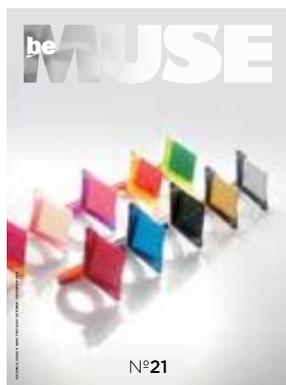


be MUSEE



VOLUME 5, ISSUE 4 ISSN: 1793-5261 OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2012

N°21



BeMUSE is published by
the Education and Outreach
Division of the National
Heritage Board.

If you have any feedback or
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EDITOR'S MUSEINGS

This is the last issue for 2012 and it is with much happiness
and a tinge of sadness that we bid farewell to another year.

The arts and heritage scene in Singapore this year has been
abuzz with so many new offerings for everyone. It is as if
arts and culture has been brought to one's doorstep and has
transformed the lives of our people.

And this issue of BeMuse is dedicated to that theme –
transformation. The articles featured in this issue showcase
the best of human effort in transforming each generation
with their creativity, passion and inspiration. From music
to art; from architecture to heritage products and even
monuments, you will enjoy reading about how these were
transformed to become more hip and appealing to the young
and old, and how transformation has enabled the old to
become inspirations for the future.

We hope that you will be inspired by these stories of
transformation to also create changes in your life. This could
be as simple as making a conscious effort to look at the old in
new ways through objective lenses and with a childlike sense
of curiosity. Then all you have to do is open yourself to new
ideas and you will be the catalyst for transformation.

From all of us in the BEMUSE editorial team, here's wishing
all our readers seasons' greeting and a prosperous 2013!

THANGAMMA KARTHIGESU
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



(Above left) Left to right: Mrs V. P. Hirubalan, wife of Ambassador of Singapore to the Philippines; Ms Mishelle Lim, Assistant Curator, Singapore Philatelic Museum; Dr Nina Yuson, President & CEO of Museo Pambata; Hon. Alfredo Lim, Mayor of Manila & Chairman of Museo Pambata; Ms Tresnawati Prihadi, General Manager, Singapore Philatelic Museum; Ms Ollie Campos, member of Museo Pambata Board; and His Excellency V. P. Hirubalan, Ambassador of Singapore to the Philippines. (Above right): The children of Manila learnt to make crafts related to Singapore's culture at the exhibition opening. Here is a paper version of a Deepavali oil lamp.

EXPLORE SINGAPORE! COLOURS OF HERITAGE

The Singapore Philatelic Museum (SPM) has brought one of its most popular galleries, the *Heritage Room*, to Museo Pambata, a renowned children's museum in Manila, Philippines.

The project aims to bring Singapore's rich and colourful culture to the children of Manila through stamps, postcards and interactive exhibits. Through the exhibits

and fringe programmes, young visitors can draw similarities and differences between Singapore's culture and their own. The exhibition opened on 5 September 2012 and will last one year.

Both museums had previously worked together on the *Bay-anihan: Spirit of the Philippines* exhibition, which was held at SPM in 2009.



National Stamp Collecting Competition 2012

The National Stamp Collecting Competition (NSCC) was held at the National Library from 31 August to 2 September 2012. The competition was organised by the Singapore Philatelic Museum (SPM) with support from Singapore Post Limited, Ministry of Education, Association of Singapore Philatelists, stamp clubs and the National Library Board.

This year, more than 550 participants from 26 primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions took part in the competition. Participants were required to select and research on a topic of their choice, and present their findings using a variety of philatelic materials such as stamps, postcards, miniature sheets and other philatelic items.

The winning entries were displayed for public viewing, and the prize presentation ceremony

was held on 1 September. SPM is grateful to all supporters and sponsors, schools, teachers and students who contributed to make NSCC 2012 a success.

Our congratulations go to all the Gold, Silver and Bronze award winners, and especially the champions of NSCC 2012 - Nan Chiau High School for secondary level and Yishun Primary School for the primary level.



GOLDEN SENIORS TOUR IN DIALECTS @ TPM FOR ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE ASSOCIATION

A request to organise a tour to the Peranakan Museum (TPM) in dialects came in September 2011. A tour in dialects is unusual to begin with. But the greater challenge was to understand the *extra* special needs of the visitors.

A volunteer with the Alzheimer's Disease Association (ADA) was keen to explore the idea of museum visits as therapy for people with memory loss. The participants were from the Bukit Batok New Horizon Centre (BBNHC), a day care centre for persons with dementia. Hence it was with some trepidation and reservation when the TPM team first looked into it.

The team's concerns were shared with and addressed by the staff and volunteers at the BBNHC. Visits to the centre provided interaction opportunities with the clients and their programmes, which proved useful. The centre even provided the TPM team with a short bio on the participants.

The day finally arrived on Tuesday 7 February 2012, five months after the first meeting. There were six participants whose ages ranged from 58 to 90 years. One participant, who is a Peranakan, even composed five poems to commemorate his visit! Another was a birthday girl, and 90 years of age! They were accompanied by the manager of the centre, Ms Mary Lim, and four volunteers from ADA. Also present were ADA's Executive Director, Ms Theresa Lee, and Ms May Wong, Senior Programme Executive (Training & Consultancy). Their sponsor Lundbeck Singapore Pte Ltd was represented by Ms Jasmine Foo.

The TPM team's detailed planning turned out to be well worth the effort. The following are notes on some of the participants by the TPM docents who conducted the tour:

She (The 90-year-old birthday 'girl') *said those were not*

kebayas... and she could sew better. She knew that they were worn with kerosangs and remembered her mother used to wear them (like the picture of a nyonya on the wall). She also remembered her mother used to bun up the hair in the same way. She did not forget anything except her age – she said she is 43! She was very happy.

Throughout the tour, he was very happy and he enjoyed teasing his wife. A very romantic uncle. At the end of the tour, while walking down the stairs to the foyer, he said to himself, "I love museum."

The challenge comes from understanding JW (a participant) and where she is coming from. The advance bio given by BBNHC provided for a necessary insight, however tiny, into the world in which she lived. After all, the purpose and objective of TPM as therapy is to engage her, hopefully enabling her to reminisce or recall memories of long ago.

Hopefully, the success of this inaugural tour of a pilot initiative by ADA will see more tours in the future. To quote a volunteer, Donald from ADA, "It is hoped that such tours, if well integrated into their day care activity schedules on a regular basis, may facilitate elders with memory loss reconnect with their personal history, self identity, and sense of personhood. Community programmes involving person-centred activities that are customised to individual needs have good potential to enhance sustained feelings of well-being and positive mood. They also provide valuable insights into the individual experiences of persons with dementia for others journeying alongside them."

THE BRIGHT LIGHTS

ZUBIR SAID AND THE GOLDEN AGE OF SINGAPORE CINEMA

TEXT BY **LOW ZU BOON**

IMAGES COURTESY OF **PUAN SRI DATIN DR ROHANA ZUBIR**

ZUBIR SAID, ALSO AFFECTIONATELY KNOWN as Pak Zubir, is most well known as the composer of Singapore's national anthem, *Majulah Singapura*. In an institutional sense, the acceptance of the song as the national anthem, and its first performance at the 'Loyalty Week' on 3 December 1959, marked the peak of Pak Zubir's career in music¹. This was at a stage of his life when he was deeply engaged in composing 'patriotic' songs as an expression of his belief that one should pay tribute to the nation in which one lives in. However, his identity as the anthem's composer tends to overshadow the fullness of his life, which was filled with a ceaseless exploratory spirit and a sense of adventure that gave rise to many creative endeavours and hundreds of songs which now resonate throughout the archipelago.

It is a little known fact that Pak Zubir was an influential figure within the rise of what we now affectionately call the golden age of Singapore cinema in the late 1940s to 1960s. Perhaps, this is due to an auteuristic tendency in film spectatorship which endows upmost emphasis on the creativity of the director, and the star-system which casts a glamorous spotlight on actors and actresses. However, filmmaking during the golden era was more than the sum of its directors and acting talents. It was a collective act of creative production that brought into play scriptwriters, set designers, playback singers, and of course, composers who imbued the screen images with the affects of songs and soundscapes, and inscribed links between film and music cultures.

Music was an essential aspect of our films from the golden age. The pioneering wave of directors in Singapore in the 1940s and 1950s, such as B. S. Rajhans and B. N. Rao, brought with them stylistic traits of Indian cinema. These included the conven-

tion of having a series of song sequences throughout the film which acted as aphorisms that propelled the narrative and encapsulated the emotions and sensations expressed in the film through verse and melody. This proved to be a popular trait which audiences came to expect, and it became an inherent construct within our cinema heritage. It was within this milieu and aspect of filmmaking in which Pak Zubir emerged as a pioneering music composer in Singapore who had brought forth many innovations and humble revolutions to the role of music in film and Singapore society.

Pak Zubir's pioneering ethos in music composition was a clear expression of a strong will towards independence and living on one's own terms. He was born into a Minangkabau family on 22 July 1907 in Bukit Tinggi, West Sumatra. His father, Muhamad Said Sanang, a well respected village headman, strongly opposed his son's musical aspirations as he felt that music was *harum* (prohibited in Islam)². As such, Pak Zubir never received a formal education in music. However, he retained a strong fascination towards music, and learnt his musical skills from different communities and individuals. In school, Pak Zubir learnt to read and write the *solmisasi* system of numerical musical notation. He also learnt to play drums and guitar from a *keroncong* club³. Upon graduation, Pak Zubir played with the village *keroncong* orchestra, and learnt to play the violin from a musician who performed music accompaniment at a silent film cinema. Soon after, he quit his day job at the Dutch administration office to join a *keroncong* troupe which travelled around Sumatra.

Pak Zubir was 22 years old when he accepted a sailor friend's offer to jour-

(Facing page): Zubir Said and his piano.





ney to Singapore on a small cargo boat, only bringing with him a clean towel, a few shirts and a small amount of money, which was all that he had. In Minangkabau tradition, it is a rite of passage for young men to experience *merantau*, to travel out of their home environment to seek their fortune. After travelling through Sumatra, Pak Zubir's wanderlust extended towards the archipelago, and he had to experience Singapore, the thriving entrepôt which he came to know as a place of electricity, and *kopi susu* and butter – both of which he had never tasted before. Peering out from the cargo boat, Pak Zubir caught his first sight of Singapore when he arrived in the wee hours of the morning. He was wholly fascinated by the bright lights glimmering from the island that he would soon call home.

Recalling his early experience of Singapore, Pak Zubir emphasised the exalting feeling of freedom and cultural diversity of its society. He started his first job as a pianist and violinist for the City Opera, a large *bangsawan* troupe that staged performances at Happy Valley Park in Tanjong Pagar⁴. There he met Malay, Straits-born Chinese (Peranakan), Indian and Filipino musicians who worked collectively to perform a repertoire of songs which featured Malay, Chinese and Indian stories. Already skilled in number notation, Pak Zubir rapidly mastered staff notation, copied all the troupe's scores in both systems, and soon became the leader of the ensemble. He was recruited by The Gramophone Company (commonly known as His Master's Voice) thereafter, where he worked as a recording supervisor who also travelled through Malaysia and Indonesia as a talent scout.

1948 marked the year when Pak Zubir stepped into the arching gates of the golden age of Singapore cinema. Helmed by the two major studios, Shaw Brother's Malay Film Productions and Cathay-Keris Films, this was the era of the post-war studio system which reached a combined average output of 15 to 20 films annually.

Pak Zubir was introduced to the chief of Malay Film Productions, Shaw Bee Hock, who recruited him as a freelance composer over at their studio in Jalan Ampas. The first film he worked on was *Chinta* (1948, B. S. Rajhans), which starred Siput Sarawak and S. Roomai Noor as lovers star-crossed by the tussles of previous generations. As



Zubir Said with P. Ramlee (3rd from the left) and friends.

not all screen actors could sing, Pak Zubir brought in the practice of voice-dubbing and recruited Nona Aishah and P. Ramlee, who also starred in his first ever screen role, to perform as playback singers. Another Shaw film Pak Zubir had worked on was *Rachun Dunia* (1950, B. S. Rajhans), a modern melodrama which featured one of his most celebrated compositions, *Sayang Di Sayang*.

Pak Zubir, however, felt that musical composition could be developed further. He believed that the musical palette for a motion picture should not be contained within the songs, but should be used effectively to convey the array of emotions throughout the film. During its early days of production, Malay Film Productions had a practice of using pre-recorded tracks for background music. Sensing greater opportunities for creativity, Pak Zubir subsequently joined Cathay-Keris Films as a full-time composer of both film songs and background music. There he composed songs and background music for some of the most highly regarded films which are now part of our heritage, such as *Sumpah Pontianak* (1958, B. N. Rao), *Dang Anom* (1962, Hussain Haniff) which won the award for Best Folk Songs and Dances at the ninth *Asian Film Festival*, and *Chuchu Datok Merah* (1963, M. Amin).

Pak Zubir was the first composer in Singapore to create original background music specifically for films. While songs were composed prior to, or during the film shoot, background music was created after

(Top): Film still of *Chuchu Datok Merah* (1963, M. Amin).

(Right): Film still of *Dang Anom* (1962, Hussain Haniff).



(Top): Zubir Said viewing a film as part of the composition process.
(Above): Zubir Said with Ho Ah Loke, the co-owner of Cathay-Keris Films from 1953 to 1960.



(Clockwise from top left): Zubir Said with Loke Wan Tho, owner of Cathay-Keris Films. Zubir Said and his favourite pet bird. Zubir Said at a practice session with actress Saloma.

the film was completed. Pak Zubir would start with a central melody which he then expanded into different styles and variations according to the changing moods and character motifs in the film. As he had to work with an average of only eight musicians when film music generally needed a larger orchestra, Pak Zubir had to experiment to create a grand effect with the little that he had.

In composing music for Malay films, Pak Zubir encountered two hurdles. Firstly, he felt that it was limiting to draw only from the repertoire and traditions of Malay music as they generally contained only two contrasting moods, happy and sad, while films contained a diversity of emotions. Secondly, Pak Zubir was acutely aware of the homogenising effects of the burgeoning commercialisation of popular music, which he saw as detrimental towards the development of a wider spectrum of music that “adds to the richness of the form of music within every nation.” As a creative escape from these two constraints, Pak Zubir continued to look to his Minangkabau heritage, conjuring the sounds of *keroncong* and *bangsawan*, while innovatively and self-reflexively infusing a wide array of cultural notes, which included styles such as Malay *asli*, Indian *raga tala*, and even Hawaiian, Arabic and Filipino sounds.

As a composer, Pak Zubir cherished authenticity and originality. He felt that the “state of independence achieved by a nation is greatly connected to the heritage and culture of that nation,” and strove to reflect the mindset of his time through diverse forms of music that could be easily understood and appreciated beyond entertainment purposes. From the mid-1950s, while he was still working at Cathay-Keris, he had begun to write ‘patriotic’ songs such as *Semoga Bahagia*, *Hari Kemerdekaan* and, of course, *Majulah Singapura*, all of which are timeless and cherished communal musical expressions of our nation. For his film music compositions, we witness the same motivations at work, but within certain entanglements which he strove to loosen. It cannot be ignored that the film industry is a commercial vehicle aimed at the masses. In Pak Zubir’s film music compositions, we sense the critical drive of a composer striving to express the soul and the culture of the community within an entertainment

medium. With modernity, Western influences have been shaping and changing the contours of local music forms. When Pak Zubir had to reflect these influences in tune with filmic narratives, he had thought deeply on how they could be appropriated in a way that would still allow the heart of Malay music to resonate down in history.

Throughout his life, Pak Zubir continued to utilise number notation to compose music, and spent his later years teaching it to the younger generation at his apartment in Joo Chiat Road. He did so not only because it is the most common method of documenting Malay traditional music, but also because of its simplicity. He saw the system as building blocks which anyone with an interest in music could utilise to participate in the creation of diverse forms of musical expression. On top of the many songs Pak Zubir contributed to our nation, his view of the relation between music and nation building has imparted an important lesson to all of us: the significance of music as an expression of the common thread and ideals of the community, and the joyfulness of a democratic drive in which everyone in the community has the means to participate in the creation of the arts and culture of the nation.

In Pak Zubir’s lifetime, the brimming bright lights of Singapore, which he saw from the small cargo boat when he first arrived, had led him to become a bearer of the constellation of lights and sounds of the golden age of Singapore cinema. This constellation of lights and sounds continues to brighten the darkness of our cinema halls today. For Pak Zubir, it started with a fascination which led to an adventure. It is with this sense and feeling that he had composed his music and imagined the future of the nation.

Low Zu Boon is Assistant Manager (Programmes), National Museum of Singapore.

MAJULAH! The Film Music of Zubir Said will be showing at the National Museum of Singapore from 10 to 20 October 2012. For more information, please visit www.nationalmuseum.sg.

¹ *Majulah Singapura* was first composed by Pak Zubir as an official song for the fully-elected City Council in 1957. With the establishing of Singapore’s self-governance in 1959, the task of creating national symbols went underway and Pak Zubir was once again approached, this time to adapt the song as the official national anthem. On 11 November 1959, the national anthem, together with the state flag and crest, were tabled at the Legislative Assembly, then presented at the ‘Loyalty Week’.

² Pak Zubir’s father attended the presentation of the national anthem at the ‘Loyalty Week’. It was then when he fully recognised his son’s achievements, and the event proved to be a reunification between father and son.

³ *Keroncong* is a form of folk music in Java which predominantly utilises a cavaquinho, a string instrument introduced by the Portuguese which is tweaked and combined with other instruments to reflect local music traditions.

⁴ *Bangsawan* is a form of Malay opera. In the golden age of Singapore cinema, many Malay myths commonly performed by *Bangsawan* troupes, such as *Bawang Putih Bawang Merah*, were adapted for the silver screen. In its early years, when there were few skilled film actors in Singapore, it was also common for *Bangsawan* actors to be recruited as cast members.

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THE POSTAL CONNECTION

SINGAPORE AND THAILAND

TEXT BY LUCILLE YAP

SINGAPORE AND THAILAND SHARE close historical ties dating back to the 13th century when Singapore was under the Malay sultanate. The opening of the Kingdom of Siam (now Kingdom of Thailand) to foreign trade from 1855 drew Singapore closer to Siam via trade.

Singapore received the first royal visit from the Kingdom of Siam when His Majesty King Chulalongkorn made his first overseas visit as king to Singapore in 1871. It was during this period when Siam studied how Singapore, then a British colony, was administered, including its economic and social affairs, as well as the postal system. The advancement of the British postal system in Singapore inspired the Kingdom of Siam to introduce and develop the postal system in Siam. The first post office and stamp issue for Siam was inaugurated on 4 August 1883.

SINGAPORE - A POSTAL HUB

Since its establishment as a trading post in 1819 by the British East India Company, Singapore was a postal and communica-

tion hub for states and countries in Southeast Asia. All written correspondence from countries in this region with the rest of the world, and vice versa, was done via Singapore. Incoming and outgoing foreign mail to and from Southeast Asian countries were collected in Singapore before being forwarded to their destinations.

Located at the crossroads of international shipping routes, Singapore's unique geographical position placed it in a position to influence the postal arrangements of neighbouring countries – many of which followed this British settlement's postal system closely when introducing new postal systems and extending old ones. The Kingdom of Siam was no exception.

Singapore continued to serve as an important collecting and forwarding hub until late 1800s when its neighbouring countries became members of the Universal Postal Union (UPU). As members of the UPU, which was established in 1874, they were able to send and receive international mail directly to and from foreign countries without having to route their mail to Singapore.

MUSEINGS.

MODERNISING SIAM

Siam was known to be a great entrepot centre in the 17th century. However, its efforts in diplomatic and commercial relations with foreign and Western countries were put to a halt by Burmese invasion in 1767. Although Burma did not retain control of Siam for long, Siam closed its door to the outside world and spent more than a hundred years to restore and reunite the country.

Siam began to resume external contacts during the reign of His Majesty King Nang Klao (Rama III 1824 - 1851). He reopened relations with Western nations and established trade with China. But it was during the reign of His Majesty King Mongkut (Rama IV 1851 - 1868) and later His Majesty King Chulalongkorn (Rama V 1868 - 1910) that Siam underwent tremendous transformation.

Diplomacy, Sovereignty and Modernisation

Faced with the pressure and threat of Western imperialist powers' advances in

» DID YOU KNOW? «

When did Siam change its name to 'Thailand'?

The attempt to change the name 'Siam' to 'Thailand' began in 1939 and again between 1945 and 1949. It was only on 11 May 1949, through an official proclamation that the name of the country was changed to 'Thailand'. The word 'Thai' means 'Free', and therefore 'Thailand' means 'Land of the Free'.



1997 Singapore-Thailand Joint Stamp Issue from Singapore and Thailand.



Outgoing letters sent from Bangkok to San Francisco and France via Singapore. Source: Collection of Dr Prakob Chirakiti.



His Majesty King Mongkut (Rama IV).



(Top): 2005 stamp commemorating a century of abolition of slavery in Thailand, which was part of His Majesty King Chulalongkorn's reform. (Above): 1995, 120th anniversary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs featuring His Majesty King Chulalongkorn.

colonising states and countries around Siam, King Mongkut kept these Western powers at bay by signing treaties with several European countries. United Kingdom was the first to succeed in signing a treaty with Siam in 1855. Signed by King Mongkut and Sir John Bowring, the Bowring Treaty in essence allowed foreigners to trade freely in Bangkok without the heavy royal taxes imposed on trade. The constructive treaty put Siam's foreign relations on a positive note at a time when resistance was met with force. The Bowring Treaty set the tone of non-interference in Siamese affairs and respect for Thai independence, which was also observed by other Western powers.

The Bowring Treaty resulted in an increasing volume of trade between Singapore and Siam. Rice exports formed the biggest part of this trade. With the signing of more treaties with other foreign powers, trade grew by leaps and bounds. For example, ships visiting Bangkok from Singapore

more than doubled, from 146 in 1850 to 302 in 1862. The total annual value of trade also rose from about 5.6 million baht in 1850 to about 10 million baht by 1868.

Capitalising on the good relationship with the Western powers, King Mongkut studied their form of government, administration, as well as their social and economic affairs. He undertook many social and economic reforms to modernise Siam. King Chulalongkorn continued his father's tradition of reform, abolishing slavery and improving the public welfare and administrative systems.

Singapore – An Inspiration to Siam

Singapore was the British centre in the region. There were many visits between British and Siamese officials. In 1861, King Mongkut sent Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse Juang Bunnag and Prince Krommamun Vishnunarth Nibhadhorn to study how Singapore was administered. As a re-

sult, modern technology such as the construction of roads and bridges was brought to Siam.

During the start of the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the progress of Singapore, Java and India had deeply impressed the young king. British and Dutch colonial government and administration – not the states in Europe – were his models. There are two main periods of reform during his reign: the first from 1873 to 1874; and the second, after 1892. The reforms were related to his travels to Singapore and Java in 1871 and his subsequent visits to these same places in 1896 and 1901.

In 1881, with a view to establish post offices in the kingdom, an officer was sent to Singapore to gain insight into the postal system. Siam hoped to establish direct postal communication with the rest of the world, and there was no post office in the kingdom at that time.


 Singera August 24th
 1859.

No 112. To Honorable CHH Wilson
 Esquire the Vice Consul
 for Governments of the
 Denmark at Singapore
 Sir Sir Sir
 Sir the Steamer "Changhya"
 on her return from Singapore
 for port of Bangkok has
 arrived here on 23rd inst.
 evening. and on seeing
 of my fleet anchored here
 Captain Thomas A. Heen
 has come up here from
 board Steamer & handed
 me your letter under the
 date of 18th inst. which
 I have perused immediately.
 The Steamer will
 proceed to Bangkok today



(Top): Letter dated 24 August 1859 written by His Majesty King Mongkut to Mr CHH Wilson, Vice Consul of Denmark in Singapore. (Far left): General Post Office in Singapore at Fullerton Building, circa 1930. (Left): General Post Office in Singapore, 1873. Source: Collection of Dr Prakob Chirakiti.

INTRODUCTION OF POSTAL SYSTEM IN SIAM

British Consulate in Bangkok

The signing of treaties between Siam and foreign countries allowed these countries to establish their consulates in Siam. The need to communicate via letters and correspondence with other consulates and with their home countries stressed the need for a postal system. At that time, there was no postal service in Siam. The people of Siam sent letters through messengers or friends who were travelling within or out of the country.

In 1867, the British Consulate was the first entity in Siam to introduce the system of post. With that, all international mailing services were provided by and dependent on the British Consulate.

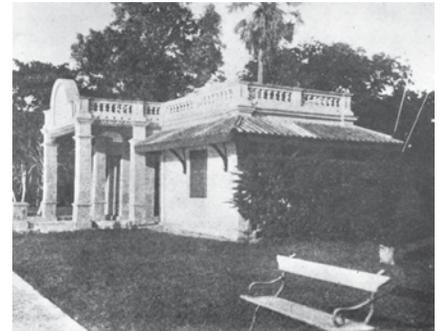
Straits Settlements Stamps Used in Bangkok

When the British Consulate Post Office was set up in Bangkok, Siam did not have its own stamp. British India stamps, which were also used in the Straits Settlements (Malacca, Penang and Singapore), were used by the British Consulate Post Office until 1867 when they were replaced by Straits Settlements stamps.

During this early period, outbound mail must be sent out from Bangkok to Singapore, and thereafter forwarded to other countries. The letters and packages were thus cancelled in Singapore with Singapore postmarks. This practice continued until 1 July 1885 when Siam joined the UPU which coordinates the international postal system, and started its own international postal services.



Code of Arms of British Consulate in Bangkok used as postal cancellation



Post office at the British Consulate on Charoenkrung Road.



Straits Settlements stamps overprinted with 'B' used in Bangkok.

Straits Settlements Stamps Overprinted with 'B'

In April 1882, the branch of the Singapore post office established in Bangkok was permitted by the United Kingdom to operate postal services in the city, as sending messages was in great demand. The Straits Settlements stamps were overprinted with the Roman alphabet 'B', which stood for 'Bangkok', the place from where the letters were mailed.

After Siam started operating its own postal services in 1883 and became a member country of the UPU on 1 July 1885, the British postal services in Siam and the use of the stamps printed with the letter 'B' were terminated.

Local Stamps for Palace Use

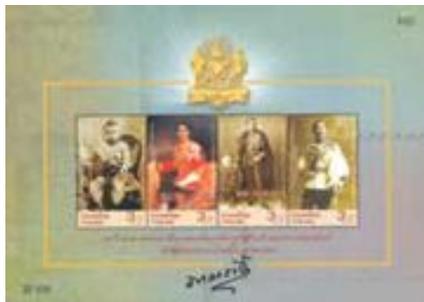
In 1875, when the British Consulate was still offering postal services in Siam, His Royal Highness Prince Bhanurangsi Sawangwongse, King Chulalongkorn's

younger brother, published a daily newspaper named 'COURT' or 'Government News' with a group of the royal family's members. The newspaper was distributed by despatch to high ranking officials and close members of the royal family, and Prince Bhanurangsi Sawangwongse issued a stamp as evidence of payment for the delivery service. This stamp, referred to as 'Local Stamp', featured a portrait of Prince Bhanurangsi Sawangwongse. They were also used for letters sent to a specific area.

Following this, Prince Bhanurangsi issued another series of stamps printed in England named 'The Royal Family'. It was used only by members of the royal family in communicating government news.



The 'Rising P', a single one-Att stamp was affixed on each copy of the Court Circular as a fee for its delivery within the metropolis' walls, and two stamps were affixed if delivered outside the metropolis' walls.



SIAMESE POSTAL SYSTEM

In 1880, Chao Muen Samerjairaj, a courier who had seen the postal system in foreign countries, made an appeal to King Chulalongkorn to establish a postal system in Siam for the benefits of the general public and the government. He said:

“It is important indeed for the trading in accordance with the international practice to know exactly where to receive and send the correspondences, which is called postal service, and this will be beneficial to the nation and other countries as well.”

On 2 July 1881, King Chulalongkorn appointed Prince Bhanurangsi as Director-General of the Post and Telegraph Department. It was a rather challenging endeavour for the prince, as the postal services were very new in the Siamese society. The registration of house numbers and last names had not commenced at that time. Moreover, a number of people disagreed with the project, fearing that it might not worth the investment.



(Top): 2009, His Royal Highness Prince Bhanurangsi, Director-General of the Post and Telegraph Department. (Above): Chao Muen Samerjairat lodged a letter of appeal to His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, requesting for a Royal Decree to establish a postal system in Bangkok.

MUSEINGS.



(Top): 1989, posting boxes in Thailand. (Middle): 1983, General Post Office in Bangkok. (Bottom): 2009, 120th anniversary of Postal School.



(Above): The postal department and post office in Siam was located in Praisaneeyakarn, situated near Chao Phraya River. (Right): Officials known as ‘Postmen’ despatched letters three times daily at 7.00am, 11.00am and 4.00pm.

Inauguration of the Postal System

On 4 August 1883, Prince Bhanurangsi, Director-General of the Post and Telegraph Department, proclaimed the inauguration of postal services, which would be on trial within the area of Bangkok. Letters were accepted and sent within the city.

After 48 days, the overwhelming number of Siamese people using the services at the post office amazed King Chulalongkorn. The king mentioned the postal services in the Royal speech on his birthday on 20 September 1883:

“I had no idea that the Siamese use letters in this huge amount ... Post Office providing the services of receiving and delivering mails within Bangkok surprises me due to the fact that the Siamese use a great amount of letters. This inspired me to expand the service throughout the Kingdom for the benefit of trading and correspondence of government sector. Later, I hope to invite the Director-General of Germany Postal Service and apply for a membership of Postal Union, which will allow for Siamese Postal Service to operate the mailing service around the world.”





First Stamp Issue in Siam

Siam issued its first set of postage stamps on 4 August 1883. The stamps, known as 'Solot', featured the portrait of King Chulalongkorn. Intended for domestic use only, the stamps bore no country name. They were designed by Mr William Ridgeway, an English designer and engraver, and were printed by the Waterlow & Sons Printing Co Ltd, England.

When Siam joined the UPU on 1 July 1885, stamps were issued and designed in accordance with the UPU regulations, so that they could be used both within the country and overseas. The word 'SIAM' was added and denominations were in both Thai and Arabic numerals.

With these changes, the use of British Straits Settlements stamps for outbound mail was no longer needed. This led to the closure of the British Consulate Post Office in Bangkok.

*Lucille Yap is Senior Curator,
Singapore Philatelic Museum.*

*Exhibition will be held at the
Singapore Philatelic Museum
from 3 October 2012 to
17 February 2013.*

SPECIAL THANKS TO:
Thailand Post Company Ltd
The Philatelic Association of
Thailand
Dr Prakob Chirakiti
Mr Charnchai Karnasuta
Mr Boonchai Bencharongkul





THAI

CULTURALFEST

Journey with us into the Land of a Thousand Smiles and explore the many facets of Thailand and its rich customs. From over 1,500 years of Buddhist Art to rare royal letters, stamps and new works of art created by Thai artists, *Thai CulturalFest* promises to provide an insightful glimpse into the heritage and culture of a beloved neighbour of Singapore.

Three National Heritage Board museums, the Asian Civilisations Museum, the Singapore Art Museum and the Singapore Philatelic Museum, will be working with various Thai organisations and artists to present an exciting and colourful line-up of exhibitions and programmes on all things Thai.



SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM

***The Postal Connection:
Singapore and Thailand***

3 October 2012 – 17 February 2013

The history of Thailand and its postal connection with Singapore in the 1800s is the theme of this unique exhibition. Learn about the role of Singapore as a postal and communications hub which inspired the introduction and development of the postal system in Siam (now known as Thailand). Rare royal letters written in Thai and English and sent to Singapore by King Mongkut (reign from 1851 - 1868) and King Chulalongkorn (reign from 1868 – 1910) are on show. The displays will also highlight the influences and contributions of these esteemed Thai monarchs towards Thailand's postal system.

In addition, visitors can also expect to see rare collections on loan from renowned Thai collectors. Exhibits include overprinted Straits Settlements stamps used in Bangkok and the first Thai stamps issued on 4 August 1883, together with the stamp artwork and proofs. The loan of these collections is coordinated by the Philatelic Association of Thailand, and the exhibition is supported by the Thailand Post Company Ltd.

For enquiries, please call 6337 3888 or email nhb_spm_adm@nhb.gov.sg.



(Facing page): Dow Wasiksiri, *Local Fashion around Kard Luang Market, Chiang Mai (Hmong hill tribe #2)*, 2012, photograph, 186 cm x 142 cm (series of 12), artist collection. *Image courtesy of the artist.*



Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *Village and Elsewhere: Artemisia Gentileschi's Judith Beheading Holofernes, Jeff Koons' Untitled and Thai Villagers*, 2011, photograph and video 19:40 minutes, artist collection. *Image courtesy of the artist.*



SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM

Thai Transience

26 October 2012 – 6 January 2013

Thai Transience showcases paintings, sculptures, photographs, installations, videos and performances by leading Thai artists. Inspiration behind these pieces are drawn from traditional artefacts and art objects from local museums and religious sites within Thailand, showing how Thai contemporary artists continue to create new expressions responding to their heritage and faith. A selection of these artefacts will be featured alongside new contemporary artworks in this exhibition.

Co-organised by the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) and the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture (Thailand), and guest-curated by Professor Apinan Poshyananda, the exhibition features more than 50 works comprising historical objects, as well as contemporary art from both emerging and senior Thai contemporary artists such as Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, Busaraporn Thongchai, Chokchai Tukpoe, Chusak Srikwan, Dow Wasiksiri, Imhathai Suwattanasilp, Kamin Lertchaiprasert, Panya Vijnthanasarn, Phatayos Buddhacharoen, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Thawan Duchanee and Yuree Kensing. The exhibition also includes selected Thai artefacts from the Asian Civilisations Museum and artworks from the SAM collection.

Artists in Conversation

26 October 2012 | 3.00pm – 4.30pm | Glass Hall
Free admission.

Registration required.

Please e-mail nhb_sam_programs@nhb.gov.sg.

Various artists from the exhibition will share the ideas and processes behind their works in this panel discussion moderated by Professor Apinan Poshyananda. Conducted in Thai and English.

Curator Tour

27 October 2012 | 2.00pm - 3.00pm

S\$12 (includes admission to the exhibition).

Tickets available at SAM and SISTIC.

Limited spaces.

For ticket availability at the door, please call SISTIC.

When does the past end and when does the present begin? How can art express that which is temporal? Immerse yourself in the world of timeless art in *Thai Transience*, where the culture of the tradition meets contemporary art. Join SAM curator, Michelle Ho, as she discusses individual artworks in the exhibition and embark on a journey of dialogues between the form and the formless, the old and the new.

Guest Lecture: Thai Buddhist Art by M. R. Chakrabort Chitrabongs

27 October 2012 | 3.00pm – 4.30pm |

Glass Hall

Free admission.

Registration required.

Please e-mail nhb_sam_programs@nhb.gov.sg.

Join this fascinating lecture by former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Culture and expert in Buddhist art and culture, M. R. Chakrabort Chitrabongs, as he presents on Thai Buddhist art that has been inspired by the *Traibhumi* – an ancient sacred Buddhist text – particularly with regard to the works shown in *Thai Transience*.

Artist Workshop: Chusak Srikwan

27 October 2012 | 3.00pm – 5.00pm | Print-

making Workshop (Block H, Room B1-14),

LASALLE College of the Arts

S\$12 (includes admission to the exhibition).

Tickets available at SAM and SISTIC.

Limited spaces.

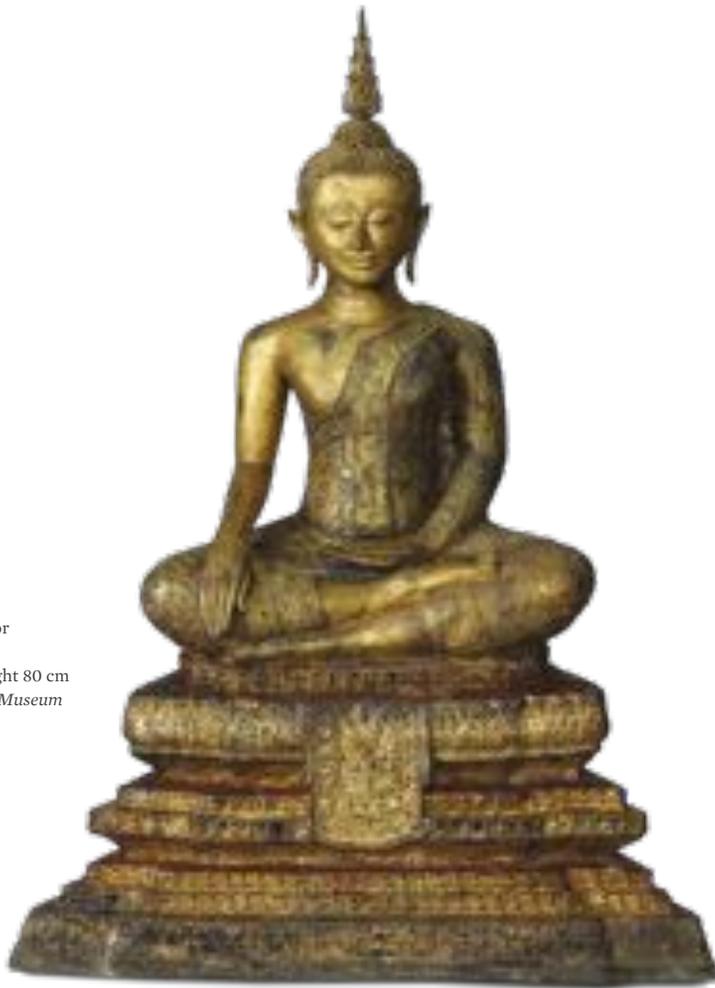
Artist Chusak Srikwan will conduct a puppet-carving workshop, drawing inspiration from his professional background in shadow puppetry (*Nang Talung*). He will also share the influences behind his practice and his works, including *Shadow*, which is featured in the exhibition.

Please visit www.singaporeartmuseum.sg for more details.





Banner: Buddha in
Tavatimsa Heaven (detail)
Central Thailand,
early or mid-19th century
Tempera on cotton
National Art Gallery,
Bangkok



Seated Buddha
Thailand, late 19th or
early 20th century
Gilded bronze, height 80 cm
Asian Civilisations Museum
Anonymous gift



ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM

Enlightened Ways: The Many Streams of Buddhist Art in Thailand

30 November 2012 – 17 April 2013

This exhibition, showcasing over 1,500 years of Buddhist art from Thailand, is the most comprehensive exploration of the subject ever organised. Images of the Buddha, precious gold ornaments, gilded and lacquered furniture, and paintings are among the highlights drawn from 11 Thai National Museums, the collections of the ACM, as well as museums and private collectors abroad.

Exploring the Cosmos:

The Stupa as a Buddhist Symbol

14 December 2012 – 18 August 2013

The stupa is the principal architectural form of Buddhism and is found across Asia, including in Thailand. This small exhibition features 29 works from ACM's collection, ranging from a 600-year-old bronze model Thai stupa to a large contemporary hanging mobile stupa by the young Thai artist Jakkai Siributr.

Salak Yom Festival

31 January 2013 – 28 April 2013

Join villagers from Thailand as they make colourful and exuberant Offering Trees. Merit-making objects are hung on towering trees in the Salak Yom festival, which takes place each year around October in Lamphun, northern Thailand. You can also write down a wish on ornaments to hang on the trees in this living display.

New Year's Eve Countdown Party

31 December 2012

Activities from 8pm to 12am

Free admission to the galleries from 5pm – 1am

Join us for an exciting night of music and dance celebrating the special exhibition *Enlightened Ways: The Many Streams of Buddhist Art in Thailand* this New Year's Eve. The museum is open until 1am with an array of live performances celebrating the best of Thai popular culture.

For more information, please visit www.acm.org.sg.



Walking Buddha
Thailand, Sukhothai,
15th or 16th century
Bronze, height 117 cm
Asian Civilisations Museum



The Object I, 2011. Mixed Media on Wood, 165 x 123 x 13 cm.

PANORAMA: CONTEMPORARY ART FROM RECENT ASIA

PANORAMA @ 8Q

TEXT BY **FAIRUZ IMAN ISMAIL**

CONTEMPORARY ART IN ASIA has phenomenally gained attention and recognition worldwide since the turn of the 21st century. The escalating international interest on Asia and Asian contemporary art serves as a vehicle for global discourse, encouraging creative dialogues between Asia and the rest of the world. In tandem with the deliberations, opportunities to look inwards transpired, instigating careful assessment and reconsiderations to the debates and discussions. As art mirrors life, tangible issues concerning the social, economical, cultural and other prevalent concerns are reflected in the art, documenting the scenery of the Asia's contemporary concerns

and the rapid changes in her landscape.

PANORAMA: Contemporary Art from Recent Asia presents a wide lens to examine the diverse angles on issues in contemporary art in Asia. *PANORAMA* at 8Q is the second instalment to the inaugural display in the Singapore Art Museum (SAM). It features 17 works from six countries - The Philippines, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Vietnam. Taken from the contemporary art collection of SAM, the artworks encompass a diversity of mediums from painting, drawing, photography, video and installation, demonstrating the vivid multiplicity of contemporary art in Southeast Asia today.



The Object II, 2011. Mixed Media on Wood, 165 x 123 x 13 cm.

JANE LEE (SINGAPORE)

The Object I and The Object II (2011)

The Object challenges the conventional notion of painting as a method of representation and as a two dimensional mode of expression. Engaging with painting medium, *The Object* was built up with multiple crossed-weaved layers of thick paint. Through this emphasis on materiality, it breaks down the boundaries between painting and the other fictional and fantastical world which painting is often seen

to create. The act of 'ripping off' a section of the work further abolishes the illusionistic space in the picture plane, pushing the work from two-dimensional into three-dimensional.

Jane Lee's works take on the age-old practice of painting, provoking the boundaries and definitions of art in its traditional forms such as painting, sculpture and installation. One of Singapore's accomplished contemporary painters, Jane Lee uses unconventional methods and innovative techniques to highlight the processes involved.



Conversation Piece, 2010. Installation with painted Resin sculptures, dimensions variable.

WIYOGA MUHARDANTO (INDONESIA)

Conversation Piece (2010)

Conversation Piece comprises a set of sculptures of human legs, installed behind a wall so that only the legs are visible to the viewer, giving the impression that a group of people are having a conversation behind the wall. The wall is installed at the front of an exhibition space, and covered with the wall text for that respective art exhibition. From the clothing and footwear worn by each pair of legs, one can guess the social status and role(s) of the personage that pair of legs belongs to: the collector, the gallerist, the curator, the *ibu-ibu* (society ladies) and the artist. These are personalities often encountered at Indonesian art openings who broker the success of the exhibitions and/or the artists whose works are on show.

Conversation Piece is a witty and sharply observant take on the politics and behind-the-scenes negotiations that characterise the highly competitive Indonesian art scene, suggesting that success in this sphere is not as simple or straightforward as merely producing good art, but rather, subject to complex negotiations and relationships which are often concealed from the public eye.



Missed Connections, 2004 – 2010.
Video, eight minutes (edition 1 of 5).

**RICHARD STREITMATTER-TRAN
(VIETNAM)**

Missed Connections (2004 – 2010)

Richard Streitmatter-Tran was amongst the tens of thousands of children who were part of ‘Operation Babylift’ – An American initiative in the 1970s, which enabled the adoption of Vietnamese children by American families due to the Vietnam-American war. *Missed Connections* draw attention to the ‘Operation Babylift’ controversy in the

1970s through the personal yearnings of Tran. The video expresses Tran’s nostalgia, loss and desire for a family he is able to only imagine. Tran returned to Vietnam in 2003 and has since continued to live and work in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

This video is nostalgic to Tran as it makes direct reference to the artist’s personal experience of growing up unacquainted with his birth family. At the start of the video, individuals mirror each other’s actions; this act of duplicity establish-

When the Water Rises, the Fish Eats the Ant..., 2005 – 2006.
Photo prints, 50 x 40 cm.



es a chord of camaraderie between them. Connection is, however, lost over time as the individuals pursue their own respective activities. *Missed Connections* touches upon the ephemeral quality of chance and encounters, as well the possibilities of collaboration through effort.

Tran was born in 1972 in Vietnam and graduated from the Massachusetts College of Art in the United States of America.

MAK REMISSA (CAMBODIA)

When the Water Rises, the Fish Eats the Ant; When the Water Recedes, the Ant Eats the Fish (2005 – 2006)

In this series of photographs, Mak Remissa referenced an ancient Khmer proverb: “*When the water rises, the fish eats the ant; when the water recedes, the ant eats the fish*”. It is a proverb reflecting the natural behaviour of living species when faced with changing circumstances. While fish are adept at living in water and ants on land, one may dominate the other when the circumstances of nature change. In this work, the artist expressed his hope for a utopian world where mankind could rise beyond power struggles as illustrated by the cycle of the fish-and-ant food chain.

Mak Remissa was born in Cambodia in 1970 and graduated from the Royal Fine Arts School in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Remissa represents the first generation of post-1990s Cambodian photographers and stands apart from his contemporaries who focus mainly on journalistic-style photography. The photographic practice of Remissa involves a conscious desire to entertain his viewers through the use of colour and composition.



Governators, 2010. Mixed media: resin, wood, steel, dimensions variable.

LESLIE DE CHAVEZ (PHILIPPINES)

Governators (2010)

The intertwining of art and politics has a long history in the Philippines. Social realist art, in particular, was instrumental during the Martial Law years (1972 - 1981) in voicing the abuses of the political system and the hardships endured by the average person.

Leslie de Chavez’s socio-political art similarly employs the tools of symbolism and allegory to critique a system that does not seem to have changed despite a succession of leaders and elected officials.

Governators comprises corpulent, hooded figures on a swing. Its title, a conflation of the words ‘governor’ and ‘terminator’, is phonetically evocative, suggesting that politicians are merciless, unfeeling beings with scant regard for ordinary people. Dressed in the Filipino men’s national dress of *Barong Tagalog*, it points to politicians who regard themselves as respectable, but their hooded faces and the blood on their hands give away their true selves as robbers and abusers of the system. Seated back-to-back and shoulder-to-shoulder, the *governators* form an impenetrable pack of brothers whose chief interest is to protect themselves and one another, gesturing to the cronyism that is often widespread in the world of politics. There is obvious reference to the ‘seat of government’, but Chavez’s use of a swing – which associates with play and the trapeze – suggests that the *governators* are perpetrators in a political system that is, essentially, a circus.



Untitled, 2007. Oil on canvas, 102 x 228.7 x 4.8 cm.

KOW LEONG KIANG (MALAYSIA)

Untitled (2007)

The political posters and buntings in this painting depict a possible scene from the 2004 Malaysian General Election in a sleepy village in the state of Kelantan. At every election since the country's independence in 1957, two major political parties, Barisan Nasional (National Front) and Parti Islam Semalaysia (PAS) (Islamic Party of Malaysia) have fought tooth and nail to win votes and the support of the Malay heartland, each claiming to represent ei-



ther progress or moral superiority or both. Yet, till today, the typical Malay *kampung*, as depicted in the painting, remains quiet and underdeveloped.

The manner in which life in the village is represented in this painting, however, defies its romantic allure and attempts to describe much of the opposite. In a sophisticated play of symbols, the two male protagonists represent the two opposing political parties – Barisan Nasional and PAS, whilst the lone and innocent female represents the emerging Malaysian political party, Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR)

(People's Justice Party). The cat that sits in the midst of this 'triangle' represents the citizens who are uncertain about whom to choose.

Kow Leong Kiang was born in 1970 in Malaysia and is best known for his series of evocative portraits, specifically those known as the 'East Coast beauties', often as melancholic allegories and nostalgia for the tropical countryside.

Fairuz Iman Ismail is Assistant Curator, Singapore Art Museum.

SERIES 1 & 2
BY ZAI KUNING

SERIES 1 & 2,
2006 - 2008, 10 X 13 CM EACH,
12 DRAWINGS AND 8 X 11.5 CM EACH, 18
DRAWINGS, CHINESE INK ON JAPANESE PAPER,
SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM COLLECTION

SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM

MUSEGALLERY.



Zai Kuning,Untitled Chinese ink on paper, series nos. 2006-2008



Zai Kuning,Untitled Chinese ink on paper, series nos. 2006-2008

An established Singaporean contemporary artist, Zai Kuning deliberately complicates categorisation, employing a wide range of practices, from video, poetry and theatre to dance, performance, music and installation.

The sketches *Series 1 & 2* were strongly influenced by the artist's time in Riau.

Zai spent the last decade researching the lives of the *Orang Laut* (sea gypsies) of the Riau Archipelago, observing how they have established a system of marking their environment - on stones, trees, their boats and belongings. This observation led him in search for his own sense of 'markings' or 'drawings' as language, and as signs.

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一九六九年一月		JANUARY 1969		Monday - Wednesday 14, 15, 16 1969	
Sun. 星期日	Happy New Year	5	12	19	26
Mon. 星期一		6	13	20	27
Tue. 星期二		7	14	21	28
Wed. 星期三	1	8	15	22	29
Thu. 星期四	2	9	16	23	30
Fri. 星期五	3	10	17	24	31
Sat. 星期六	4	11	18	25	MERRY VALENTINE

MUSECALENDAR.

OCT
to
DEC
2012

// ASIAN
CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM**Islamic Arts from Southeast Asia: Highlights of the Asian Civilisations Museum**

- Till 20 January 2013
- Admission charges apply

Showcasing works of art drawn exclusively from the collections of the Asian Civilisations Museum, this exhibition reveals how artistic ideas from central Islamic lands were adapted to a style that is uniquely Southeast Asian. On display are sculptures carved in wood, precious metal objects, ceramics and enamels, and textiles, notably batik. Religious works of art, Qur'ans, mosque furnishings and secular objects from China and many Southeast Asian countries, including Singapore, are also included in the exhibition.

Master Strokes: Works by Abbot Song Nian of the Mahabodhi Monastery

- Till 2 December 2012
- Free admission

The late Master Song Nian (1911 – 1997), abbot of the Mahabodhi Monastery in Singapore, is known for his religious devotion and artistic creations. Along with his Buddhist practice, he pursued calligraphy and painting. His works span many styles, from calligraphy executed in archaic seal scripts to wildly cursive writings. Many of his pieces have been sold for charity or presented as gifts to foreign leaders. Organised in commemoration of the master's 15th death anniversary, this exhibition will showcase representative pieces from his rich body of work, including several which have been donated to the national collection, to celebrate his artistic individuality and generosity.

This exhibition is organised by the Asian Civilisations Museum and Song Nian Art Gallery.

Enlightened Ways: The Many Streams of Buddhist Art in Thailand

- 30 November 2012 - 17 April 2013
- Admission charges apply

This major exhibition will

survey the unique manifestations of Buddhist art in Thailand over a period of 1,500 years. It will feature important works from national museums in Thailand as well as private collections and museums overseas. A full programme of special events, including a festival, demonstrations and a lecture series, will be presented. A scholarly catalogue with contributions from experts in Thailand and around the world will accompany the exhibition.

Exploring the Cosmos: The Stupa as a Buddhist Symbol

- 14 December 2012 – 14 July 2013
- Free admission

This exhibition will explore how the stupa – the principal architectural form of Buddhism – became a complex symbol of the universe. The show will feature 29 works from the collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum, covering a period from the 3rd to the 19th century, as well as a contemporary Thai work by Jakkai Siributr.

Lunchtime Concerts at ACM

- Fridays, 5, 12, 19 October and 2, 9, 16, 23 November 2012
- 12.30pm
- Free admission

The popular lunchtime concerts return to the Asian Civilisation Museum's Shaw Foundation Foyer with the latest series featuring winds, strings, piano, vocals and jazz music.

Countdown Bash at ACM!

- 31 December 2012
- 7pm – 12am
- Free admission to galleries from 5pm – 1am

Party hard and celebrate the last night of 2012 at the Asian Civilisations Museum with top tunes and glamorous high-energy Thai performances. Enjoy giveaways and usher in 2013 with a spectacular view of the Marina Bay fireworks display!

All free giveaways while stocks last, terms and conditions apply.

// NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE**45 – 65: Liberation, Unrest... a New Nation**

- Till 18 November 2012
- 10am – 6pm, daily
- Stamford Gallery, Level 1
- Free admission

A collaboration between the National Archives of Singapore and the National Museum of Singapore, this exhibition brings visitors through the tumultuous period of post-war Singapore up until its independence in August 1965. Using selected artefacts and archival materials such as photographs, film and oral history interviews, the exhibition offers a glimpse of the cultural dynamism on the ground, amid the awakening of a political consciousness that contributed to the determined struggle for de-colonisation and self-rule. It allows visitors to find out about the journey that paved the way in Singapore's quest for independence and a national identity, giving Singaporeans today an insight into how the nation was shaped and formed.

To expand its reach, the exhibition will also travel to venues such as community centres, public libraries and schools after the launch at the National Museum of Singapore.

A Life of Practice – Kuo Pao Kun

- 15 September 2012 – 24 February 2013
- 10am – 6pm, daily
- Exhibition Gallery 2, Basement

2012 marks the 10th anniversary of the passing of Singaporean dramatist Kuo Pao Kun. An art activist and public intellectual, Kuo was a forerunner in the local arts and culture industry.

Kuo's pioneering acts included Bertolt Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, presented in 1967. He created a home for the Arts – The Substation – in 1990, and established local, regional and international networks, making possible artistic and theatrical exchanges.

Kuo's life will be exhi-

// SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM

Thai Transcience
• Till 6 January 2013

- Admission charges apply

Part of the *Thai CulturalFest* organised by National Heritage Board, *Thai Transcience* showcases paintings, sculptures, installations, videos, films and performances by leading Thai artists. Inspiration behind these pieces were drawn from traditional artefacts and art objects from local museums and religious sites within Thailand, showing how Thai contemporary artists continue to create new expressions responding to their heritage and faith. A selection of these traditional artefacts will be featured alongside new contemporary artworks in this exhibition.

Co-organised by the Singapore Art Museum and the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture (Thailand), the exhibition is guest-curated by Professor Apinan Poshyananda and features more than 20 new works from both emerging and senior Thai contemporary artists such as Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, Bus-saraporn Thongchai, Chokchai Takpho, Chusak Srikwan, Dow Wasiksiri, Imhathai Suwatthanasilp, Kamin Lertchaiprasert, Panya Vijnthanasarn, Rirkrit Tiravanija and Yuree Kensaku.

bited for the first time at the National Museum of Singapore through a selection of photographs, manuscripts, letters, costumes and archival footage. The exhibition will also shed light on the development of arts and culture in Singapore.

// PRESERVATION OF
MONUMENTS BOARD**Monumental Weddings: Wedding Portraits At National Monuments**

- Till 4 January 2013
- Canyon, National Museum of Singapore
- Free admission

Monumental Weddings presents a collection of about 150 archival and contemporary wedding photographs taken at 32 of Singapore's national monuments from the early 20th century to the present. These unique images capture couples in their wedding finery against a backdrop of historic buildings that have earned a permanent position in the landscape of Singapore

as preserved monuments.

The exhibition highlights the characteristics of *Early Wedding Photography* in Singapore and the popularity of monuments as wedding venues; the origins and evolution of *Mass Weddings* on the island; *The Ties that Bind* monuments, communities and families together; and the distinct architectural features of our monuments that serve as *Monumental Backdrops* to wedding photos. *Monumental Love Stories* rounds off the exhibition with four short films featuring heart-warming couples relating stories of their commitment and love, while a fifth film provides an industry-insider's take on the history and development of wedding photography in Singapore.

Monument Open House 2012

- 17 - 18 November 2012
- Selected National Monuments

Monument Open House is back for the second year! Grab the chance to visit

and explore over 20 national monuments in Singapore. You can also join a tour to learn more about these historical buildings.

Please refer to www.pmb.sg for more information on *Monument Open House* and the participating monuments, from 1 November 2012.

// SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM

Panorama: Recent Art from Contemporary Asia

Singapore Art Museum at 8Q:

- Till 14 April 2013

- Admission Charges Apply

Singapore Art Museum:

- Till 25 December 2012

- Admission Charges Apply

Contemporary art is often a dialogue with the social, economic and cultural issues of the present. Since 2000, the explosion of Asian art can be seen as a window to the epochal changes around us.

PANORAMA offers a wide lens to examine our world, and chart some of the issues pervading contemporary art-making in Asia today – the negotiation over values, social and political change, escalating urbanisation and the subsequent pressures on nature. Drawn entirely from the Singapore Art Museum's contemporary art collection, *PANORAMA* features 41 artists from 10 Asian countries working in painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, video and installation.

// SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM

Spice Is Nice

- Till May 2014

Spice Is Nice traces the voyages of discovery, spice trade, colonisation, migration pattern, life in early Singapore, traditional cures and flavours of regional cuisine. The exhibition, targeted at families with children, features many hands-on activities and multimedia programmes for visitors to explore and discover the development of Singapore from the 19th century, and the uses and properties of spices.

Touch, feel and smell spices 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? Find out other interesting trivia about these spices at the exhibition.

Discover the areas of crop cultivation in Singapore for gambier, pepper, nutmeg, sugarcane, coconut and lemongrass in the mid to late 1800s; and learn about notable people associated with spices and other crops, including José Almeida, Syed Sharif Omar Aljunied, Tan Tock Seng, among others.

The Postal Connection: Singapore and Thailand

- Till 17 February 2013

Explore Thailand's history and its postal connection with Singapore. Learn about the importance of Singapore as a postal and communication hub and see how Singapore had inspired the introduction and development of the postal system in Thailand (then known as Siam). View rare royal letters written in Thai and English and sent to Singapore by King Mongkut (reign from 1851 - 1868) and King Chulalongkorn (reign from 1868 - 1910), and learn more about their influences and contributions towards the Thai postal system.

Other rare collections on display include Straits Settlements stamps and overprinted Straits Settlements stamps used in Bangkok, the first Thai stamps issued on 4 August 1883 and the stamp artwork and proofs.

Supported by Thailand Post Company Ltd, this exhibition is held in conjunction with the National Heritage Board's *Thai CulturalFest*.

Imagine Dragons

- Till December 2012

With 2012 being the Year of the Dragon, the Singapore Philatelic Museum (SPM) brings dragons to life with stamps and interactive displays. Designed for children aged five to ten years, this exhibition brings them into the world of dragons and let their imaginations fly!

Do you know that dragon legends appear in every continent in the world?

Meet dragons from around the globe, including ones from Singapore! Discover what makes the mythical creatures tick, explore a dragon's lair and unearth some 'real-life' dragons at SPM!

School Holiday Programmes at Singapore Philatelic Museum

Contact Lily at Tel: 6513 7347 or e-mail Lily_Samuel@nhb.gov.sg to register for the following school holiday programmes:

The Amazing Stamps

- 20 & 27 November,

4 December 2012

- 10am - 12pm

- Age: 7 - 12 years

- S\$12 per child

Go on a guided tour of the museum, hunt for philatelic treasures, take part in a stamp designing competition and win interesting prizes!

Fun with Stamps

- 21 & 28 November,

5 December 2012

- 10am - 12pm

- Age: 7 - 12 years

- S\$12 per child

Explore the museum and discover art depicted on postage stamps. Create your very own unique stamp template and win museum tokens.

The Spice Trail

- 30 November,

4 & 12 December 2012

- 10am - 12pm

- Age: 7 - 12 years

- S\$15 per child

Visit the *Spice Is Nice* exhibition galleries and learn about explorers, spice merchants, wet markets and festival food. Then go on a walking trail to Fort Canning Park to discover interesting facts about spices, and create a special spice craft.

Fun Overnight Adventure Camp

- 22 November 2012, 6pm -

23 November 2012, 9am

- 6 December 2012, 6pm - 7

December 2012, 9am

- Age: 7 - 12 years

- S\$80 per child

Check-in at the Singapore Philatelic Museum for a night of discovery, games and movie time. Then snuggle up and dream sweet dreams among

the stamps. Dinner, supper and breakfast will be provided and participants will bring home their very own personalised stamp.

// THE PERANAKAN MUSEUM

Emily of Emerald Hill: Singaporean Identity on Stage

- Till 17 February 2013

Written by Stella Kon in 1982, *Emily of Emerald Hill* tells the story of a Peranakan woman from young bride to strong-willed matriarch. Through its local subject matter, familiar characters and recognisable patterns of speech, the play expresses a strong Singaporean identity.

The principal character of Emily Gan was inspired by the experiences of the author growing up in a Peranakan household on Emerald Hill in Singapore. This exhibition examines the origins of the play and its performance history. It also highlights the major performers of Emily: Margaret Chan, Pearly Chua and Ivan Heng.

Emily of Emerald Hill Weekend Festival

- 24 & 25 November 2012

- Activities from 12pm to 5pm

- Free admission to galleries

from 9am to 7pm

Experience art and drama through exciting performances and unique crafts for the whole family. Watch an entertaining play inspired by *Emily of Emerald Hill* and learn about the play's influence.

Straits Family Sunday

- 14 October, 11 November &

9 December 2012

- 1pm to 5pm

- The *Ixora Room*, Peranakan Museum

Join us every second Sunday of the month to create a unique craft inspired by the museum's collection. Go on a special themed tour of the galleries or dress up with the whole family in a *batik* shirt or the *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.

TRANSFORMING CLIFFORD PIER BUILDING AND CUSTOMS HOUSE

THE FULLERTON HERITAGE

TEXT BY **CHERYL SIM**
IMAGES COURTESY OF
DP ARCHITECTS PTE LTD

BUILT IN 1933, the majestic Clifford Pier Building was a landing point for immigrants and other passengers who arrived in Singapore by sea. As red oil lamps used to hang from the pier to guide seafarers, it was widely and affectionately known in Chinese as 'Red Lamp Pier' (红灯码头).

The two-storey Customs House, constructed in the late 1960s, was one of Singapore's earliest public buildings built in the simple and functional 'Modern' style. It was home to the Singapore Customs Police, which was responsible for watching over one of the world's busiest harbours as Singapore's trade and shipping thrived from the 1960s onwards.

The Fullerton Heritage project involved the conservation and transformation of the Clifford Pier Building and Customs House, and the building of a new six-storey hotel nestled between the two historical buildings.

CLIFFORD PIER BUILDING

The Clifford Pier Building had a simple but unique architecture.

The star architectural treasures of the building include the roof structure with its signature concrete arched trusses, and the stained glass fanlight at the main entrance in varying shades of blue. Many other details such as the roof support brackets and even the cast iron rain water down pipes are also unique features of this building. Many of these unique elements have been expertly preserved and brought back to life by the restoration project team.

During restoration, it was discovered that some of the building's most distinctive architectural features, such as its roof support brackets, had their original shanghai plaster finishes concealed under layers of paint – probably applied over the years to prevent deterioration. Instead of simply re-applying paint, the project team decided to

expose the beauty of the original shanghai plaster finishes. However, as some of the shanghai plaster finishes were in poor condition, they had to be restored with matching materials and colours.

Other key characteristics of the building have also been retained. For instance, most of its façade and exterior parapet are made up of grey granolithic finishes, carefully selected to match with the original texture and grain-sizes. Also, even though the original asbestos roof panes had to be replaced as they were hazardous to health, the final aluminium roof tiles retained the qualities of the original and the selected terracotta brown colour aimed to reinstate the roof to its original colour.

In addition, many decorative accessories were preserved, restored and displayed as artefacts within the Clifford Pier Building. These include the cast-iron red lamps and lanterns, which were restored to their original red colour, and are now located prominently in various parts of the building.

The Clifford Pier was formerly open on all sides and naturally ventilated. The greatest challenge in transforming this voluminous structure was thus to introduce within it an air-conditioned environment appropriate for its new use: a high-end luxurious hotel with a fine-dining restaurant.



THE FULLERTON BAY HOTEL





CUSTOMS HOUSE

In restoring Customs House, a critical design issue was to adapt the former office building to one that houses dining establishments, while retaining its 'original spirit'. There was also the added challenge of connecting the building to the rest of the waterfront development.

The building was successfully reconfigured and reinvented by the project team. The butterfly fascia boards on its façade are original conserved features. New modern glass shop-fronts were sensitively added to its first storey such that the old and the new blend together harmoniously. Of notable mention is the retention and restoration of the building's square umbrella-like pavilions.

To preserve its rich maritime heritage, only basic repair works were performed on the watch tower. The original windows were cleaned and repainted. The original handrail leading up to the top of the tower, however, was in a state of disrepair. It was replaced with an identical custom-made handrail.



MUSEDESIGN.



THE OLD AND THE NEW

Nestled between two historical buildings is The Fullerton Bay Hotel. This new six-storey hotel pays tribute to its unique context by inclining three sides of its glass façade to capture the reflections of the two heritage buildings, and at the same time presenting a sleek and modern look.

The hotel's main entrance is located at the Clifford Pier Building. A brief journey brings hotel guests from the past to the present, starting from the historic Clifford Pier, slowly transitioning to a modern link-way with a hotel lounge offering glorious views of the Marina Bay, and finally to the main hotel building where the reception greets the guests.

The revitalised historic waterfront now serves as an attractive lifestyle destination in the Marina Bay area, and the tastefully preserved Fullerton Heritage was one of the Category B winners of the 2011 *Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) Architectural Heritage Award*.

Cheryl Sim is Editor, BeMUSE.



THE HERITAGE INDUSTRY INCENTIVE PROGRAMME

TOWARDS A VIBRANT AND
RICH HERITAGE ECOSYSTEM



TEXT BY **KIN SHILI**
 IMAGES COURTESY OF
**HERITAGE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT,
 NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD**

BUILDING THE HERITAGE ECOSYSTEM

Managed by the National Heritage Board (NHB), the Heritage Industry Incentive Programme, or Hi2P, is an initiative introduced from the Renaissance City Plan (RCP) III. The RCP III was a culmination of two years of public consultation and strategic planning. It sets the strategic direction and key initiatives that the then Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA), the National Arts Council (NAC) and the NHB would undertake from 2008 to 2015. In achieving Singapore's vision to be a Distinctive Global City of Culture and the Arts, the RCP III aims to see Singapore in 2015 as a Vibrant Magnet for International Talent and a Best Home to an inclusive and cohesive population appreciative and knowledgeable about its diversity, and proud of its national identity¹.

NHB presented the Heritage Development Plan, which outlined the initiatives required to achieve the RCP III objectives within eight years by 2015. In the plan, the term 'Heritage Ecosystem' was coined to identify the various stakeholders within the industry. While studying the gaps in the industry, it was found that there was little participation from players within the ecosystem at that time. As a key player in the fledgling sector, NHB is thus the primary driving force behind the growth and development of the ecosystem. Hi2P was then conceived to proactively develop players within the ecosystem through incentives for upgrading capabilities and training initiatives, so as to raise overall skill standards and core competencies that would help the industry to thrive. Hence, providing seed funding through the Public-Private-People (PPP) arrangements was initiated for noteworthy heritage and cultural projects.

Launched officially in September 2008, Hi2P's key objectives were to spur the development of new and innovative heritage and museum products/services, encourage private players in the industry to upgrade their capabilities, incentivise these players to collaborate and synergise in joint incentives, and to export Singapore's cultural capital overseas. The programme also seeks to create new and impactful private museums and heritage attractions to ensure a vibrant ecosystem with differentiated offerings for the public.

SEEDING A GROUP OF HERITAGE ADVOCATORS

In 2008, the idea of marrying businesses with heritage seemed foreign to many. Most were sceptical over how sustainable or even remotely commercially viable heritage projects would be. It was thus a seemingly tall order for NHB to encourage the private and people sector to invest their resources in heritage. The Hi2P started with supporting a small but encouraging number of 11 projects in 2008, which has grown to 120 projects today with a S\$6 million funding that yielded a total private investment of S\$17 million. The companies Hi2P seeded in its initial years proved to be great advocates who exemplified the untapped opportunities in the heritage sector.

The annual Business of Heritage Conference organised from 2008 to 2011 by the NHB also proved to be an excellent platform to showcase the Hi2P-supported projects and for networking among stakeholders in the heritage ecosystem. The conference also provided participants with value-added knowledge on starting a heritage business or project.

FROM PUBLICATIONS TO LIFESTYLE MERCHANDISE

The diversity of projects supported by Hi2P may surprise many. The programme encourages organisations to be creative and to constantly seek new platforms and medium to present and package their heritage initiatives, so as to effectively engage and meet the needs of audiences today. The supported products and services have ranged from publications, documentaries, short films, multimedia, trails, exhibitions, installations to lifestyle merchandise; and the boundary is limitless.

Hi2P also aims to break the notion that 'heritage' equates with only 'history'. In fact, NHB aims to position 'heritage' as being accessible to everyone and easily related to by different communities, groups and age segments. The diversity of projects thus gives all levels and segments of the Singapore society the opportunity to interact and consume contents relevant to their needs. A publication such as *Conserving History*,

(Left): The *Heritage Mall* at the Business of Heritage Conference in 2010 was an excellent platform to network and showcase heritage ideas.

¹ *Renaissance City Plan III*, published by the then Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts, 2008.



An exhibition held at the Asian Civilisations Museum showcasing the works of Ideas Empire's *IEX Asian Heritage* collection, which was inspired by artefacts in the museum. *Courtesy of Ideas Empire.*



The team of young content developers from the culture and heritage blog, *Rediscover.sg*. *Courtesy of rediscover.sg.*

which catalogues and discusses the history, conservation and adaptive re-use of heritage buildings in Singapore, attracts the history and architecture buffs; while *IEX Asian Heritage*, a collection of merchandise inspired by the artefacts in the Asian Civilisations Museum and designed by local designers, reaches out to the fashion-savvy PMETs (Professionals, Managers, Executives and Technicians).

Also, through a series of projects supported by Hi²P, the various communities in Singapore were profiled, along with a purposeful documentation of their heritage. These projects included the *Nagarathars in Singapore*, a publication on the Indian community; and *Lagu-Lagu Kita*, an audio disc developed for the Malay community. In addition, the Singapore Chinese Opera Museum had produced a video documentary on the Chinese opera community, as well as *Peranakan Beadwork*, a publication on the disappearing trade of the Peranakan

community.

In his response to a feature on Hi²P in a local media report in November 2011, NHB Chief Executive Officer, Mr Michael Koh, said that the diverse genres of Hi²P projects showed that “*Singapore’s history and heritage could be consumed, experienced and savoured in many ways*”.

REACHING OUT AND INFLUENCING PEOPLE

Today, there are many new audiences who have directly consumed products and services developed with Hi²P’s support, as well as those who have indirectly benefited through social discourse and the media – both the mainstream and particularly the new social media platforms. The diverse range of Hi²P-supported projects has inevitably reached out to a wide spectrum of businesses and individuals who would, otherwise, not be engaged in these heritage projects. For instance, when develop-

ing the *Fullerton Heritage Gallery*, vendors such as researchers, curators, designers, fabrication suppliers, as well as public and communication agencies were engaged to develop and market the exhibition; while a mobile application such as the *Singapore Heritage Walks* by Waalkz Pte Ltd required the assistance of application developers, writers, editors and designers. By and large, Hi²P has initiated the procurement of a wide variety of services and supplies from local professionals and providers. It is through these professional interactions and engagements that skills and competencies are developed. The process has also created a new team of heritage advocates with the necessary skill sets.

The transfer of knowledge and how Hi²P has transformed and engaged the ecosystem are in many ways untraceable. However, this sector has clearly shown progress based on the trends and rising interest levels within the communities.

A NEW BREED OF HERITAGE PLAYERS

Singaporeans are beginning to recognise the need to seek a common identity through efforts to document and conserve their heritage, so as to preserve their familiarity with their home country, which otherwise will be eroded by the process of urban renewal.

Today, Hi²P is receiving more interest from individuals, community groups and associations who may have been influenced by the recent wave of nostalgia or the genuine passion of heritage converts. Of those individuals, an increasing number is from the younger generation whose expertise and familiarity with new media has given rise to the development of social blogs such as *Rediscover.sg*, which document heritage through videos, pictures, shared stories and virtual dialogues. Derek Foo, one of the young moderators of *Rediscover.sg*, shared that in the case of documenting and sharing heritage, “new media is a very powerful tool as it allows the rapid sharing of information across the population”. However, he noted that it also meant “more conscientious efforts have to be put into documenting heritage via new media”, as it is a volatile medium where one has to constantly ensure that information stays fresh and relevant to their audiences.

Evidence suggests that there are many heritage enthusiasts in Singapore. There are interest groups with a common passion in documenting and sharing the various aspects of local heritage. The initiatives by these groups are clearly from the ground-up. Their intention is simply to reach out and create awareness of Singapore’s heritage amongst their peers and the public. In 2012, Ground-Up Initiative (GUI), a volunteer driven non-profit community introduced *Heritage Kampung*, a five-month

Reliving the *kampung* spirit with farming activities at the Ground-Up Initiative’s *Heritage Kampung*. Courtesy of Ground-Up Initiative (GUI).



extravaganza that aimed to bring back the community spirit that was once special to the *kampung* community in Singapore. Together with commercially driven heritage projects, the upsurge of such community-led initiatives has created a refreshing and dynamic local landscape with buzz all round, and which proliferates the various segments of our society.

Hi²P will come to an end in March 2013. In the meantime, the programme looks forward to continue the support for Singapore’s heritage ecosystem, creating and

growing businesses in sustainable ways, ultimately building capabilities and talents within our community while contributing to the creation of a shared identity, fostering our nationhood and promoting rootedness in our society.

Kin Shili is Manager, Heritage Business Development, National Heritage Board.

INSPIRED BY THE PAST SHAPED BY CULTURAL EXCHANGE DESIGNED IN SINGAPORE

FUSING HERITAGE, MUSEUM AND ENTERPRISE

TEXT BY **LUA AI WEI**
IMAGES COURTESY OF
**IDEAS EMPIRE PTE LTD &
NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD**





AFTER VISITING A MUSEUM and marvelling over its amazing collection of artefacts, have you ever wished you could bring home a piece of history? Even better, how about a beautifully designed original product inspired by an artefact's rich legacy? This vision has been brought to reality by Ideas Empire with its inaugural collection of Asian heritage-inspired retail products created in partnership with Singapore designers and artists.

MAKING HERITAGE ACCESSIBLE THROUGH ENTERPRISE

Supported by the National Heritage Board (NHB)'s Heritage Industry Incentive Programme (HI²P), *IEX Asian Heritage* is a pilot effort by Ideas Empire to promote Asian heritage and Singapore design. It is the collaborative workshop through which Ideas Empire partners with some of Singapore's top designers and artists to design, develop and produce a series of contemporary retail products inspired by artefacts in Singapore's national collection.

The first series of this collection comprises a unique range of fashionable accessories and lifestyle collectibles inspired by chosen artefacts housed at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM). As such, each item has an interesting story to tell, highlighting Singapore's position as a facilitator of Asian commerce and cultural exchange from the past, present and future.

AN ECLECTIC MIX OF SINGAPORE TALENTS

To reap truly fresh and unique ideas, IEX works with Singapore designers and artists from varied backgrounds, including graphic design, fashion design, jewellery design, pottery and illustration. For this collection,

a total of 13 collaborators contributed their efforts: &Larry, Mindflyer, B.A.L.L.S., Mojoko, Steven Low, PAULINE.NING, Keith Png + Juffri, Aiwei Foo, CARRIE K., Hatch, Whitewords and Diana Tang. Depending on their respective strengths and skills, each collaborator was assigned to a specific product category; they were given a choice of artefacts to draw inspiration from, as well as design guidelines to direct their creative energies.

"It has been a truly refreshing experience for Ideas Empire to work with so many talented Singapore artists and designers of varied disciplines," said Zullikhan Abdullah, Director, Ideas Empire Pte Ltd. *"There were definitely numerous challenges along the way, and all the artists and designers have put in hard work, but it has been rewarding. This first-of-its-kind collaboration has resulted in a unique collection of collectibles which is not only contemporary but at the same time, infused with rich Asian culture and heritage elements. We are heartened by the highly positive feedback received so far."*

40 ORIGINAL DESIGNS WITH 40 VARIANTS

The *IEX Asian Heritage* collection was unveiled officially at a private launch party on 1 August 2012 during which it received rave reviews, followed by a month-long exhibition at ACM. Showcasing the designers' unique take on history, the collection comprises 40 original designs with 40 variants across three product categories:

Food Prints

A beautiful and at times intriguing series of tableware designed to add more interest to daily dining experiences.

Cross Culture

An eclectic range of contemporary fashion apparel and accessories with designs linked to history.

Wearable History

A refreshing mix of modern accessories that seek to reinterpret traditions with new materials and perspectives.

Ms Jessie Oh, Director (Business Development) of NHB commented: *"The project is a result of our ongoing efforts with private organisations such as Ideas Empire (IEX) to develop innovative heritage-related products for Singaporeans and visitors to enjoy. We are happy that the national collection at ACM has served as inspiration for our local talents. Their creativity and resourcefulness have given new meaning to our artefacts, and more importantly, encourage a deeper understanding of the diverse Asian cultures and civilisations that make up our unique multi-ethnic society."*

A PIECE OF INSPIRED HISTORY TO BRING HOME

The *IEX Asian Heritage* collection is now available for purchase at the IEX shop at PARCO Marina Bay P2-25/26, MUSEUM LABEL @ ACM, Singapore Art Museum and National Museum of Singapore, PAULINE.NING flagship store, CARRIE K. Atelier, Hide & Seek and selected independent stores. The collection is also available for purchase online at www.iex.sg. Visit www.iex.sg for updates on new stockists and more information.

Lua Ai Wei is Director, Creative & Communications, Ideas Empire Pte Ltd.



The Longevity Scarf by IEX Keith Png + Juffri.

ARTEFACTS AS SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

All contributing designers and artists were asked to choose one or any combination of selected artefacts from ACM to create their inspired designs. The brief was simple: the designs should reflect elements of the chosen artefacts, demonstrate retail appeal and be cost effective to produce.

Artefacts for Food Prints

Ding Dish, Yaozhou Bowl, Bugis *Keris*, Famille Noire Dish with the Three Friends of Winter

Artefacts for Cross Culture

Gem-set Chinese Porcelain for Turkish Market, Palembang Lacquerware, *Songket*

Artefacts for Wearable History

Hill Tribe Silver, Javanese Proto-Classic Jewellery, *Dokoh*, *Pending*



One of the sources of inspiration for the Cross Culture category: Gem-set Chinese Porcelain Bowl for the Turkish Market. Collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum.

PAULING.NING

CATEGORY:

Cross Culture

DESIGNED:

The Porselen Collection

INSPIRED BY:

Gem-set Chinese Porcelain for Turkish Market

WHAT INSPIRED YOUR DESIGNS?

I really wanted to explore beyond the artefact's physical attributes, so I went ahead to research the history of these interesting porcelain pieces that were made for the Turkish market. I was also intrigued by the gilt copper embedded on the porcelain bowl. It was the first time that I had come across porcelain with such strong character.

WHAT IS YOUR DESIGN PHILOSOPHY?

I'm naturally drawn to organic shapes and elements, gathering contradictions to create designs with a mix of opposites – raw yet refined, structured yet soft.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT WORKING ON THIS PROJECT?

I am thankful for the chance to work on this project. In fact, it has given me an early kick-start to my experimentation with prints! Hopefully this project will spark more interest in products inspired by museum artefacts as I feel it is the most appropriate souvenir for visitors to bring home!





Timeless dress from the IEX PAULINE.NING collection.



One of the sources of inspiration for the Wearable History category: Hill Tribe Silver. Collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum.

HATCH

CATEGORY:

Wearable History

DESIGNED:

Inspire-Ring and Soul Locket

INSPIRED BY:

Hill Tribe Silver and Dokoh

WHAT INSPIRED YOUR DESIGNS?

Making the trip down to ACM, seeing the actual artefacts and being totally absorbed by the ambience was our main source of inspiration. Together with my team's passion for acrylic jewellery, we thought it would be interesting to combine both historic and modern elements in one design.

WHAT IS YOUR DESIGN PHILOSOPHY?

Design is like telling a story. What matters most is how the story is being told.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU FACED ON THIS PROJECT?

Finding suitable and reliable suppliers to work in Singapore has always been a challenge. Through this project, we learnt that if you want something bad enough, you will eventually get it, though the process can be very trying.

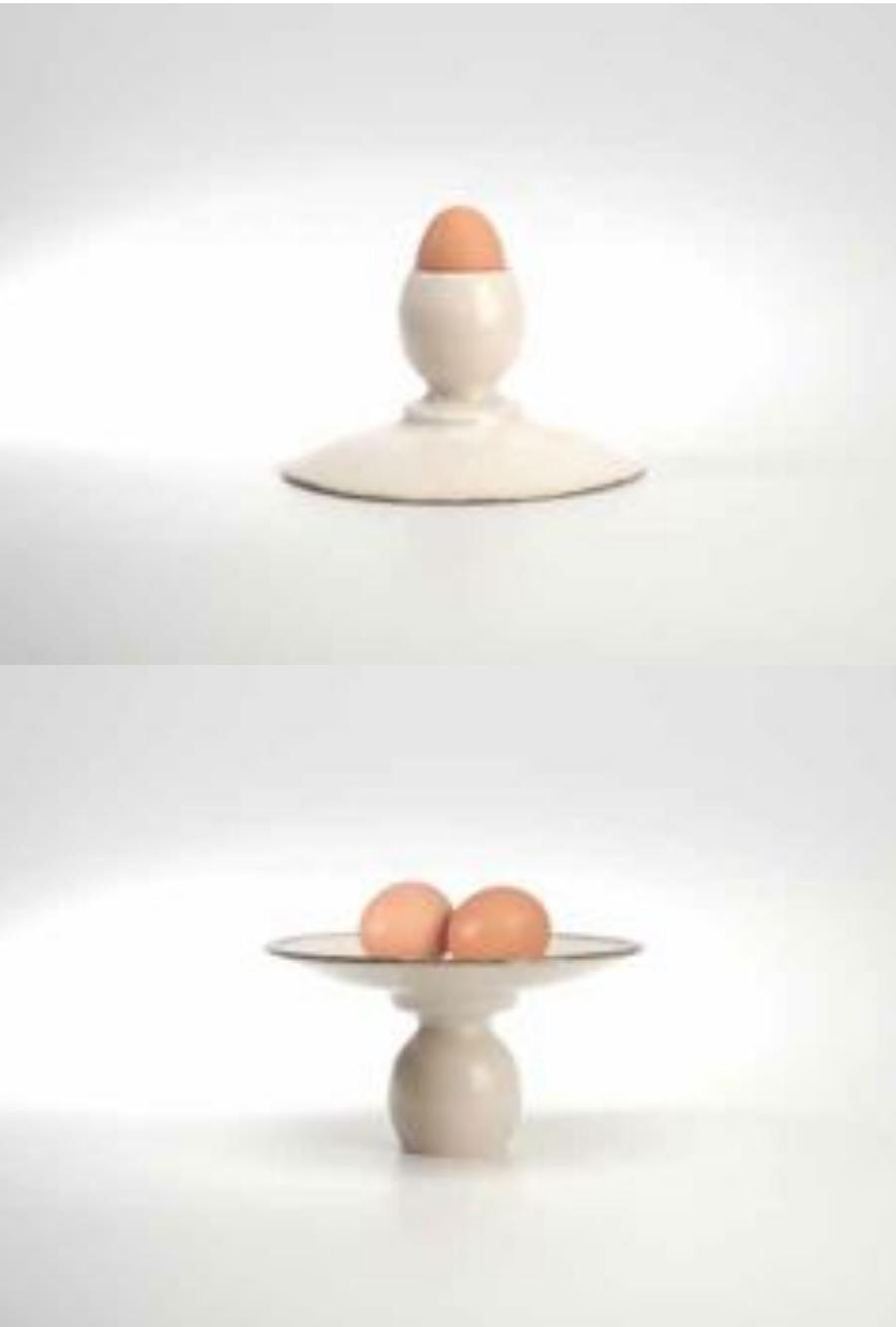


(Top & above): Designed to be a fun piece of jewellery, the Inspire-Ring by IEX Hatch is available in 10 juicy colour combinations.

(Left): The Soul Locket by IEX Hatch features a secret drawer which can be used to hold a special message for a loved one.

ABOUT THE HERITAGE INDUSTRY INCENTIVE PROGRAMME

Managed by the National Heritage Board, the Heritage Industry Incentive Programme or HI²P encourages the development of new and innovative heritage inspired products and services. It also seeks to seed new museum and heritage ventures, enhance museum galleries and programmes, and encourages the development of new audiences. Visit www.hi2p.sg for more information.



(Top & above): The East-West Egg Saucer by IEX B.A.L.L.S. cleverly fuses two distinct culinary cultures. (Right): One of the sources of inspiration for the Food Prints category: Ding Dish. Collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum.

B.A.L.L.S.

CATEGORY:

Food Prints

DESIGNED:

East-West Egg Saucer and Raw Plates

INSPIRED BY:

Ding Dish and Bugis Keris

WHAT INSPIRED YOUR DESIGNS?

We were drawn to the minimal embellishments of the Ding Dish, which exudes a sense of quiet beauty. We wanted an honest interplay of East and West with the egg saucer, and being able to create a utilitarian piece of art was a definite plus!

WHAT IS YOUR DESIGN PHILOSOPHY?

To provide joy through applied creativity! Good work is a result of good working relationships with clients and other partners. It's beautiful when design brings a smile to one's face.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU FACED ON THIS PROJECT?

We had some structural issues but that is to be expected with any ceramic work, especially when each piece is individually hand-made and fired.



ABOUT IEX

IEX is the collaborative workshop of Ideas Empire. Through IEX, Ideas Empire partners with artists, designers and manufacturers from various disciplines to create interesting and unexpected cross-collaborative concepts for custom retail. To know more, visit www.iex.sg.

ABOUT IDEAS EMPIRE

Ideas Empire is a young and growing creative collective based in Singapore. On a quest to venture out of the comfort zone to explore new creative concepts, the founding members bring together a wealth of expertise to transform brilliant ideas into unique, compelling products and projects. More notably in 2010, Ideas Empire

successfully revamped and re-launched KALKITOS®, an internationally popular game brought back from the 1980s. To know more, visit www.ideasempire.com.



MONUMENTAL WEDDINGS

WEDDING

PORTRAITS

AT NATIONAL MONUMENTS

TEXT BY **WONG HONG SUEN**

MONUMENTAL WEDDINGS presents a collection of about 150 archival and contemporary wedding photographs taken at 32 of Singapore's national monuments from the early 20th century to the present. These fascinating and unique images capture more than just couples on their wedding day and their love stories - they also feature historic buildings which have earned a permanent position in the landscape of Singapore as preserved monuments. Taken at these monuments, the photographs have become artefacts that reveal not only changes in wedding fashions, venues and photography, but also certain sociological and cultural trends and developments.

Broadly organised into five main segments, the exhibition highlights the characteristics of *Early Wedding Photography* in Singapore and the popularity of monuments as wedding venues; the origins and evolution of *Mass Weddings* on the island; the *Ties that Bind* monuments, communities and families together; and the distinct architectural features of the national monuments that serve as *Monumental Backdrops* for wedding photos. *Monumental Love Stories*, four short films shot on location at the monuments, round off the exhibition by giving visitors the opportunity to see heart-warming couples on-screen as they relate stories of their deep-felt commitment and love, while a fifth film provides an industry-insider's take on the history and development of wedding photography in Singapore.



(Above) Frank and Mavis Benjamin at their wedding solemnisation at the Maghain Aboth Synagogue, 1963. Frank Benjamin is the founder of FJ Benjamin Holdings Limited. *Courtesy of Frank and Mavis Benjamin.* (Facing page): Cheong Kian Sin and Lee Hui Xian at Thian Hock Keng, 2011. *Courtesy of Andrew Tay.*

» THE EARLY BEGINNINGS OF WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY IN SINGAPORE «

Wedding Photography – Studio and Wedding Day

Wedding photography in Singapore before the second half of the 20th century consisted mostly of formal, posed indoor studio shots of the bride and bridegroom.

Actual day wedding pictures taken at the venue of the solemnisation or wedding reception were less common. Posed or candid, this was an option primarily for the privileged or prominent members of society who had the means to commission a photographer for the event itself.

A wide variety of locations could serve as the venue for a couple's solemnisation ceremony or wedding reception, even in the early days. All couples featured in this exhibition, however, shared one thing in common: their weddings and/or wedding receptions were held at buildings, institutions and places that have now been recognised as historical treasures and gazetted as national monuments.

Monuments as Wedding Witnesses: Places of Worship

In early Singapore, religious places of worship took on an important role as sites of social interaction and fellowship for newcomers to the island.

Religious buildings also served another important function. They were venues of choice to mark one of the most significant moments of their members' lives: their weddings. Families, together with the immediate community, would gather in these buildings to witness wedding customs and rituals being carried out and to give their blessings to the newly wedded couples.



(Top & above): A wedding held at Former Tao Nan School (Peranakan Museum today), 1930s. Ang Chin Tiong was a student of the school while his bride Ong Cheng-Geok studied at Hua Chiao Girls School. Courtesy of Kelvin Ang.

Fashionable Affairs:

Hotels and Commercial Venues

From notices and announcements published in local newspapers, it could be gathered that the custom of holding one's wedding reception at hotels such as Raffles Hotel and Goodwood Park Hotel started in Singapore in the early 1900s, and was especially popular amongst the expatriate community. Notable personalities such as former Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew and his wife, Madam Kwa Geok Choo, held their wedding reception at the Raffles Hotel.

Another popular venue was the Former Victoria Theatre and Memorial Hall (today's Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall),



(Top): A wedding service conducted by D. D. Chelliah in St Andrew's Cathedral, 1950s. *Leaena Tambyah Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.* (Above) William Chong-Wah Chen and Betty Vivienne Wong at the Raffles Hotel, 7 February 1948. The reception was held where the entrance lobby of the hotel facing Beach Road is today. The grandfather's clock in the background can still be found today at the hotel lobby. *Courtesy of William Chong-Wah Chen and Betty Vivienne Wong.*

which played host to wedding receptions of various ethnicities from the late 1930s to the late 1940s.

Institutions of Learning (and Weddings!)

In the early 20th century, the Peranakan Chinese community in Singapore publicly engaged in a discussion on the need to reform expensive and heavily ritualised Chinese wedding ceremonies. The view that traditional Chinese weddings were old-fashioned, and ‘modern’ forward-thinking Chinese should cast them off in favour of simplified ‘reformed’ weddings, was taken up by certain prominent members of the Chinese society.

Towards the 1920s and 1930s, such ‘reformed’ weddings were increasingly held at institutions of education and learning such as schools and libraries.

The concept of ‘modern’ education had taken root in Singapore and Mandarin began to replace Chinese dialects as the main medium of instruction in the 1900s. By 1939, there were 30,000 students enrolled in Chinese-language schools on the island. A popular motto during the 1920s and 1930s was: “*Without Chinese education there can be no overseas Chinese*”. It was thus no coincidence that the same period saw numerous Chinese couples choosing to take photos in front of institutions of Chinese learning. It was their way of expressing their Chinese identity and aligning themselves with the values that modern schools such as Tao Nan exemplified. Tao Nan stood out as one of the first ‘new style’ Chinese primary schools. Opened in the early 1900s, it promoted Chinese culture and values, which differed from 19th-century privately funded schools that had no fixed curriculum.

» MASS WEDDINGS AT MONUMENTS «

The Move towards Mass Marriages

“Mass marriages are very wise in cases where the parties are not very wealthy... They are economical and convenient and it means young couples being able to begin their married life without making heavy expenditure. Mass marriages are customary in China but these are the first to be held in Singapore.”

– Kao Ling Pai (Singapore Chinese Consul-General), “Ten Couples Wed at Great World”, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (1884 - 1942), 1 February 1937.

The first mass wedding ever held in Singapore took place at the Great World Amusement Park in 1937. The phenomenon of mass weddings in Singapore had its intellectual and ideological roots in Chiang Kai-Shek’s New Life Movement, which was launched to halt the perceived material and spiritual ‘degeneration’ of the Chinese people. The reform movement emphasised (among other things) simplicity and frugality; traditional Chinese weddings, regarded as costly and extravagant, became a target of this reform.

Marrying En Masse: “Affordable Pomp and Ceremony” (1940s - 1960s)

The outbreak of World War Two and the ensuing Japanese Occupation put a temporary halt to mass weddings in Singapore. The practice restarted with much fanfare in the late 1940s as organisations such as the Mayfair Musical and Dramatic Association, the Chinese YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association) and Chinese clan associations including the Khék Community Guild and the Hokkien Huay Kuan took the lead in initiating and promoting mass weddings. Although such ceremonies were no longer associated with the New Life Movement, mass weddings nevertheless prevailed because the essence remained unchanged: it saved money.

Dramatically Different Demographics

Besides reasons of economy, mass weddings took off in the two decades after the war also because of the dramatic demographic changes on the island during that period. A distinctive feature of 19th-century Singapore was the huge disparity in its number of men and women, especially among the immigrant Chinese and Indian populations. By 1947, however, the imbalance in the Chinese community was much reduced with a ratio of 1,132 men to 1,000 women. With the numbers of Chinese men and women almost at par, opportunities to find a marital partner were much increased.

Between 1956 and 1960, the Hokkien Huay Kuan alone held a total of 17 mass weddings. The first involvement of the clan association in its members’ weddings began with Tan Kim Ching, who took the lead to officiate weddings of Chinese couples during his tenure as president of the Hokkien Huay Kuan in the mid-19th century.

In 1969, Radio and Television Singapura organised a mass wedding ceremony at the Singapore Conference Hall as a publicity event for distribution and broadcasting

overseas. It was the first of its kind and a precursor to the way mass weddings were marketed in the following two decades.

Marketing the Mass Wedding (1970s - 1980s)

“Imagine a wedding with more than a thousand guests, followed by a dream holiday abroad – for which you pay a mere \$3,000.” – “I do... and so do we”, *The Straits Times*, 3 April 1988.

The trend of mass weddings in Singapore continued in the 1970s and 1980s, although the driving force behind such events were by then tour operators and travel agencies such as Singapore Cultural and Entertainment Tours, Oxley Tours and Sino-America Tours. These operators often co-opted other relevant parties including the Social Development Section (SDS) and Singapore Airlines.

Mass weddings were packaged with honeymoon trips to attract a new set of consumers. Held at the Neptune Theatre Restaurant, Shangri-La Hotel and even the Tanjong Pagar Railway Station, these mass weddings were marketed as romantic and convenient alternatives, with the added advantage of a honeymoon abroad at affordable prices.

Mass Weddings Revived (2000s)

By the 1990s, mass weddings had largely disappeared from Singapore as a result of a vastly different socio-economic environment. Personalised, customised and individualistic weddings became the norm. Nevertheless, in recent years, mass weddings have seen a surprising revival in Singapore. Mostly held on unusual or ‘auspicious’ dates, these mass weddings are now unique rarities organised for a variety of reasons. For example, the 2008 mass wedding organised by the Hokkien Huay Kuan was an effort to highlight the history and involvement of the clan association in the practice of mass weddings in Singapore. In the same year, the Sultan Mosque Malay mass wedding was held to foster closer links between families and the community. In addition, the Botanic Gardens held a mass wedding for 150 couples on the ‘special’ date of 20 September 2009 (or 20.09.2009) to celebrate its 150th anniversary, while the People’s Association Family Life Section, in collaboration with *Lianhe Zaobao* and Sentosa Leisure Group, organised a mass wedding on 10 October 2010 (or 10.10.2010) to encourage more Singaporean couples to wed.





(Top): The first televised mass wedding in Singapore held at the Former Singapore Conference Hall and Trade Union House (Singapore Conference Hall today), 1969. *Courtesy of The Straits Times, Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reprinted with permission.*

(Bottom): "Mass wedding couples have a 'rail' good time" (at Tanjong Pagar Railway Station) published in *The Straits Times* on 18 September 1989, p. 17. The Tanjong Pagar Railway Station was gazetted a National Monument in April 2011. *Courtesy of The Straits Times, Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reprinted with permission.*



(Facing page): Couple arriving at the Hokkien Huay Kuan at Telok Ayer Street to participate in a mass wedding organised by the clan association, 1956. In the background is Thian Hock Keng. *Courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore.*



Chandra Sekar Ramanujan and Gail Hayward at Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple, 23 November 2011. Courtesy of Teo Sze Lee.

» THE TIES THAT BIND «

Religious monuments in Singapore have been featured as backdrops in wedding photographs ever since wedding photography emerged from indoor studios to the outdoors. Many of these religious monuments were established in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when the diverse ethnic backgrounds of migrants resulted in the construction of churches, temples, mosques, synagogues and other religious buildings. Besides serving as places of worship, these buildings also supported networks and welfare organisations that sheltered migrants, provided financial aid and helped to improve the lives of their communities. Naturally, these prayer halls and sanctuaries have over the years witnessed countless wedding solemnisations and played host to numerous wedding receptions, thus securing the religious monuments' place in their worshippers' treasured wedding albums.

A Part of the Family – Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple

For Chandra, the Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple has a towering presence in his fam-

ily history and childhood.

His grandfather, P. Govindasamy Pillay, who established the PGP stores which sold sundries, spices and textiles, was the founder-member of the Indian Chamber of Commerce. Pillay contributed generously to the temple, especially to the building of the five-tiered *gopuram* or entrance tower completed in 1979. Realising that the Hindu community needed a communal space for wedding ceremonies and celebrations, Pillay also funded the building of the wedding hall, where Chandra's family and members of the Indian community have since held their weddings.

As a child, the temple served as a playground to Chandra and his siblings. He fondly remembers his mother taking them around the temple, sharing its stories and its various sculptures, paintings and decorative features.

Chandra now resides in the United Kingdom with his wife, Gail. When the couple decided to get married, they chose to return to Singapore to hold a traditional Hindu wedding ceremony at the Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple. The temple remains a focal point for Chandra's family as they continue to actively worship and partici-

pate in the various festivals and activities held at the temple.

"Now that I'm living in the UK, it's really important to reconnect with the community in general when I come for my very short visits and the temple facilitates that. We come here in the evening and we're pretty sure that some of my relatives, friends are going to be here after work for prayers as well." - Chandra.

Since it was first built in 1855 as a simple brick building with a main hall, the Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple has been an important religious centre for the Indian community in Serangoon – an area with a large concentration of Indian-run brick kilns and cattle farms in the 19th century that attracted numerous Indian migrant workers.

Gazetted as a national monument in 1978, the temple remains a focal point for the celebration of key Hindu festivals such as Brahmotsavan, Deepavali and Thaipusam.

Four Weddings and a Monument – Maghain Aboth Synagogue

Justin and Joelle were married on 20 March 2011 at the Maghain Aboth Syna-



(Left): Mohammad Shah Bin Sulaiman and Nur Syahidah Bte Mohd Zin at the Sultan Mosque, 9 July 2011. Courtesy of Khairuzamani Bin Mohamed Noor. (Right): The bride seen as a babe in arms with her family in front of the Sultan Mosque, 1986. Courtesy of Nur Syahidah Bte Mohd Zin and family.

gogue. The synagogue has been an important witness to the weddings of four generations in Joelle's family. Her great-grandmother, grandmother and mother all exchanged their vows under the cloth canopy in the synagogue. This canopy or covering, known as the *chuppah*, is a symbol of the home the couple will build together. Many couples from the tight-knit Jewish community were also married under it. Joelle's family continues to worship at this synagogue and Joelle's father, Victor Sassoon, is President of the Jewish Welfare Board. Their family actively contributes to this monument and the Jewish community.

"The Maghain Aboth Synagogue is a place for communal activities and prayer for our Jewish community. It is the longest standing structure in our community, and the first place that brings the community together on a regular basis. The synagogue gives our community a sense of belonging and permanence and we hope that this will continue to be clearly communicated for future generations." - Joelle.

The Maghain Aboth Synagogue, the oldest synagogue in Southeast Asia, was established in 1878 to serve a growing Jewish population in Singapore. Today, the syn-

agogue continues to play an important role in the communal life of the local Jewish community, who gather at the synagogue to celebrate weddings and participate in religious festivals such as Yom Kippur and Simchat Torah.

A Call to Prayer and Love - Sultan Mosque

Shah and Syahidah's paths were destined to cross. They were both regular worshippers at the Sultan Mosque when they met at the Raffles Hotel where they worked.

Shah attended Friday prayers at the mosque where his mother was also a regular worshipper.

Syahidah went for prayers at the mosque, which has been an integral part of her life since she was a child. Her grandmother, who came to Singapore from Indonesia, settled in Kampong Glam where she first began attending the mosque. It was to the mosque that her grandmother fled when the Maria Hertogh riots erupted. Two generations on, Syahidah's family continues to worship at the mosque.

For Shah and Syahidah, holding their wedding at Sultan Mosque was meaningful not only for themselves but also their

families. Today, the couple continues to frequent the mosque which remains the centre of their spiritual life, and they hope to bring their newborn daughter there as well.

Sultan Mosque took its name from Sultan Hussein (appointed by Sir Stamford Raffles as the Sultan of Singapore), who requested that a mosque be built near his Istana in Kampong Glam. The original mosque was a single-storey brick building with a double-tiered roof completed in 1826. The current mosque, designed by Swan and MacLaren, was completed in 1928 with its distinctive golden domes. Sultan Mosque continues to be an important centre of religious, cultural and social activities for Muslims.

Wong Hong Suen is Assistant Director, Research and Education, Preservation of Monuments Board. Research and Education Team: Sharon Low and Joyce Yip.

» MONUMENTAL BACKDROPS «

Rising sentiments have surged in recent years towards Singapore's past. A wave of nostalgia has swept the nation, perhaps triggered by the pace of urban renewal. Singapore's zest for modernisation and development led to a period of intense urban renewal, starting from the 1960s. As more and more buildings fell to the wrecking ball, familiar landscapes began to vanish, igniting public discussions on the emotional ties and social memories that places and buildings evoke as markers of identity and history; and consequently, the need for preservation and conservation.

With heritage at the forefront of public consciousness, 'vintage' has become fashionable and trendy. As buildings of great historical, architectural, social and cultural significance, Singapore's national monuments have seen a surge in popularity among couples caught up in this wave of nostalgia and in search of something unique and special for their wedding albums. Mostly designed and constructed in the 19th and early 20th centuries, these monuments often feature beautiful architectural elements such as sweeping staircases, intricate carvings and sculptures, towering classic columns, steeples and minarets, and majestic domes. Their distinctive façades and use of geometric shapes and sharp clean lines serve as beautiful and unique backdrops against which wedding couples are framed, injecting a sense of elegance and grandeur into their photos. Furthermore, as historic buildings that have withstood the test of time, these monuments convey a feeling of timelessness, lending gravitas to the wedding pictures and highlighting what couples aspire for their marriages.

These wedding photographs showcase archetypal wedding pictures taken at popular national monuments with interesting stories of the monuments as well as the couples' journey into marriage. They were contributed by couples who shared their stories and by photographers who shared their work.



Jordan Ang and Candice Ng at St Joseph's Church, 2009. Courtesy of Jordan Ang and Candice Ng.

MUSEINGS.



Gary Soon and Ashley Lee at the windows of the main building of Raffles Hotel facing Beach Road, 2011. Courtesy of Ng Hui Kwang.

» Raffles Hotel

DID YOU KNOW?

The main building of the Raffles Hotel was designed by Regent Alfred John Bidwell, a graduate of London's Architectural Association and a member of architectural firm, Swan and MacLaren. It was opened with great fanfare on 18 November 1899 and introduced innovations such as electrical lights and fans. Its magnificent façade of louvre, fanlight-arched windows facing the seafront greeted visitors en route to other destinations as well as globetrotters on around-the-world cruises made popular by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.

» St Joseph's Church

Before they were an item, Jordan invited Candice to attend mass with him in St Joseph's Church. Candice immediately felt a special connection to the church and was eventually baptised into the Catholic faith. They are one of the few rare couples who married at the church as it ceased to be a parish with an active congregation in 1999. St Joseph's Church continues to be a focal point in the couple's lives as they and their families still faithfully serve and worship there.

DID YOU KNOW?

St Joseph's Church stands out among the churches with its unique octagonal belfry tower. Its distinctive blue colour is associated with the city of Fatima, Portugal, where the Blessed Virgin Mary is believed to have appeared to three shepherd children in 1917.



Dominic Lane and Mashita Mohamed Al-Johar at Hajjah Fatimah Mosque, 2010. *Courtesy of Khairuzamani Bin Mohamed Noor.*

» Hajjah Fatimah Mosque

DID YOU KNOW?

The Hajjah Fatimah Mosque has a beautiful onion-shaped dome with 12 lancet-shaped windows and decorative tiles that circle its interior. The classical onion-shaped dome represents a vertical relationship with heaven, and the skylights symbolise the source of light from above.

» Raffles College

Charlie and Gina met during their first year in the Singapore Management University, previously located at the Former Raffles College (today's National University of Singapore campus at Bukit Timah). They attended classes at the Federal Building and played Frisbee in the Quadrangle. A year after they graduated, Charlie proposed to Gina at the Former Raffles College, and the couple decided to take their wedding pictures there to "immortalise those memories of (their) old campus".

DID YOU KNOW?

The Former Raffles College was established in 1928 as a college for higher education in the arts and sciences and to commemorate the centenary of the founding of Singapore by Sir Stamford Raffles. It has an illustrious group of alumni that includes Dr Toh Chin Chye (Chairman of the People's Action Party from 1954 to 1981, Deputy Prime Minister and Cabinet Minister from 1959 to 1981), Dr Goh Keng Swee (former Deputy Prime Minister) and former Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew.

» City Hall

DID YOU KNOW?

A distinguishing feature of City Hall is the row of 18 Corinthian columns that line the façade of the building. Some of Singapore's most pivotal historical moments had been staged on the spacious front steps of City Hall and within its chambers. It was the location where Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten accepted the Japanese surrender from General Itagaki in 1945, where Singapore was conferred its city status in 1951 and where the new government of Singapore was sworn in after the island became self-governing in 1959. A countdown clock was installed at City Hall when Singapore became the first host nation for the inaugural Youth Olympic Games.



(Left): Wedding couple photographed by a group of tourists at the entrance steps of City Hall, c.1990. *Courtesy of Matthew Tan.* (Below): Charlie Yast and Gina Tjeng at the Upper Quadrangle of the Former Raffles College (today's National University of Singapore campus at Bukit Timah), 2010. *Courtesy of Charlie Yast and Gina Tjeng.*





(Top): Casey Wai Jia Pink and Rowena Sootoo Yue Mei at the Former St Joseph's Institution (Singapore Art Museum today), 2011. *Courtesy of Joe Teng.*
 (Above): Chow Chiu Wai and Susan Soh at the Former Chinese High School Clock Tower Building (Hwa Chong Institution Clock Tower), 2012. *Courtesy of Chow Chiu Wai and Susan Soh.*

» **Former Chinese High School Clock Tower Building (Hwa Chong Institution Clock Tower today)**

Chiu Wai and Susan, both teachers at Hwa Chong Institution, chose to take their pre-wedding shots at the school where they first met and where their love blossomed.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Former Chinese High School Clock Tower Building (today's Hwa Chong Institution Clock Tower) played an important role in the history of Singapore. It was used by Allied defenders as their headquarters during the Battle of Singapore and, subsequently, by the Imperial Japanese Army for the purpose of surveillance during the Japanese Occupation.

» **St Joseph's Institution**

Rowena remembers visiting the Former St Joseph's Institution (today's Singapore Art Museum) on a school trip and has since admired the building's architecture. As her husband is Malaysian, getting married in a national monument was her special way of sharing her Singapore nationality and identity with him.



» *St George's Church*

DID YOU KNOW?

The north wall of St George's Church is dominated by a simple but starkly beautiful pattern of arched windows, with the largest central window highlighted by four circular windows on top with brick detailing. The church is named after St George, the patron saint of England. Legend has it that there was a dragon plaguing the city of Silene in Libya, demanding the sacrifice of young women. A knight by the name of St George fought and killed the dragon, an act he attributed to the power of the Christian God. In doing so, St George became the driving force behind the conversion of people to Christianity.

» *National Museum of Singapore*

DID YOU KNOW?

The National Museum of Singapore's magnificent dome is covered with distinctive zinc fish-scale tiles and decorative glass windows with floral and grid patterns, allowing sunlight to filter through.

» *Tanjong Pagar Railway Station*

Luanne and Kevin met and bonded through a mutual love of motorcycle riding. The Tanjong Pagar Railway Station was a favourite rest stop between their frequent rides. As Luanne put it, *"Parking was free, dining was alfresco, and we could admire each others' steeds in between bites. What better way to fall in love?"*

DID YOU KNOW?

The Tanjong Pagar Railway Station and its tracks stood on land that belonged to Malaysia until recently. The Singapore Railway Transfer Ordinance of 1918, enacted when Singapore and Malaysia were still British colonies, had mandated that the Tanjong Pagar Railway Station (as well as the Bukit Timah Railway Station) be transferred to the Federated Malay States Government. The station was gazetted a national monument in April 2011.



(Top): The bride Kristy Fong on the arm of her father who walked her down the aisle of St George's Church.

The wedding of Mikaël Bonny and Kristy Fong, 3 September 2011. *Courtesy of Mindy Tan.*

(Left): Roy Thian and Amy Ng at the National Museum of Singapore, 2011. *Courtesy of Raymond Phang.*

(Below): Kevin Wong and Luanne Tay in front of the 'Quick Baggage' store of the Tanjong Pagar Railway Station, 2010. *Courtesy of Bryan Foong.*





THE JOURNEY TO SEMAKAU LANDFILL from the pier off Pasir Panjang takes about 40 minutes in a diesel launch with an oil-stained deck and (often) shirtless boatman. For most visitors, the trip begins long before daybreak, as the tide waits for no man and the tug of the moon is usually strongest hours before dawn. In the dark, the vessel swings past the refineries of Pulau Bukom as well as Pulau Jong, a tiny island named after a Chinese junk, before discharging its passengers at one end of a long wharf. At the other end of what was once an islet called Pulau Sakeng is a waste transfer station, a cavernous hall that emanates an air of industrial purpose as huge excavators unload ash from barges into off-road dump trucks.

Semakau Landfill is a place of contradictions, a land of stark yet striking contrasts. Dubbed a 'Garbage of Eden', a 'Dump Wonderland' and an 'Island paradise built on a garbage dump' by visiting journalists on a mission to discover Singapore's unique solution for solid waste disposal, the island is a landfill that defies conventional expectations by doubling as a habitat for native biodiversity. Today, the landfill is a patchwork of cells spanning 350 hectares, designed to hold the city's refuse until the year 2045 and hopefully beyond. But it is also home to shorebirds, sea stars, sea anemones and rare shellfish that thrive in mangroves, seagrass beds

and a reef flat right next to a massive municipal facility. The air is fresh and the surrounding waters harbour dolphins, turtles and countless fish, for the cells contain mostly ash, the output of incineration plants that reduce the nation's trash into inert fragments, and an impermeable membrane prevents the waste from contaminating the sea.

When filled to the brim and covered by a layer of earth, each landfill cell transforms from a scene of desolation into a growing landscape of grasses, shrubs and trees where flocks of birds feed and roost. Birdwatchers make regular pilgrimages here to catch glimpses of endangered species such as the Malaysian plover and great-billed heron, while the wide open sky above the landfill draws budding astronomers who gather to observe distant stars and galaxies from atop a seven-kilometre perimeter rock bund. This embankment, which encircles the cells and links Pulau Sakeng with Pulau Semakau proper, unites the fate of two small islands with a recorded history nearly as long as that of modern Singapore.

BUILT FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The bulk of visitors to Semakau Landfill have their sights set on the natural wonders of its western shoreline, where low spring tides unveil a mudflat teeming with fiddler crabs, sand stars and sea cucumbers.

Led by guides from the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research or the Nature Society of Singapore, every intertidal tour of Pulau Semakau is a walk on the wild side, a wade through waters full of sponges, corals and colourful marine creatures at home in this bustling corner of the Singapore Strait. Overhead, reef egrets, brahminy kites and sea eagles battle for hunting rights over tidal pools where shrimp and small fish are trapped.

Today, Pulau Semakau is best known as a haven for coastal wildlife and an outdoor classroom where students, families and nature lovers can see, touch and take back vivid memories of the flora and fauna that live alongside an active landfill. Staff from the National Environment Agency (NEA), which runs the facility, also implore visitors to reduce, re-use and recycle their waste as much as they can, so that the lifespan of the place can be extended for as long as possible. There is a ring of urgency to their pleas, for Semakau Landfill has served as Singapore's only remaining solid waste disposal site for the past 12 years, following the closure of the Lorong Halus dumping ground in 1999. Built at a cost of \$610 million between 1995 and 1999, Semakau Landfill was a project of national exigency, as all existing dumping grounds were expected to be depleted by the turn of the 21st century and the mainland had run out of suitable sites for storing waste. Sheer

(Facing page): Colonies of magnificent sea anemones (*Heteractis magnifica*) and colourful corals thrive on a reef flat just beyond the bund of Semakau Landfill.

(Below): A juvenile harlequin sweetlips (*Plectorhincus chaetodonoides*) finds refuge in Pulau Semakau's reefs. When fully grown, the fish will venture out to hunt in open waters.

HABITAT AND HUMANITY

A HISTORY OF SEMAKAU LANDFILL



necessity, rather than a fad for novelty, thus drove planners from the then Ministry of the Environment to look offshore and envision the possibility of reclaiming the shallow seabed between two islands south of Pasir Panjang to form a landfill that would last for decades to come.

The making of Semakau Landfill also marked a new chapter in the Singapore story, in the way economic growth and social needs were joined by environmental sustainability as a measure of success in the long run. Attaching the rock bund to Pulau Semakau entailed the inevitable loss of a chunk of the island's original mangrove forests, while the building of the wharf and

transfer station would result in considerable sedimentation. In response, two scientists, Professors Leo Tan and Lee Sing Kong, then respectively Director and Head of Biology at the National Institute of Education, drew up a plan to mitigate the environmental impact of the landfill on what was already recognised as a habitat of high biodiversity value. Their proposal, to create two new plots of mangroves to replace the 13.6 hectares lost to the construction, was accepted by the ministry, along with the recommendation of another marine biologist, Professor Chou Loke Ming from the National University of Singapore, to use floating silt screens to prevent sedi-

ment from choking nearby coral reefs. Today, thousands of healthy young trees grow near the base of the bund, providing habitats for crabs, mudskippers and otters, and serving as bio-indicators of marine pollution, while the waters around Pulau Semakau still support some of Singapore's richest coral reefs, a slice of which can be viewed during public intertidal walks.

LIFE ON MANGROVE ISLAND

The making of Semakau Landfill was, however, a swan song to the communities who had lived and died on Pulau Sakeng and Pulau Semakau for over 150 years. Observant visitors to the latter's western shore-



(Top): Prominent stilt roots or pencil roots allow mangrove trees to breathe and survive on the mudflat of Pulau Semakau. (Above): Thousands of mangrove saplings were planted by Semakau Landfill to replace trees lost during its construction.



line will note a sprinkling of eroded piles along parts of the beach as well as the foundations of long-vanished buildings amid the understorey of an overgrown forest. These are the few surviving traces of a village where as many as 1,600 people lived in dozens of timber houses lining the shore, set on tall beams to stay dry during the highest tides.

For reasons unknown, Pulau Semakau was marked as Pulau Barmalang in early maps, such as one drafted by Captain James Franklin of the East India Company in the early 1820s and currently on display in the Singapore History Gallery at the National Museum of Singapore. The island

could have been occupied or at least visited much earlier, as archaeologists found 18th century Qing porcelain pieces and older fragments while exploring the place in 1991. By 1844, however, the island was already referred to as Pulo Simakow or Mangrove Island, as documented by a *Singapore Free Press* report on a pirate attack that resulted in the death of an unfortunate villager. The islanders then, about a dozen strong, consisted of Chinese smallholders who cultivated vegetables and raised poultry. They also burned charcoal, probably made from the wood of *bakau* or *Rhizophora* mangrove trees that grow abundantly around the island, and which were probably the source

of the name 'Semakau'.

The original island was flame-shaped, just over a kilometre wide and spanned 2.1 kilometres from its northern tip, known as Tanjong Romos, to its southernmost point, Tanjong Penyelai. To the east was a dense mangrove swamp, while a sandy beach and mudflat faced the western front. In between was scrubland which islanders cleared to plant coconuts, fruit trees and vegetables.

More settlers, principally Chinese of Teochew origin, arrived in the early 20th century. By 1955, Pulau Semakau was home to about 780 villagers, both Chinese and Malay, who farmed the land and raised goats and poultry. Those who fished used small manoeuvrable craft called *kolek* as well as traditional fish traps and nets to harvest valuable species such as bream, mullets, groupers, snappers, stingrays and scads. Some of the catch was consumed by the fishermen's families, but the bulk was sold to middlemen from mainland markets.

Singapore's attainment of self-rule in 1959 and full independence in 1965 was a mixed blessing for the community, for the threat of foreign pirates, and later, the turbulent years of *Konfrontasi* with Indonesia between 1963 and 1966, prevented them from venturing into good fishing grounds. As a result, some islanders sought new livelihoods in Pulau Bukom, Jurong and Kallang or moved to the mainland. But in the late 1960s, Pulau Semakau received a population boost when villagers from Pulau Bukom were resettled to make way for new petrochemical facilities.

The residents of Kampong Tengah, as the village on Pulau Semakau was called, lived in about 160 houses. Life in Kampong Tengah, though adequate for its time, was primitive by today's standards. Village wells were unreliable, and fresh water had to be ferried over from Pulau Bukom. Electricity was available only in the evenings when a generator was switched on. As there were no sewers, the villagers used communal latrines positioned over the water so that the sea would wash away their waste. Healthcare was a weekly affair provided by a nurse in a boat from Pulau Brani known as the Floating Dispensary.

Serving the village was a mosque, a community centre, a football field, a police post as well as Muslim and Chinese burial grounds. A primary school opened in 1951 with seven teachers, one of whom was former Senior Minister of State for the Environment, Mr Sidek Saniff. Basic education notwithstanding, the children went about barefooted, seldom bathed or brushed their teeth, and boasted dirty fingernails.

An aerial view of Semakau Landfill, showing the heavily wooded Pulau Semakau on the left and the perimeter bund on the right. Photo courtesy of the National Environment Agency.



The history of Kampong Tengah drew to a close in 1977, when the villagers were relocated to the mainland, leaving Pulau Semakau to the whims of nature for some 20 years.

LORE AND LEGEND ON PULAU SAKENG

Similar scenes of *kampung* life existed on Pulau Sakeng, an islet barely half-a-kilometre long located about 1.6 kilometres east of Pulau Semakau. Though marginally shorter than its neighbour's, the history of this tiny rock is somewhat more intriguing. The earliest record of the place came from a surgeon, Dr Robert Little (whose younger brother founded John Little & Co.), who surveyed the southern islands in 1848 and found on Pulo Siking [sic] about 30 inhabitants occupying seven well-built houses on the slope of a hill.

Dr Little also noted a narrow belt of mangroves around the island as well as the presence of coconuts and fruit trees. This observation was echoed by the memories of Haji Ghani bin Dualip, a former assistant headman who recalled that the island was once known as Pulau Kelapa or 'Coconut Island'. The villagers, thought to have originated from Riau or descended from the *Orang Selat* (People of the Straits) who

MUSEINGS.

once dwelt by Singapore's shores, claimed links with the Johor-Riau sultanate, which once ruled much of the archipelago; older residents would cite a curse that befell the island after the 1699 assassination of Sultan Mahmud II, which barred the islanders from setting foot in Johor for seven generations.

According to local lore, a lady of Riau blood named Keng arrived at the island more than 200 years ago. A woman of doughty temperament, Keng became chieftain after healing the sick and saving the villagers from pirates. The island later bore her name and until it was reclaimed for the landfill, a shrine or *keramat* on the hilltop of Pulau Sakeng was said to have been her tomb. Like the surviving *keramat* on Kusu Island, Keng's shrine was reputed to be a source of blessings for pilgrims who paid their respect at the site. Other sources claimed that Keng and her descendants were in fact pirates, which was plausible as the islanders enjoyed a reputation for maritime robbery even in the late 1800s, when men from Pulau Sakeng would raid passing vessels laden with prized goods such as cigarettes.

Only a few families lived on Pulau Sakeng before the Second World War. The population grew during the war as some

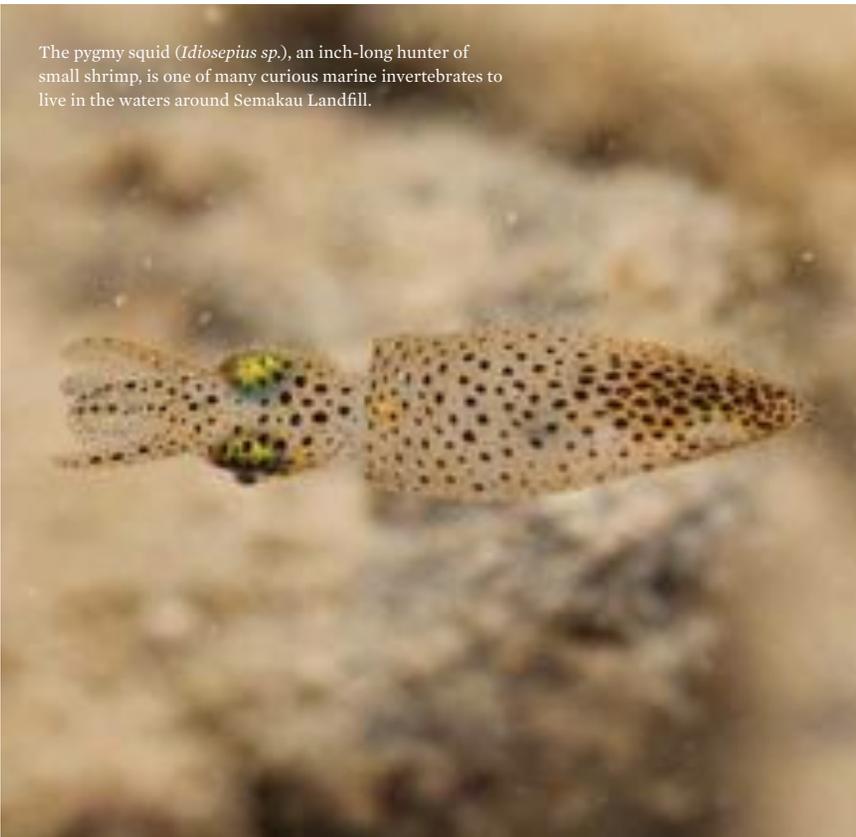
people left the mainland to stay with their relatives on the island. In the 1950s and 1960s, villagers from Pulau Sebarok and Pulau Bukom also arrived after their islands were developed. By the early 1980s, Pulau Sakeng had a population of about 520, some of whom worked on the mainland or at Pulau Bukom. Others gathered seashells, fished or raised chicken and geese. A mosque, primary school, religious school, clinic, sundry shop and police post served the close-knit community, who lived in about 80 houses on stilts by the water's edge. Until the 1970s, one annual highlight for the islanders was a National Day regatta, during which villagers would compete with their peers from Pulau Semakau, Pulau Sudong and Pulau Seraya in boat races and swimming contests.

On weekends, mainlanders would visit the island to sightsee and photograph the last traditional village in the southern islands of Singapore. But few spent as much time there as Normala Manap, a researcher who visited Pulau Sakeng in the early 1980s to document its ethnography. Asked what she remembers most fondly about the island, she had this to say:

"Everything! To name a few, I miss the connectedness on the island, both of the region and in the island. The people had relatives from the Riau islands who came to visit the island by boat. Everyone on the island knew one another. There was great unity in the community and decisions were made together. When there was a celebration, all were invited. Their emphasis was on what's important in life: communication and building relationships, namely the ties that bind. This is also represented in the way their houses were designed – the verandahs always looked towards the village square or thoroughfare; this is intended so one can always greet passers-by.

They also had a very different worldview in relation to nature. They believed that all things in nature have spirits. The trees, water and even rocks have spirits and as a result they treat nature with great reverence. Their knowledge of their environment, the tides, the plants, was intimate; they could tell the weather from the ripples in the sea and the changing hues of the skies. They even named themselves after trees, flowers and sea creatures. Some of their names were also references to their everyday preoccupations – 'Jala' is a common name, which is also the word for 'net', while the name 'Malam' refers to 'night' in Malay. It's a pity that people of this generation no longer get to experience these cultures and ways of life that are integral parts of our history and who we are today."

The pygmy squid (*Idiosepius* sp.), an inch-long hunter of small shrimp, is one of many curious marine invertebrates to live in the waters around Semakau Landfill.





(Top): Sitting on stilts just out of reach of the highest tides, this house at Pulau Sakeng once doubled as a provision store and dwelling for two brothers, Mr Teo Yen Eng (b. 1924) and Mr Teo Yan Teck (b. 1932), who now reside on the mainland. Photo courtesy of Mr Teo Yen Eng.

(Above): Living in a tube embedded in the sand, a peacock anemone extends its tentacles to feed when the tide rises to cover the reef flat.

(Left): The stars of many a visit to Semakau Landfill are these colourful knobbly sea stars (*Protoreaster nodosus*), a locally endangered species that still survives in good numbers on the reef flats by the landfill.

Manap also noted the presence of a white kaolin outcrop as well as a line of reddish coral-stone blocks – unusual structures that hinted at long-forgotten human activity and whose origin was unknown to the final generation of islanders. These and other past mysteries, however, no longer trouble the present, for no traces of the original island survive and the former villagers are now scattered across the mainland, far in mind and essence from their childhood home.

HABITATS IN HARMONY

The story of Pulau Sakeng came to an end in 1994 when the remaining 130 or so residents bid farewell to their ancestral isle before contractors and cranes arrived to turn the place into a miracle of modern engineering and a model for urban environmental sustainability. Semakau Landfill began operations on 1 April 1999. Six years later, following a visit by then Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, the landfill assumed a second life as a public showcase for Singapore's ability to marry development with the preservation of natural habitats.

Since then, more than 60,000 people from Singapore and abroad have set foot on a facility where one can find respite from the noise of the city and revel in a vision of how much of Singapore's coastline was like before it was reclaimed for docks, shipyards and artificial waterfronts. Here, on the reef flat of Pulau Semakau, man has left little evidence of his presence, save the footprints of fellow tidechasers and the glittering towers of Pulau Bukom on the northern horizon. Nature guides in khaki and rubber booties shepherd their charges down a well-trodden path through the seagrass and but soon struggle to maintain the cohesion of the groups as the eyes of each and every visitor are drawn to myriad creatures creeping, sliding, climbing and swimming in shallow pools and on rocky outcrops. Seahorses, giant clams, hairy crabs, sea slugs, octopuses, flatworms and anemonefish take turns to hog the limelight but there is never enough time to learn all their secrets, for the tide soon returns to swamp the reef, forcing everyone to turn back and head for the bund.

Semakau Landfill, as every visitor learns, is a place of contradictions. It is a landfill that is clean and green, maintained with care and devotion to ensure the integrity of the cells as well as the health of

its ecosystems. It is a refuge for many rare and endangered species that thrive in the shadow of a colossal seawall. Above all, it is a glimpse into a future in which habitats can exist in harmony with the needs of humanity, as well as a unique chance to witness Singapore's oft-overlooked biological wealth and learn how a country can grow without losing sight of its natural history.

Marcus Ng is the author of Habitats in Harmony: The Story of Semakau Landfill, a book chronicling the history, development and biodiversity of Semakau Landfill, published by the National Environment Agency (1st edition, 2009, 2nd, revised edition, 2012)

(Right): The landfill cells, when filled up and covered by a layer of earth, are soon overgrown by lalang and casuarina trees, becoming lush habitats for butterflies and birds.

(Below): The sea returns to cover the reef flats after a few hours of low tide that allow visitors to explore these intertidal habitats. Semakau Landfill's mangroves and the refineries of Pulau Bukom can be seen in the background.





SEMAKAU LANDFILL: WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO GO

Since 2005, Semakau Landfill has been open to the public as a place for recreational activities and nature walks. Visitors also get a rare chance to see how Singapore's solid waste is handled and safely disposed of in landfill cells that, over time, turn into grasslands that support wildflowers and songbirds.

The landfill is about eight kilometres south of Pasir Panjang and accessible only by boats from Pasir Panjang Ferry Terminal, West Coast Pier or Marina South. Private visits are not possible, however; the facility only accepts pre-arranged tours organised by NEA or its partner groups. These include:

- The Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research, whose guides conduct intertidal walks of Pulau Semakau's natural shores. For more information, visit http://rmbr.nus.edu.sg/workshop/nw_semakau.html
- The Nature Society (Singapore), whose members lead bird-watching trips to Semakau Landfill. For more information, visit <http://www.nss.org.sg>
- The Astronomical Society of Singapore (TASOS), which organises stargazing expeditions from the bund. For more information, visit http://tasos.org.sg/semakau_island_stargazing/semakau_stargazing.html
- The Sports Fishing Association of Singapore (SFAS), which holds regular fishing trips at the landfill. For more information, visit http://www.sfas.net/activities/semakau/semakaufishing_main.html
- Nature walks for school and corporate groups are also organised by licensed guides at www.subaraj.com and www.ulusingapore.com
- For more information about visiting Semakau Landfill, contact the National Environment Agency at contact_nea@nea.gov.sg

A PRACTICAL APPROACH

MANAGING AND PRESERVING
DIGITAL VIDEO/MEDIA AND
INSTALLATION ART WITH DAMS



Lee Wen, *Journey of Yellow Man No. 6: History & Self*, 1995.

Apart from relics (as shown in the pictures above), video, visual or text documents might be the only remains of ephemeral performance artworks such as Lee Wen's *Journey of Yellow Man No. 6: History & Self*. Part of preserving such performances would be to have a system to manage and preserve the videos, images and other documents and records generated.

TEXT BY **LOW JYUE TYAN**

Preserving contemporary art such as video and installation artworks is *different* from preserving conventional works of art such as a painting... it involves more than just preserving the physical materials of the artworks.



Preserving media collection is unlike preserving other artefacts and antiquities. It involves more than just storing the objects nicely and neatly in optimal environmental conditions in drawers and shelves.

CONTEMPORARY ART PRESERVATION and conservation is a relatively young field. In the context of museum conservation and preservation, we often speak of ensuring the longevity and persistent existence of artworks. So how can short-lived, intangible and complex contemporary artworks such as video, media and installation artworks be preserved?

Video and photography remain two of the most prevailing artistic tools¹, and moving image works have become commonplace in major exhibitions around the world. Artists have been using video to produce art since the 1960s, and art museums in the Western world have exhibited and collected media art for almost as long. However, other than perhaps the big brothers, museums are generally oblivious, ill-equipped and therefore lack concerted strategy to manage and preserve the moving-image and multimedia materials in their collection. Museums and archives which specialise in media art are notable exceptions; a typical art museum is considered a 'non-specialised institution'.

In most museums, tapes and disks are stored like other antiquities: though in climate-controlled rooms, they are relegated to drawers and shelves. It doesn't take an expert to quickly realise that tapes and disks, unlike their object-based counterparts such as paintings and sculptures, cannot be left in a state of non-intervention. With the speed of technological change today, very soon, we will no longer find playback machines that can play them. If hardware/media obsolescence is to be feared, format obsolescence is worst, as that does not need to take years to happen — proprietary formats not readable by certain media players are not uncommon and could happen immediately. Today, error messages could be encountered on a daily basis when one attempts to open a video file unreadable by the media player. Ensuring that the works are always 'renderable' (now and in future) is indeed a challenge.

A 2008 report published by the Training for Audiovisual Preservation in Europe (TAPE) concluded that many non-specialist institutions that hold audiovisual collections face similar problems. Urgent discourse and significant progress on media art preservation have occurred in the Western world in the past decade. However, actual employment of media preservation solutions by non-specialist institutions with mixed-media collections (as suggested by the TAPE report) is not widespread and seems to take a low priority. This art form deserves better. Tuck it away and museums will find themselves in deep trouble when confronted by the big 'O' — obsolescence.

CHALLENGES IN PRESERVING AND MANAGING DIGITAL VIDEO/MEDIA AND INSTALLATION ART

Video art lacks materiality and is essentially ephemeral. A work does not exist once the videotape ejects from a player. Similarly, a digital video file is not unlike a digital document — once electricity ceases, it sits impalpably in a computer, in non-existence. The ability of the file to instantiate itself depends on, for example, the integrity of the medium it resides in and the existence of the necessary hardware and software that can render it. Therefore, video art is extremely vulnerable to technology obsolescence. In fact, as video moves from the analogue to the digital realm, preservation of video art — or for that matter, preservation of audiovisual materials — will share the same agenda presented by digital preservation². How do we ensure that we can re-instantiate a digital video file in the future when technology changes so quickly? At some point, when the technology needs replacement, preservation might mean having to replicate, migrate or even emulate the artwork. How then could we render such actions without meddling with the integrity of the original work?

The good news is: a complementary approach that circumvents the need for head-on digital preservation solutions has already been articulated by scholars in the art conservation scene. The strategy to preserve media art is through *comprehensive documentation*³. For ephemeral and conceptual artworks, documents may be the only emblems of a work that will likely sur-



Zhou Xiaohu, *Crowd of Bystanders*, 2003 - 2005.

Installation art refers to site-specific artworks, where “the artwork is created especially for a particular gallery space or outdoor site, and it comprises not just a group of discrete art objects to be viewed as individual works, but an entire ensemble or environment.”* Here is an example of an installation artwork. This artwork consists of 10 clay statues and 10 corresponding television screens with video animation displayed in a circular fashion in a gallery space. This artwork comprises videos and is thus a video installation art.

* Arase, Jacqueline M. 2004. “Can Museums Save Video Installation Art at the Moment of Accession?” Paper in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts in Museum Studies, John F. Kennedy University. http://library2.jfku.edu/Museum_Studies/Can%20museums%20save%20video.pdf.

vive when the videotape or file is no longer renderable. Therefore, other than having to preserve the video signals, *good documentation practice* is an essential component for the preservation of media art⁴.

However, the act of documentation generates a new problem. To capture the immateriality and volatility of this art form, comprehensive documentation is required. Documentation means having to generate myriad documents and records that could represent a work and the contexts in which it existed. These representations could exist in many forms and formats, e.g., paper, digital text, images and moving images. Obviously, these myriad documents and records need systematic management and preservation as well. Furthermore, many of these documents are also digital (con-

sider, for example, a video documentation of an installation work or of an artist interview) and thus demand as much attention as the video artwork itself! Consequently, managing this huge amount of digital assets is itself a challenge.

That is not to say the scene is totally devoid of initiatives to address this challenge, even though some of the proposed solutions remain theoretical and are not directly deployable, e.g., as software modules. However, employing a digital asset management system (DAMS) could be an implementable first step to the preservation of media art — though not without its limitations — by serving as a virtual dossier that would allow museums to assume control over these digital assets.



With media collection, to preserve means making the work accessible. Accessibility means if one is able to render and 'see' the work. A media artwork resides as digital files in this hard disk. Obviously, we cannot 'see' the work unless a machine with compatible software can read the files.

A CENTRALISED DIGITAL REPOSITORY: EMPLOYING DAMS TO MANAGE, PRESERVE AND PROVIDE ACCESS TO DIGITAL VIDEO FILES

The idea of DAMS should not be totally new to museums, since museums of all sizes employ DAMS to manage images of their permanent collection⁵. However, the use of DAMS in museums for moving image collection – including video and media art – is uncommon. We could perhaps attribute the low take-up rate of DAMS to the “media-based preservation mindset [in this area that] is hard to break”⁶.

At this point in time, it is mature to assert that setting up a digital repository by employing DAMS is a necessary first step for museums to manage and preserve their

media collection.

A digital repository can fulfil all important aspects of collecting and preserving digital objects – collecting, documenting and displaying⁷. While employing DAMS is not a promise of long-term access to a digital collection, it certainly provides institutions with an organised system to manage their video and media collection on a daily basis, which is fundamentally important.

DAMS also facilitates viewing of these video assets. A persistent problem that plagues many media art archives is the lack of accessibility to a work in its entirety to scholars, curators and the interested public. It is common to see only still images of video artworks or ten-second previews on online databases. However, just like how a viewer needs to see a complete

painting (even if it is a reproduction) to generate the necessary impression, it is crucial for researchers to be able to see the full extent of a video work⁸. As the cost of handling and viewing is usually one of the highest in maintaining an audiovisual collection, solutions are needed to reduce the frequency of handling⁶. DAMS is one such solution. A video, when deposited into a DAMS, could be streamed over the network, i.e., the video could be delivered to the computer screen of internal (museum staff) and/or external (public) audiences in full or in parts⁹. Instead of having to maintain old playback machines and rely on staff for retrievals, researchers and curators could view the video works over the network via DAMS through self-service.

DAMS AS A DIGITAL DOSSIER FOR COMPLEX MEDIA AND INSTALLATION ART

Besides serving as a repository for the management of the video artwork itself, DAMS could also serve as a repository for the surrogates and documentations of complex media art.

As discussed earlier, preservation of media art is all about documentation. Many projects that looked into the preservation of contemporary art forms advocated that these art forms [especially (new) media, installation, and conceptual art] be represented and documented in as many forms and formats as possible, i.e., texts, visuals, videos, etc. There are two situations that could possibly generate or result in a deluge of digital files and record types.

The first situation involves the need to

capture the intangible aspects of a complex media work, which is likely to require unconventional documentation strategies. For example, how would one capture 'user experience' of say an interactive media installation? Capturing user experience using text could be challenging. In such instances, audiovisual recordings would be more useful¹⁰.

The second situation entails the need to capture the 'evolution' of a complex media work. For example, metamorphosis of media installation to suit different exhibition venues is not uncommon, and it is good practice for museum staff to do visual documentation of these presentation modes every time the work is set up in a different context/venue⁸. Also, 'upgrading' of a media work is inevitable. This would also likely result in new sets of instruc-

tions, drawings, images, etc., that need to be managed.

Indeed, museums are generating numerous digital objects in various forms in their attempt to document complex media works. At the Heritage Conservation Centre, for example, digital files that are important documentation of installation artworks are generated continuously. Conservators, documentation specialists and curators who take pictures of installation processes (which are important records for future re-installation of the work) may not know where to 'keep' these images. When important video documents are created (e.g., video documentation of installation processes, artist interviews), they are, at best, burned into DVDs or stored in a common computer folder; or at worst, remain in the memory of the video camera, un-



Sakarin Krue-On, *Cloud Nine*, 2004.

It is not uncommon for installation artworks to evolve to accommodate different exhibition spaces, as seen in the two pictures which shows the same work setup in two different venues. Notice also that the installation of the work on the right does not have 'food' on the table, while the same installation at the exhibition *Panorama: Recent Art from Contemporary Asia* (now on at the Singapore Art Museum) has food on the table.

organised. As a result, related documents are not properly managed and put together. This is largely due to the lack of a systematic workflow to deal with such installation images or video documents. When these born-digital documents are not centrally stored or properly archived for future access, they are as good as lost.

DAMS is specially designed to house different types of digital objects. Museums could therefore capitalise on this system by making it a formal home for such objects. DAMS could serve as a repository space for these myriad document types, i.e., video documentations, images of installations/de-installations, diagrams, documents of artists' drafts/drawings/installation plans/layouts, etc. – in short, any unconventional documentation forms and formats that cannot be captured in the standard fields of a

museum's collections management system.

To sum it up, "the aim of the database [digital repository] is to present the documents, to collect them and serve as a temporary material depot for subsequent readings of media art in various dimensions"⁸.

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A full paper on this topic was presented at the 2012 ICOM-CIDOC conference. The paper can be accessed from <http://www.hcc.sg/Highlights/A-practical-documentation-practice-for-the-management-and-preservation-of-digital-video-media-and-installation-art>.

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10. Fromme, Rens and Sandra Fauconnier. 2005. "Capturing Unstable Media Arts: A Formal Model for Describing and Preserving Aspects of Electronic Media Art." *Present Continuous Past(s): Media Art. Strategies of Preservation, Mediation and Dissemination*, edited by Ursula Frohne, Mona Schieren, and Jean-Francois Guiton, 174-189. New York: SpringerWien.



(Top left): DAMS could serve as a digital dossier for complex media and installation art. Here is an example of a video artwork and its related documents. This picture shows an impression of how a DAMS user interface might look like. Hypothetically, there are five digital assets in this mock-up: two video files, one GIF image, a Word and a PDF document. In a real situation, hundreds of digital images and files could be deposited into such a system.



(Bottom left): Actual video file will not only be 'archived' in the system, but will also be viewable on-site.

