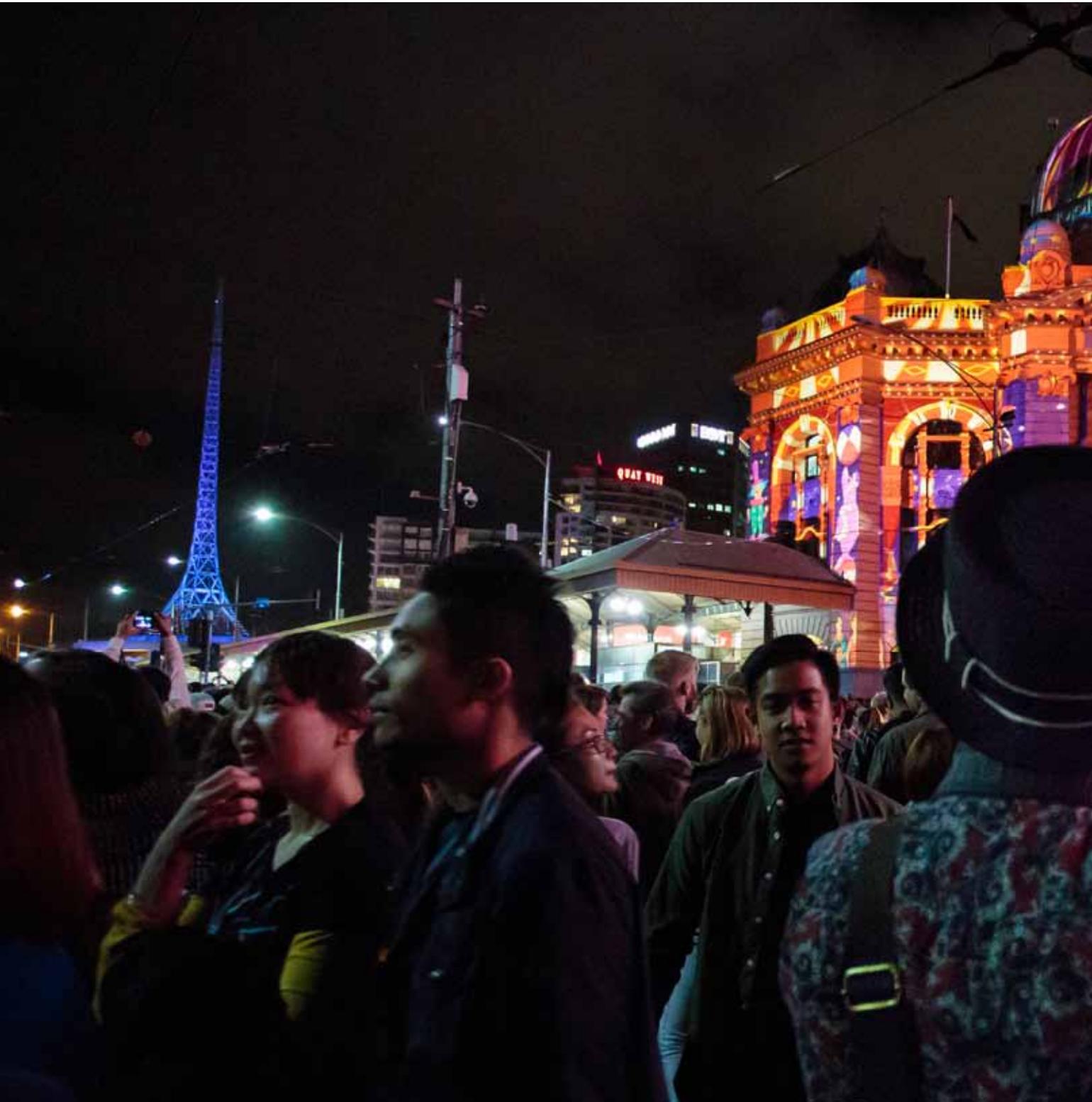
SCOTT CRESWALL - FLICKR.COM

CUBAGALERY - FLICKR.COM

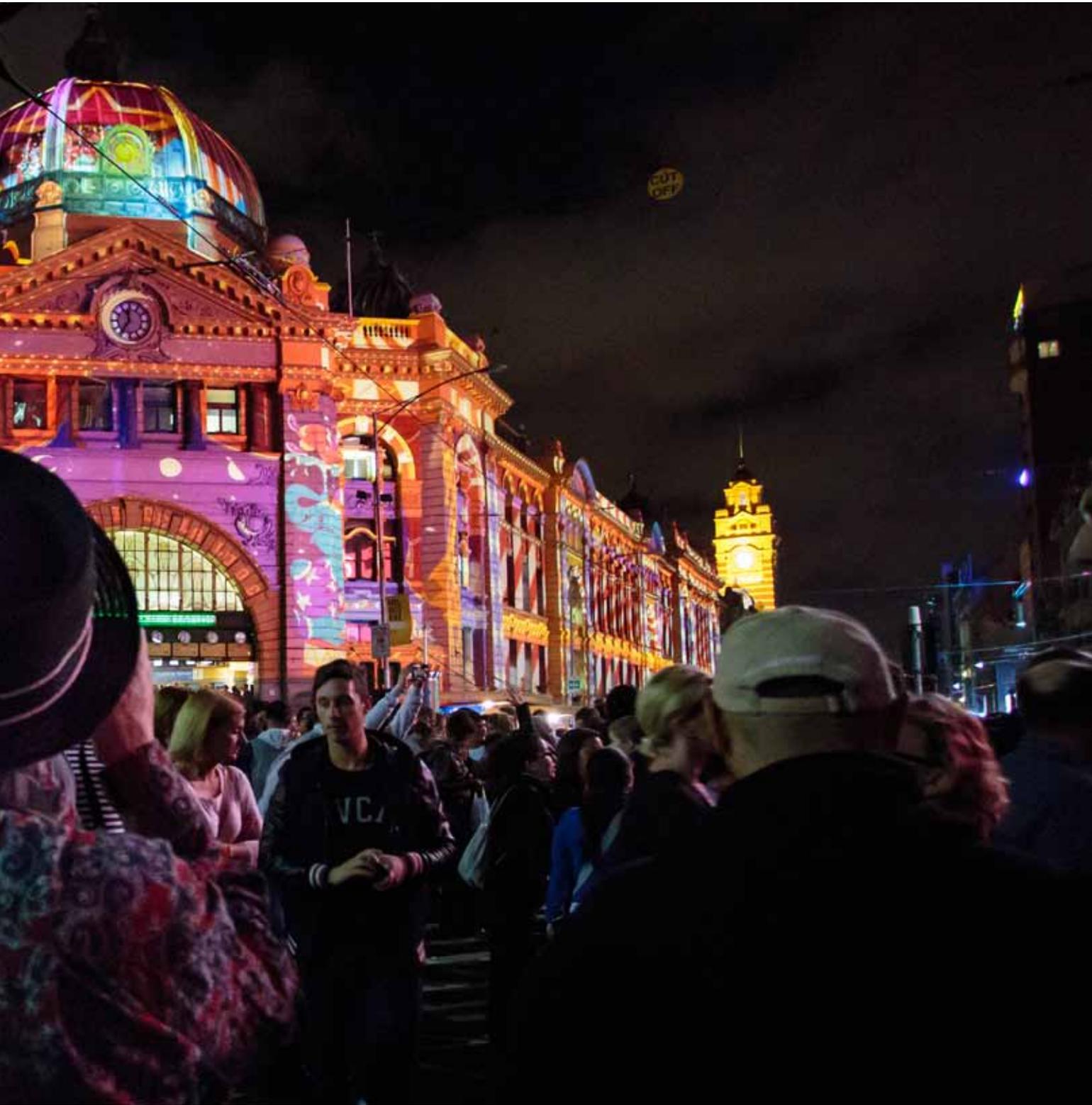
Queen Victoria Market was next on our list. Known to the locals as Vic's Market, it has been around for more than a century and sells everything from gourmet food, fresh fruits and coffee to technological gadgets and even soap. I made sure to try Market Lane Coffee's flat white as I was determined to taste my way through Melbourne's roasted brews. Another notable place at Vic's Market is the deli section, which is characterised by its strong smells. Shops there sell regional specialities as well as home-made items such as pates, barbeque mixes and breakfast spreads. The environment was incredibly refreshing – an air-conditioned market complete with grocers shouting out their prices and insisting that they offered the best deals. Every item looked fresh and inviting. Fishmongers competing for customers displayed an impressive array of seafood, ranging from fresh Tasmanian oysters to Victorian mussels. Aside from the variety of food choices, Vic's Market was also packed with buskers and street performers, making it truly a feast for the senses. From classical jazz to indie rock, the visceral beats and dynamic rhythm of Melbourne's buskers were music to our ears. When our legs grew tired from walking and our tummies were bursting, we decided that we were done for the day. I was longing for a change of scenery, away from the hustle and bustle of Melbourne's city life.

Bright and early the next morning – a Sunday – I had my heart set on visiting Melbourne's glorious St Patrick's Cathedral, the mother church of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne. The cathedral was so tall that I needed to stick my neck out of the car in order to get a full glimpse of it. It reminded me of a skyscraper, one that obviously stood the test of time, having been around since the 18th century. Renowned for its gothic architecture and design, St Patrick's was designed by William Wardell, an important Melbourne architect. Not only did he design the cathedral, he was also the architect for St Ignatius' Church, Cathedral College (formerly known as Christian Brothers College), Government House and the ANZ Gothic Bank in Melbourne, as well as St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney. Wardell has been acclaimed as the most eminent architect to have lived in Australia and St Patrick's, regarded as the country's finest ecclesiastical building, is considered one of his biggest achievements. As with all great cathedrals, its interior was modelled after the style of a Latin cross, consisting of a nave complete with side aisles. Seeing all of St Patrick's beauty and grandeur in real life was absolutely breathtaking. But beyond the architecture, St Patrick's is truly a sanctuary for all who visit.





SCOTT CRESWALL - FLICKR.COM





With our hearts filled and inspired, we headed down to the bathing houses in Brighton, a popular tourist attraction in the city of Bayside. All 82 bathing houses are lined up, side by side, in a single row facing the sea. They are unique because of their uniformity in scale and proportion. The structures of the original houses remain as they were when they were all licensed bathing houses. Currently, however, the houses do not have electricity and water connected to them, and they serve only as a tourist attraction. Each house is decorated according to different themes and colour schemes, with some depicting the ocean and others, rainbows. Imagine the vibrant landscape that greeted us as we walked down the beach! Instead of the typical beach mats and sandcastles, Brighton Beach was filled with tourists armed with cameras, snapping away at the stunning backdrop of the bathing houses. Following the example of the photo enthusiasts before us, we whipped out our cameras and took a few shots as well.

Our final stop in Melbourne was, ironically, the Visitor's Centre at Federation Square. One might think that it would have been a wiser choice to make this our first stop instead of our last. Indeed, from the moment we entered the centre, we were overwhelmed by the realisation of all the places that we did not visit and the long list of activities that we should have done. Every corner of the centre was filled with brochures from every possible entertainment venue, restaurant and company in Melbourne, beckoning us to stay for another day. Staff and volunteers were readily available to share information about their city and to provide advice on the places to visit in Melbourne. My original itinerary coming into Melbourne would have multiplied threefold had I visited the Visitor's Centre first.

I was reluctant to leave Melbourne when it was time to do so. Melbourne is truly a culturally diverse city, much like Singapore actually. Different heritages have blended to form a truly unique Melbournian experience that I will never forget. Melbourne is definitely a city that I will visit again, and soon. ❁

Eunice Png is an Officer, Education, Community Institutions & Outreach with the National Heritage Board



CUBAGALLERY - FLICKR.COM



IMAGES COURTESY OF LOW SEOW JUAN & RANDY CHAN KENG CHONG

The façades of the eight units of conserved Chinese Baroque-style shophouses, built around the early 1900s, have been well-restored.

19 LORONG 24A GEYLANG

Entrusted to different architects, the shophouses have been given a new lease of life with eight distinctive interior expressions that accentuate the eclectic character of their Geylang neighbourhood, evoking a spirit of creative engagement that spills into the streets.

/ design





REVIVING THE OLD

All eight shophouses share the same façade typology characterised by rich detailing like the glazed porcelain tiles, motifs, intricate bas-relief mouldings and stained glass windows. Practising the 3R principles and observing the Specific Façade Restoration Guidelines, all elements on the facades were repaired and reinstated where possible - from the five-foot way to old peepholes, fanlights, decorative tiles, windows, doors and vents. Within the interiors of the shophouses, elements such as the profile, pitch and height of the existing roof were retained. The original floorboards were repaired and re-varnished, with badly damaged ones replaced.

EIGHT DISTINCTIVE CONCEPTS

To introduce diversity and contrast behind the relatively uniform façades in the row, the owner engaged different local architects for each shophouse on the same fixed, relatively modest budget. This meant the architects had to come up with creative solutions to make the most of the budget, yet effectively demonstrate how the interior spaces could be treated in different, exciting ways to showcase various approaches to shophouse restoration. Notable design features and solutions in the units include the reintroduction of air wells, which although typical in shophouses of the era, were not part of the original designs of any of the eight. While every unit now offers a different interior spatial experience, the flow of natural light seems to be the guiding factor for all designs.

There is also an array of interpretations for the central stairway structure connecting the top and ground levels of the shophouses. From the suspended steps over an internal courtyard pond in Unit 9, to the meandering fence-like stairway leading to the roof garden in Unit 11, the steel spiral 'red dragon' in Unit 13, and the origami-esque sculptured centerpiece in Unit 15, the treatment of the stair core seemed to lead the interior metamorphosis of every unit, bringing drama and illumination into the otherwise light-deprived central core of each house. The result is an intriguing display of what can happen when space and imagination meet within the narrow confines of a vintage shophouse.

INGENIOUS ENGAGEMENT

The intent from the very beginning was to create a series of distinctive shophouses that could be enjoyed by tenants, yet shared with the community to spur creativity and enhance the appreciation of Singapore's built heritage. With the ongoing idea to open up these units between leases for complementary use in community building activities, the owner seems to have made some headway in his goal to activate a new kind of excitement in the neighbourhood. In no small measure, this project is a glowing example of how architects and owners can creatively work together to combine the old with the new in a refreshingly unexpected way to transform life in the area - strengthening the community spirit, reviving the social sense among inhabitants and contributing positively to the street.

BY LIEW HANQING



About the project - The Lorong 24A Shophouse series represents a novel art- and design-led approach to conservation and place-making in Singapore.

The project revolves around eight conservation shophouses along Lorong 24A Geylang, owned by a single client consortium. The idea was to invite eight local architects and designers to produce eight unique concepts with a common brief. The shophouses would be rented out and regular events would be held in the various shophouses to help rejuvenate the street, and bring another point of view to Geylang, a renowned red-light district in Singapore.

Pocket Projects was appointed as the creative development consultant for the project. Their involvement started from the initial conceptualisation, selection of the eight architects and designers, and working closely with the appointed architects on the various projects. They were also involved in subsequent tenant selection, event curation and the planning of programmes and events. This strategic long-term involvement in the place-making process was necessary to ensure consistency in terms of the outcome, which is experiential and begins with finding the right designers, selecting the right tenants and managing events well.

In contrast to conventional “top-down” urban planning projects, this scheme is built around a collection of architectural approaches to conservation - in effect, eight complementary proposals for the shophouse and eight teams of architects and designers translating their ideas into reality. Each designed their assigned shophouse according to their interpretation of the common brief. This resulted in an exciting showcase of possibilities where atypical spaces and imagination met the narrow typology of a shophouse. These homes have been designed to accommodate a shared interest in visual arts, design and media, as a basis for community-building among neighbours. Each unique design is attractive to its own occupants, but as a cluster with a common focus on design and edginess, the shophouses form a small but dynamic core, revitalising the street through open houses, art exhibitions and social activities to engage long-time residents of the Geylang district as well as others from further afield.

SPACES FOR CREATIVITY

To date, 14 events have been held at the project, including student shows, local artist exhibitions, talks, architecture tours and pop-up dinners. The project has been of interest to a variety of groups including students, design professionals, tourists, local residents and members of the public. Some of them have discovered their influence on the urban fabric, and others have voiced their support for good architecture. Apart from the restoration work to the shophouses, the new designs have added value and interest to them, by catering to contemporary living needs and offering a strong design attraction.

A JOURNEY THAT HAS JUST BEGUN

The project continues to evolve and new energy has been injected into the street. We hope that the ideas born here will inspire similar projects in other parts of Singapore. A kind of micro-neighbourhood has been started as a result of a design-driven initiative. Recognition of this approach will acknowledge the achievements through design practice and hopefully inspire other collectives or groups to seek out their own neighbourhoods to make a difference.

The existing shophouses had two storeys and shared a similar layout. Common features included the five-foot way, open rear court and a quarter-turn staircase located in the centre of the house. The ground floor of each shophouse comprised an entrance hall and private living space behind the central staircase on the ground floor, with the kitchen and bathrooms located in the rear, while the second floor was divided into two bedrooms. The central wall spanning the breadth of each unit - separating the external kitchen area from the internal living area - greatly reduced the amount of light entering the central interiors. The traditional central air wells were also absent.

The following represents the typical plan of the original shophouses. ❁

Liew Hanqing is a Writer for BeMUSE

WHAT'S ON

OCTOBER– DECEMBER 2014

// ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM

**Beginning of the Becoming:
Batak Sculpture From
Northern Sumatra**
Now till 29 Mar 2015

This exhibition explores the extraordinary sculptures of the Batak peoples of northern Sumatra. The Batak live in the mountain heartlands centred around Lake Toba, a striking environment that nurtured an intriguing culture rooted in ancient Southeast Asian traditions. The show asserts a rightful place for Batak sculpture in the global artistic canon. Over 80 works in wood, stone, and bronze have been lent by the Mandala Foundation, 20 of which have been donated to the Asian Civilisations Museum.

**Once Upon a Time in Asia:
The Story Tree**
**An Interactive Exhibition for
Children and the Young at Heart**
Now till 2 Nov 2014

Come play with us under the story tree. Explore with all five senses. Have fun and make some art of your own to take home. Embark on an exciting trail through the museum to uncover more secrets about trees and arty facts! Also, look out for our story tellers as they spin Asian tales in the galleries. This specially-curated exhibition for children and the young at heart showcases original interactive ensembles inspired by objects in the collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum.

**CHINA MANIA! The Global Passion
For Porcelain, 800-1900**
Now till 14 Dec 2014

For more than a thousand years, China provided the world with porcelain of the highest quality. Vastly superior to the ceramics made in other regions, Chinese porcelain of various sizes and colours was eagerly sought – and just as eagerly copied and imitated. This exhibition examines the global demand for porcelain, not only in Europe and America, but also within Asia – including Japan, Southeast Asia, and the Islamic world.

A is for Art: Earth, Water, Fire
[A showcase of works from schools]
Now till 26 Oct 2014

A is for Art is back, and this year we're getting down to basics! The participants will learn how to transform ideas into lessons, look at new case studies, and discover other practical art teaching strategies in this programme, now in its third year. Local potter Chua Soo Kim will mentor teachers on hands-on pottery skills. Participants can also look forward to learning more about the resources of the Asian Civilisations Museum and the Peranakan Museum, and pedagogies for the art classroom with local as well as overseas art and museum educators.

// MALAY HERITAGE CENTRE

Budi Daya Special Exhibition
13 Oct 2014–29 Mar 2015

Showcasing artefacts alongside contemporary art, *Budi Daya* explores the value and meaning of 'culture' from the Malay perspective. This multi-layered exhibition features 57 artefacts drawn from the National Collection and private loans, and includes 18 new commissions, performances and existing works by artists from Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam.

Budaya, the Malay word for 'culture', delves into the concepts of *budi* and *daya* as expressed in the exhibition title. *Budi* originates from the Sanskrit *buddhi*, meaning 'intellect' or 'wisdom', but when adapted into the Malay language, it has expanded to include ideas of 'ethics' and 'graciousness'. *Daya* refers to a person's or a community's abilities, skills and capacities. Taken together, they express the notion of enacting *budi* in thought, emotion, speech and conduct, which are held up as prized virtues.

Curators' Tour [Galleries 1 & 2]
21 Nov 2014 | 7.30pm–8.30pm
24 Jan 2015 | 7pm and 9pm

Join us for an after-hours tour as *Budi Daya* curators introduce the different artefacts and contemporary artworks in the exploration of the value and meaning of 'culture' from the Malay perspective. To register, please call 6391 0450 or email NHB_MHC_Programmes@nhb.gov.sg.

**Artist Performances–Supper Club
In conjunction with Art Week 2015**
24 Jan 2015 | 7pm onwards

Experience art differently! Take part in a communal feast based on ancient recipes from the Langkasuka kingdom [Kelantan/Thailand]. Encounter the folkloric *Kabayan* from Bandung, or the strange *Buddhist Bug* around the Malay Heritage Centre and Kampong Gelam. Relive the heydays of the hit band, NADA, with their unique blend of Malay *keroncong*, *pop yeh-yeh* and western classical music.

- *The Langkasuka Cookbook* by Roslisham Ismail@ise [Kelantan, Malaysia]
- *Buddhist Bug* by Anida Yoeu Ali [Cambodia]
- *Si Kabayan Ngjintreuk* by Tisna Sanjaya [Bandung, Indonesia]
- *A NADA STORY* by Rizman Putra in collaboration with Safuan Johari [Singapore]

Let's Play!
11, 18 & 25 Nov
2, 9, 16, 23 & 30 Dec
10am–10.45am & 3pm–3.45pm
Courtyard 1

Come and learn more about traditional Malay games at the Malay Heritage Centre! Learn skills you will need to play *capteh*, *main lereng* (wheel spinning), *congkak* (traditional Malay board game), *batu seremban* (five stones) and many more. This 45-minute session will also invite participants to use their creativity as they invent new and fun games.

All programmes are free and will be conducted in English unless otherwise stated.

**Lintas Nusantara 2014:
Kembara Melayu-Jawa**
18–22 Nov 2014

Returning for the third time, *Lintas Nusantara* will delve into the foundation of Classical Malay Dance which resonates across the Malay regions of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Catch dancers from Indonesia and Singapore collaborate to present *Srimpi Pendelori* and other

dance forms from the Sumatran province of Bangka Belitung.

*Registration is required for all programmes and limited to 30 pax per session. To register, please call 6391 0450 or email NHB_MHC_Programmes@nhb.gov.sg.

// NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE

**PLAY @ National Museum
of Singapore**
National Museum of Singapore
10am–6pm, daily
Free admission

The National Museum of Singapore kicks off the school holidays with the opening of PLAY@NMS, the first dedicated area for young children to take their first steps towards museum-going with interactive exhibits and special activities that encourage learning through play. Inspired by the Museum's collection, your young ones will have the opportunity to express themselves through the various curated programmes that will stimulate their curious minds and tap their creativity.

SINGAPURA: 700 Years
Now till 10 Aug 2015
Exhibition Galleries 1 and 2,
Basement

SINGAPURA: 700 Years takes you on a journey through 700 years of Singapore's history beginning from the 14th century. Experience Singapore's transformation through the ages as it went from a humble fishing village to the pride of an empire, before finally achieving the status of being an independent nation-state as it is today. This immersive exhibition brings you through a riveting exploration of Singapore's history as you will find yourself placed right in the midst of the nation's defining moments. The exhibition consists of six sections, Archaeology in Singapore, Ancient Singapore [1300–1818], Colonial Singapore [1819–1942], Syonan-To [1942–1945], Road to Merdeka [1946–1965] and Independent Singapore [1965–1975].

Free admission for Citizens, Permanent Residents, and visitors aged 6 years and below
Foreign Visitors: Adults, S\$6 (includes SISTIC fees) | Students and seniors aged 60 and above with valid identification, S\$3 (includes SISTIC fees)

INCENSE BURNER

This object was assembled in Europe during the 18th century from several components. The Chinese porcelain horse, made in the Kangxi reign, is realistically modelled onto a green-glazed base that imitates grass. Above it are two Japanese lacquer bowls set rim to rim; inside is a metal tray meant to hold burning incense, which would escape through the openings in the ring. Crowning the construction is a piece of red coral.

These pieces are held together by gilded bronze mounts probably made in France. Such fantasies, which blend objects from different cultures and mix the natural with the man-made, were favoured in the Baroque and Rococo periods in Europe (17th and 18th centuries).

Porcelain horse:
China, 1661–1722 (Qing dynasty, Kangxi reign)

Lacquer bowls:
Japan, 17th century (Edo period)

Gilded bronze mounts:
France, around 1750

ASIAN CIVILISATIONS
MUSEUM



// THE PERANAKAN MUSEUM

**Auspicious Designs:
Batik for Peranakan Altars**
Now till 28 Dec 2014

Colourful and imaginative, batik altar cloths blend traditions and influences, showing how Peranakans adapted and improvised. Called *tok wi*, altar cloths decorate the fronts of Peranakan altars during important ceremonies, and reflect the strong ritual elements of Chinese Peranakan life in Southeast Asia.

**Straits Family Sundays -
Supersized!**
14 Dec 2014 | 1pm-5pm

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 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.

// SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM

Spice Is Nice
Now till 1 Dec 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 long-ago voyages of discovery, the history of the spice trade and its impact on Singapore, traditional cures and the flavours of regional cuisines. Learn about some of the explorers (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**
Now till 1 Jan 2015

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 will 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 narrate a poem. There are stamps that taste of chocolate!

**The League Against Evil:
A DC Super Heroes Exhibition**
Now till 30 Nov 2014

See the first and only DC Comics Super Heroes exhibition in Asia, held in conjunction with Warner Bros.' celebration of the 75th anniversary of BATMAN. Learn about the history and origins of DC Comics and the "World's Greatest Super Heroes": SUPERMAN, BATMAN and WONDER WOMAN, and the JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA. View interesting collections on display such as DC Comic Super Heroes stamps from Singapore Philatelic Museum's permanent collection; a special issue of Singapore Post MyStamps on DC Comics and BATMAN and the corresponding stamp artworks; and rare original comic art pages and collectibles on loan from collectors. Pose for photographs with life-size comic covers of SUPERMAN and BATMAN, as well as with limited-edition life-size busts of these Super Heroes.

Our Postal Stories
Now till 15 Nov 2014
Our Museum @ Taman Jurong,
Taman Jurong Community Club

Do you remember sending your first letter? Or waiting for the postman to deliver your parcel? And who can forget the postboxes and the post offices of our neighbourhoods? The post not only connects us, it links us to our past. Our history can be found in our country's postal development and its stamp issues. Designed for families with children, this educational and interactive exhibition invites you to rediscover yourself through postal stories. You can chart the progress of Singapore and travel around the island through stamps, as well as gain insights into the postal history of Singapore and Taman Jurong. Plus, you get to use your different senses to appreciate the unusual stamps of Singapore!

// SUN YAT SEN NANYANG MEMORIAL HALL

Champions for Charity
13-14 Dec 2014
10am-5pm

What better way to spend your day than to learn a skill and doing your fair share for a charitable cause*? Students from ITE College Central are organising an array of workshops to guide you through the process of making and personalising your own bags and furniture! Registration is required for all the workshops. Wait no more! Register and join us today!
*All proceeds go directly to AMKFSC Community Services Ltd.

Free [Registration is required]
For more information, contact:
www.wanqingyuan.org.sg/
NHB_WQY@nhb.gov.sg / 62567377

Wan Qing CultureFest 2014
14 Nov-7 Dec 2014

Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall proudly presents Wan Qing CultureFest 2014. Keep a lookout for an exciting line-up of performances by students and local artists, including public lectures, craft demonstrations, movie screenings and more as we deliver memorable cultural treats in an educational and fun manner for you and your family!

Free [Registration is required]
For more information, contact:
www.wanqingyuan.org.sg/
NHB_WQY@nhb.gov.sg / 62567377

**Movie Matinee
(Collaboration with
National Library Board)**
Library@Chinatown
27 Dec 2014 | 2pm-4.30pm

How do movies contribute to our understanding of the socio-historical setting of Republican China and its road to modernisation? What are some of the woes and difficulties faced by the protagonist in these films that continue to resonate with us even until today? Check out our movie matinees and find out for yourself during the pre-movie screening presentation.

* Admission is free but registration is required on a first-come-first-serve basis. For more information, contact:
www.wanqingyuan.org.sg/
NHB_WQY@nhb.gov.sg / 62567377

**Zhongshan Warship
& Its Treasures exhibition**
18 Oct 2014-19 Apr 2015

A collaboration between Singapore's Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall and the Zhongshan Warship Museum in Wuhan, this exhibition will showcase artefacts ranging from honorary plaques to military equipment salvaged from the Zhongshan Warship. Through these artefacts, historical objects and archival materials, the audience will be introduced to the rich and exciting history of the Zhongshan Warship, a vessel closely tied with modern Chinese history.

Originally named the Yongfeng Warship, the Zhongshan Warship was one of the two modern warships which the Qing Government commissioned from Japan in 1910. Upon its completion in 1912, the warship was assigned to the Beiyang Government Navy. It was later renamed Zhongshan Warship in honour of Dr Sun Yat Sen after his passing in 1925. During the Sino-Japanese War, the ship was sunk off the waters of Jinkou in Yangtze River in Wuhan after suffering extensive damage from the attacks launched by the Japanese fighter planes on 24 October 1938. The Zhongshan Warship had been lying submerged in the waters since until it was salvaged 59 years later, in 1997.

Admission fees apply (All Singapore citizens and permanent residents will enjoy free admission to this exhibition). For more information, contact: www.wanqingyuan.org.sg/ / NHB_WQY@nhb.gov.sg / 62567377

// THE ARTS HOUSE

**Leonardo da Vinci's
'Earlier Mona Lisa'**
The Arts House at the Old Parliament
16 Dec 2014-11 Feb 2015

The highly anticipated "Leonardo da Vinci's 'Earlier Mona Lisa'" exhibition will be the first public viewing of the painting with all the fascinating surrounding circumstances and evidence which demonstrate its attribution to Leonardo da Vinci. The exhibition promises an interactive multi-media experience across nine galleries. Visitors will be given a tablet that allows them to embark on a journey into the world of the Italian Renaissance and immerse themselves in the exciting discovery and authentication process of the painting before coming face-to-face with the masterpiece itself in Singapore's Old Chambers of Parliament.



Java, late 19th or early 20th century
Gold, 42 x 17 cm
2014-00228

PERANAKAN MUSEUM

NECKLACE

This gold wedding necklace is richly decorated with filigree panels that are embellished with flowers and leaves. Peonies are a symbol of love, affection, feminine beauty and spring, making them auspicious flowers for weddings. The intricacy and refinement of the necklace indicate the importance of jewellery in Peranakan weddings.

Wedding necklaces such as this were worn by Peranakan Chinese brides throughout the Straits Settlements and the Dutch East Indies. The ornateness of this specimen points to it having originated from Jakarta (Batavia), although the exceptional quality of the necklace makes a precise geographical assignment difficult. Brides were draped with an impressive assemblage of several necklaces and other jewelled ornamentation as a sign of the wealth and splendour of the occasion. Such necklaces became prized family heirlooms and were passed down through the generations.

