

# be MUSE

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## N°25





CREATING INSPIRING ENVIRONMENTS



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## Editor's Letter

With the beginning of every year comes the exhilarating promise of a fresh start. Each January brings with it new resolutions and first-time adventures, unfamiliar challenges and untried opportunities – all underpinned by the glorious anticipation that what is to come could be better than what went before.

Yet we never completely turn away from the past. Nor should we, for in its worn folds and creases linger moments to be cherished, lessons to be remembered, and traditions to be preserved. This issue of BeMUSE kicks off 2014 with a collection of unusual expeditions and novel perspectives, but interspersed throughout its pages is a recurring theme of finding new ways to pay tribute to the old.

This motif weaves its way into art, where we take a considered look at the true meaning of a “pioneer” artist in Singapore’s modern art scene, and photography, in which a group of youths turn their curious eyes on Taman Jurong, one of the nation’s oldest towns.

We also see it in architecture, in a pair of striking shophouses along North Canal Road that have successfully married heritage and modernity in a unique redevelopment project.

The theme surfaces again in an ongoing exhibition of stamps, those charmingly old-fashioned emblems of communication that now incorporate thoroughly contemporary techniques, including state-of-the-art laser technology and 3-D moving images.

And we find it even in the exotic earthiness of Ladakh, a surreally beautiful region in northern India believed to have been inhabited since Neolithic times. One of our writers ventured there on an unforgettable trip to teach present-day entrepreneurial skills to students looking for alternative economic opportunities.

Closer to home, this year heralds an exciting one for the National Heritage Board. In February, Academy Award winner Tim Yip who won for his production and costume design on Ang Lee’s *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, will be speaking at the Asian Civilisations Museum; and later, a first-ever exhibition on Dr Sun Yat Sen and his wife, Madam Soong Ching Ling, will open from March to September. The “Love and Revolution” exhibition is a joint collaboration by the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall, the Soong Ching Ling Memorial Residence in Shanghai, the Soong Ching Ling Mausoleum of the PRC, and the Shanghai Archives Centre.

We look forward to seeing you at our events in the year ahead. In the meantime, here’s wishing all BeMUSE readers a happy, fulfilling and meaningful 2014.

THANGAMMA KARTHIGESU  
Editor-In-Chief

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In the course of preparing for the exhibition 'A Changed World: Singapore Art 1950s-1970s', one of the challenges that confronted my co-curator, Daniel Tham, and myself was the use of terms in discussions about modern art in Singapore. These terms in themselves demarcate boundaries which limit and exclude – and, in many instances, these boundaries are extremely ill-defined. The result is a problematic set of terms which one may, at best, use loosely, and with utmost care due to their inadequacies. In particular, the contention over the use of the terms 'pioneer' and 'second generation' is one which we would like to explore further<sup>1</sup>. This article makes no attempt to resolve the issues of categorisation; rather, it aims to encourage readers to reflect on these terms, and to appreciate the richness and complexities of our art history.

# OF THE TERMS 'PIONEER' AND 'SECOND GENERATION'

*by Szan Tan*

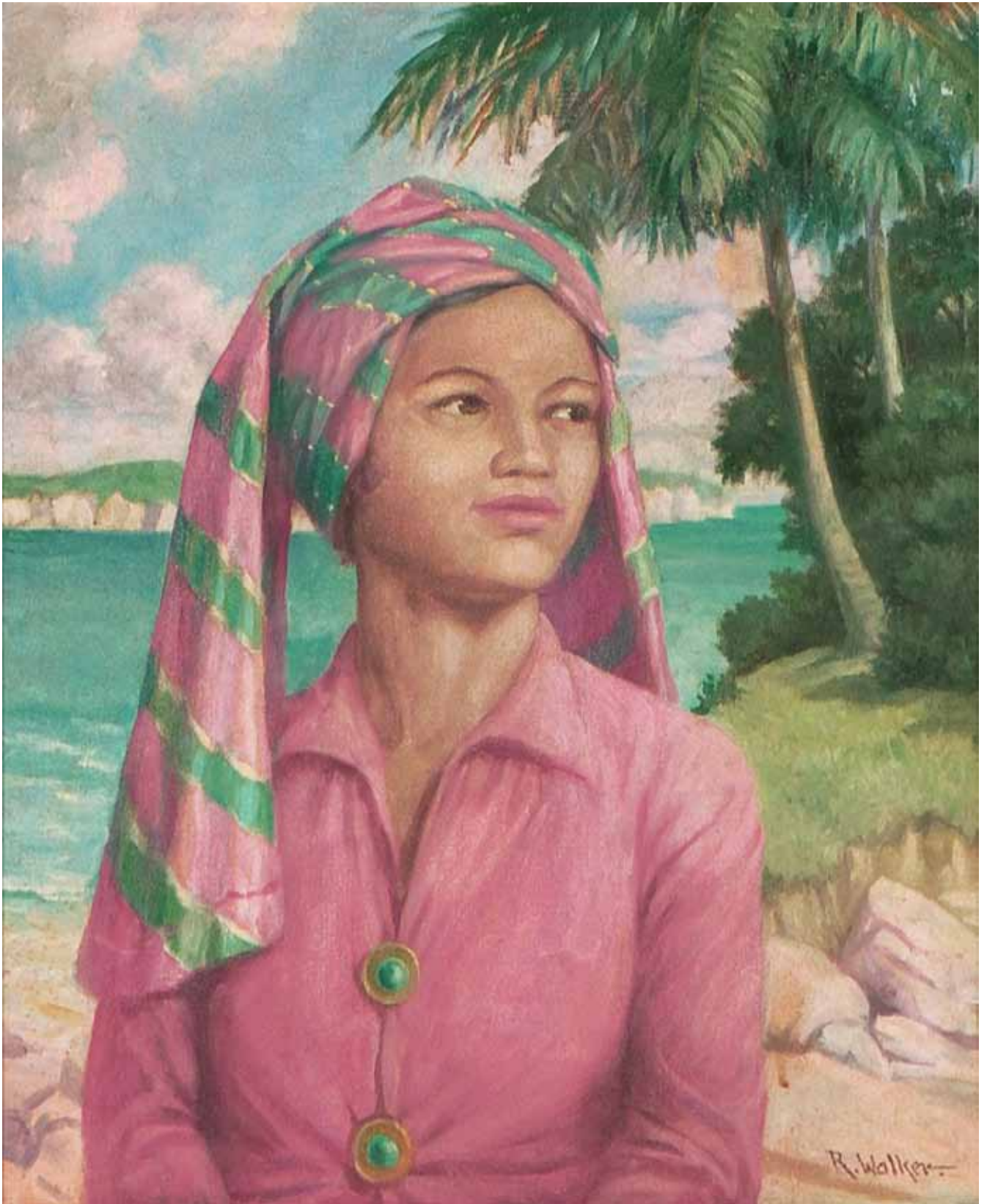
## **OF THE TERM 'PIONEER': INCLUSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS**

The term 'pioneer artists' is commonly used in writings on local art history. So who are these recognised 'pioneers' of our visual art history? Who are those who are consistently regarded as 'pioneers'? Are there geographical and age limits that are attached to the term? From when do we chart the beginnings of our visual art history?

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the term 'pioneer' refers to 'a person or group that originates or helps open up a new line of thought or activity or a new method or technical development', or 'one of the first to settle in a territory'. If we were to combine both definitions, then the term 'pioneer' would refer only to immigrant artists, resulting in the loss of an important facet of our culturally diverse history as important non-immigrant artists would be excluded from this category. Geography and chronology further complicate matters, for the study of Singapore's history and its art cannot be divorced from the history of Malaya, which, in turn, brings us back to the colonial period. And if we say our visual history has its roots in the colonial period, how early should we start tracking it, and on what grounds?

RETHINKING BOUNDARIES  
AND CATEGORIZATIONS  
IN THE STUDY OF  
SINGAPORE MODERN ART

/ art



*MALAY LADY ON BEACH*,  
UNDATED, BY RICHARD WALKER (1918-1985)  
OIL ON CANVAS, ANONYMOUS GIFT, 2011-1732  
© NATIONAL COLLECTION, SINGAPORE



From the late 1980s to early 1990s, 'pioneer' status has been conferred on artists like Liu Kang, Cheong Soo Pieng, Chen Chong Swee, Chen Wen Hsi, Lim Hak Tai, Georgette Chen and Lim Cheng Hoe, with the latter three occasionally forgotten and omitted. All seven artists were Chinese immigrants who had settled in Singapore before and after World War II, trained and tutored a great number of art students, and later became full-time artists. The conferment of 'pioneer' status carries with it the understanding that these artists significantly impacted and contributed to the local art scene. While there is no doubt these seven artists deserved it, many more artists should be remembered as pioneers as well.

Artist Tsang Ju Chi, for example, is a forgotten pioneer. Trained in Shanghai and Paris, Tsang arrived in Singapore in the 1930s and actively organised art exhibitions featuring works depicting local subject matter. Although he was chiefly involved in commercial art, he was dedicated to promoting local art, especially in his capacity as the chairman of the Society of Chinese Artists. He also sought to groom young artists by organising the Youth Encouragement Society art exhibitions<sup>2</sup>. As a painter himself, he was known for his oil paintings of local Malay folk and fishermen. Unfortunately, none of Tsang's works survived. He was killed in the Sook Ching massacre during the Japanese Occupation.

ROCKY COAST, 1961  
BY CHEN JEN HAO (1908-1976)  
OIL ON BOARD, 1992-979  
© NATIONAL COLLECTION, SINGAPORE

(RIGHT)  
LUNCH BREAK, 1965  
BY LAI FOONG MOI (1931-1994)  
OIL ON CANVAS  
© NATIONAL COLLECTION, SINGAPORE







LAKE TOBA, C. 1970  
BY YEH CHI WEI (1913-1981)  
OIL ON CANVAS, 2000-128  
© NATIONAL COLLECTION, SINGAPORE

(RIGHT)  
SELLING SALTED EGGS, 1977  
BY CHEN CHENG MEI (B. 1927)  
OIL ON CANVAS, ANONYMOUS GIFT, 2008-6711  
© NATIONAL COLLECTION, SINGAPORE

Besides Tsang, artists such as Suri Mohyani, M. Sawoot bin Haji Rahman and Mahat bin Chaadang, Lee Ta Pai, Liu Sien Teh, Chong Pai Mu, See Hiang To, Chen Jen Hao, Wu Tsai Yen, Fan Chang Tien, Chang Tan-Nung and Sunyee should be regarded as pioneer artists for their significant contributions as artists and art educators in our history. When examining our art history, it is also important to note the significance of Penang. Hence, the works of the pioneers who were active there - in particular, Abdullah Ariff and Yong Mun Sen - should be taken into account too when studying Singapore's early art history. And if we were to rethink the constraints of time and space in our history, should we not regard the dedicated art inspector and artist Richard Walker - who made great contributions to the development of watercolour painting in Singapore and Malaya - as a 'pioneer' too?





A CLEAR DAY, C. 1976-1978  
BY YEO HOE KOON (B. 1935)  
OIL ON CANVAS, P-325  
© NATIONAL COLLECTION, SINGAPORE



### **‘SECOND GENERATION’: WHEN DOES IT BEGIN?**

The term ‘second generation’ probably began to appear in the late 1990s to early 2000s. It generally referred to artists who were most probably taught by ‘pioneer’ or ‘first generation’ artists. In many cases, it is assumed that the artists received training at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, or that they were taught by the ‘pioneers’ privately, or in classes held at Chinese medium schools. It is also believed that many of these ‘second generation’ artists received further training in art overseas, particularly in the United Kingdom, other European countries and the United States. Artists who went to these countries to study in the mid-1950s to the early 1970s, such as Thomas Yeo, Yeo Hoe Koon, Anthony Poon, Teo Eng Seng, Ng Eng Teng, Tan Teo Kwang, Wee Beng Chong and Goh Beng Kwan are generally categorised as ‘second generation’ artists. Choy Wen Yang, Lu Kuo Siang, Latiff Mohidin and Eng Tow are also categorised as second generation artists due to their overseas training, but they were not taught by any first generation artists.

And then, there are the artists who did not have the opportunity to be trained overseas in Western countries – students of the ‘first generation pioneers’, who were successful in their own right. These include artists such as Tay Chee Toh, Tan Ping Chiang, See Cheen Tee, Foo Chee San and Koeh Sia Yong. Moreover, the term ‘second generation’ also implies that these artists stood for and embraced Western abstraction in their art<sup>3</sup>. For example, Tay Chee Toh is widely recognised as a ‘second generation’ artist. However, the boundaries start to blur again in the case of artists who were students of the first generation who did not embrace Western abstraction. These artists include Ong Kim Seng, a prominent watercolour artist; See Cheen Tee and Foo Chee San, who specialised in wood block printing; as well as Koeh Sia Yong and Chua Mia Tee, who adhered to realism throughout their careers.



(LEFT)  
ANGELUS II, 1976  
BY LU KUO SHIANG (B. 1943)  
GOUACHE ON PAPER, P-331  
©NATIONAL COLLECTION, SINGAPORE

(RIGHT)  
LANDSCAPE, 1963  
BY CHEONG SOO PIENG (1917-1983)  
OIL ON CANVAS, P-617  
©NATIONAL COLLECTION, SINGAPORE

Then there is the issue of time: when does the 'second generation' begin? Should the limits of a generation be defined, or should one only consider the peak of an artist's career as the period of time that defines his or her generation? Can artists such as Lai Foong Moi, Foo Chee San, Choo Keng Kwang, Lim Tze Peng, Chua Mia Tee, Chen Cheng Mei and Yeh Chi Wei and Abdul Ghani Hamid - all of whom were born between 1910s and 1930s- be regarded as 'second generation'? How should we categorise these artists, who do not fit the mould of 'pioneers' or 'second generation' artists? Or should we simply ignore these categorisations and honour these artists for their unique contributions to our art history?

Indeed, the use of the terms 'pioneer' and 'second generation' throws up more questions than answers, raising issues that will not be immediately – or ever - resolved. This is because the reality of art-making and its history is not one of neat and convenient categorisations. The spirit of a milieu can be ingrained in an artist's works but if he/she is to be called an 'artist' in the first place, his or her unique voice has to come through and withstand the test of time - and transcend boundaries. ❀

» *Szan Tan is Curator, National Museum of Singapore*

- 1 The contentions surrounding the use of the term and category 'first generation pioneers' and 'second generation' were first raised in 2007 by Wang Zineng in his endnotes to the article 'Curatorial Notes', in the exhibition catalogue 'Bodies and Relationships: Selected works of Lee Sik Khoon', presented by NUS Museums.
- 2 Hsu, Marco (translated by Lai Chee Kein), *A brief history of Malayan Art*, Millennium Books, Singapore, 1999
- 3 The abstract works of these artists should not be seen merely as imitations or derivations of Nicholson, Rothko, Motherwell, De Kooning, Pollock, Kline or Hoffman for their expressions possess a universality that transcends space and time. At times an Eastern spirit can be detected in the use of strokes, lines and composition.



### **A CHANGED WORLD: Singapore Art 1950s-1970s**

This exhibition looks primarily at the expressions and response of Singapore artists to the tumultuous social, political and economic changes that took place from the 1950s to the 1970s. Art in Singapore reflected the changing world the artists found themselves living in. Early immigrant artists challenged themselves to depict the new region they were settling in. Meanwhile, emergent waves of anti-colonialism and nationalism inspired artists to document and, in turn, contribute to the prevailing political discourse of that age. By the 1960s and 1970s, as Singapore experienced ongoing urban and industrial development, artists too responded to these themes. The local art scene also began developing a new visual language that was more international, just as Singapore was asserting itself as an emerging nation on the global stage.

This exhibition is a parallel event of the Singapore Biennale and is currently on view at the National Museum of Singapore until 16 March 2014.

Admission is free.

by Low Ching Ling    photos: Patrick Bingham-Hall

**T**he two buildings were in bad shape – so much so that even though they had been designated for conservation, a decision was made to tear them down.

But this also presented an opportunity: The two shophouses at 48 North Canal Road – a part of Singapore’s historic trading hub - could be reconstructed such that not only would a slice of their heritage be preserved, but their resurrection would also be the blueprint for rebuilding other shophouses found to be unsafe for occupation.

The task was given by the properties’ owner Maybank Kim Eng Properties to WOHA Architects, who took on the project like a champion. The new buildings, with its contrasting architectural styles, make for a striking

landmark in the neighbourhood. It even has a modern rear wing – in the form of a boutique office linked by an elevated bridge to the adjacent building, which houses businesses owned also by the Maybank group.

It took a whole two years to complete the project, but it was worth it. Since its completion in 2012, the project not only was a Category B winner in the 2013 URA Architectural Heritage Awards, it was also shortlisted as a finalist at the World Architecture Festival 2013, held in Singapore in October.

The URA said the project was the first of its kind to be recognised for rebuilding old shophouses found to be unsafe “so as to facilitate the preservation of unique heritage streetscapes in downtown Singapore”.

# A BLUEPRINT TO SAVE HERITAGE

/ design





## *Contrasting styles*

Though they stood side by side, the two original shophouses embodied different architectural styles.

The three-storey unit 46, which was built in the 1940s and housed a wholesaler trading in optical products, exemplified art deco – a style that flourished in the early 20th century and is commonly characterised by rich colours, bold geometric shapes, and lavish decoration. Unit 46's façade was given a streamlined appearance by pediments with moulded edgings, and its geometric design was accentuated by latticed mild steel windows and concrete canopy forms.

On the other hand, the five-storey unit 47, built in the 1950s, took on the style of modern architecture. The design was simpler, with the aim of functionality in mind. The result? Large mild steel windows that were less elaborately designed (compared to those of unit 46's), concrete louvers, and canopies maximised natural light and ventilation. The façade was also minimally decorated. A wine shop and a bar occupied the ground floor, while the upper floors were home to the Teochew Chan Clan Association and the Singapore Sabah Importers & Exporters Association.

Both units had a concrete flag pole at the top of their façades, a typical feature of shophouses built during this period.



## **RISING FROM THE RUBBLE**

The shophouses, unit 46 and 47, were built in the post-war period and part of the Upper Circular secondary settlement area gazetted for conservation in November 2004.

But checks by the Building & Construction Authority revealed extensive cracks along the structural beams and columns of the building. The entire building also appeared to be leaning. This was how WOHA Architects put it: "In their existing condition, the shophouses appeared to be in a state of disrepair, with visibly leaning structures that posed a high risk of collapse."

So the buildings had to go. Once they were torn down, WOHA got busy.

First, they did some research. A thorough examination was done of the building typology, its architectural elements, and original structural design. The team also studied North Canal Road and found that the row of shophouses on the street, which reflected both art deco and modern styles, were relatively untouched. They came to a conclusion: That the units had to be rebuilt in a way that retained the character of the street's shophouses, and that a rear extension wing – requested by Maybank – should not affect its appearance. Working with carefully documented data, measured survey drawings and post-demolition images, the project team hunkered down for the task that lay ahead of them.



## STAYING TRUE TO THE ORIGINAL

To capture the look of the original shophouses, WOHA kept close to the original design features, and reinstated the steel windows, concrete canopies, rounded façade pediments, and concrete flagpoles at the top of the façades.

In order to retain also the low ceiling heights in the original floor levels, the front end of the shophouses was

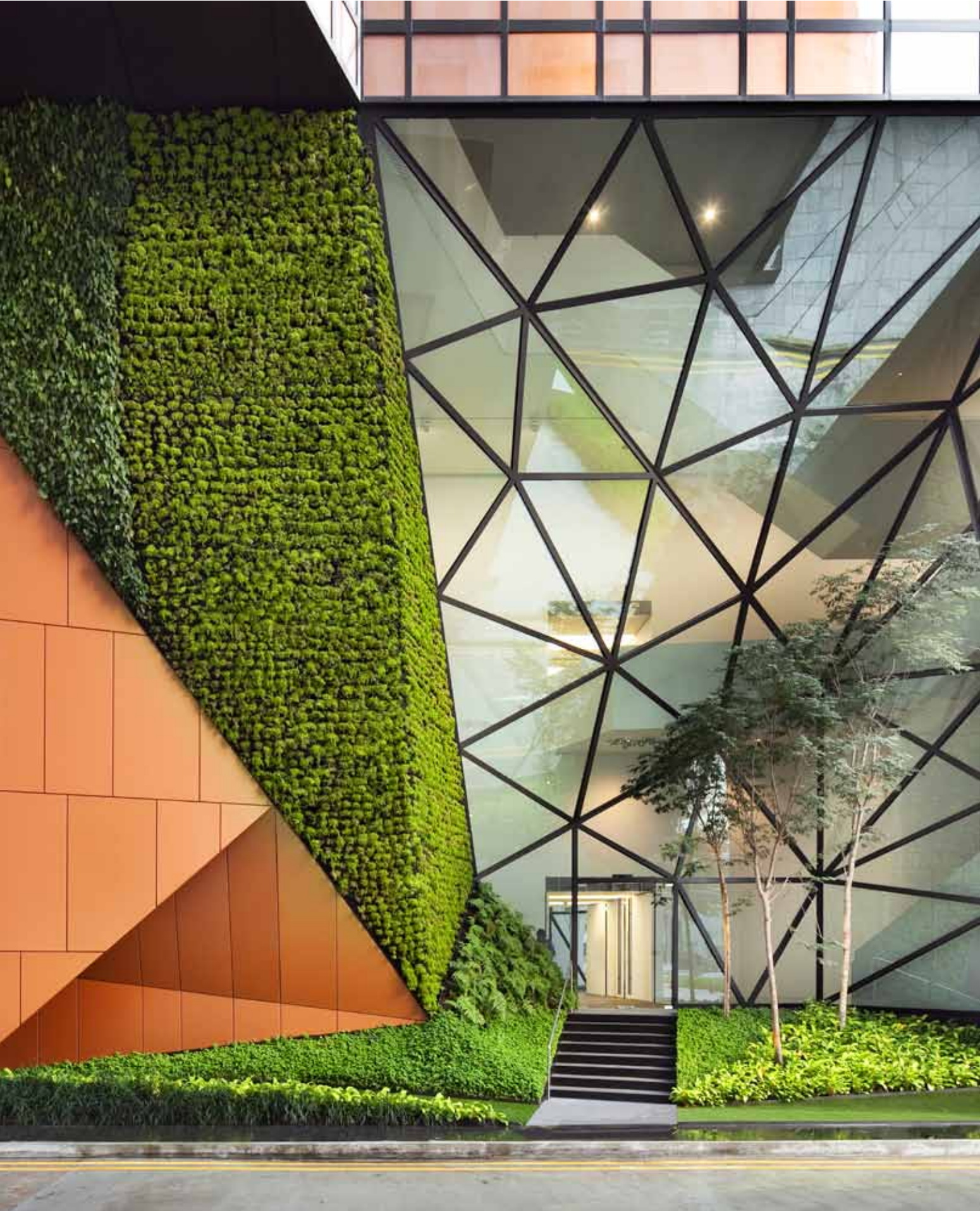
deemed more suitable for meeting rooms. The service end would accommodate a mechanised carpark. The open-plan offices were to be located within the property's upper four floors and strategically lifted; this, the architects said, would maximise the units' floor plate size, allow for better natural light and higher headroom, and enable occupants to enjoy better views of the city.

Meanwhile, the roof areas of the two shophouses would be converted into gardens that offer unblocked views of Hong Lim Park across the road, and the stunning lush sky gardens wrapping the façade of the PARKROYAL on Pickering Hotel that towers over the park.

**“THE FORMAL ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE OF FRACTAL, TRIANGULATED GEOMETRY THAT WAS DEVELOPED FOR THE PROJECT WAS INTENDED TO CONTRAST WITH THE ADJACENT MAIN OFFICE'S FAÇADE VOCABULARY.”**

- WOHA





## SEAMLESS INTEGRATION

The new rear wing stands at double the height of the shophouses, providing more space for modern office floors while at the same time increasing the value of the property.

The challenge here was to ensure that the design and appearance of the new wing complemented, not overwhelmed, the shophouses. This extension features distinct linear expressions to demarcate the number of storeys, echoing the language of the original shophouses. The façade's geometric designs contrast, yet relate, to their architectural typology. In terms of colour and scale, the juxtaposition of new against old was achieved by choosing bronze as

the predominant colour. The use of mesh for shade eliminated the need for overhangs.

A small lane, which leads to the adjacent Hongkong Street, separates the new property and the main building. Walk through it and you will discover an intimate urban oasis. Because of the shophouses' corner location, WOHA decided to create a public pocket park here – housing a small café, break-out areas and meeting rooms. ❁

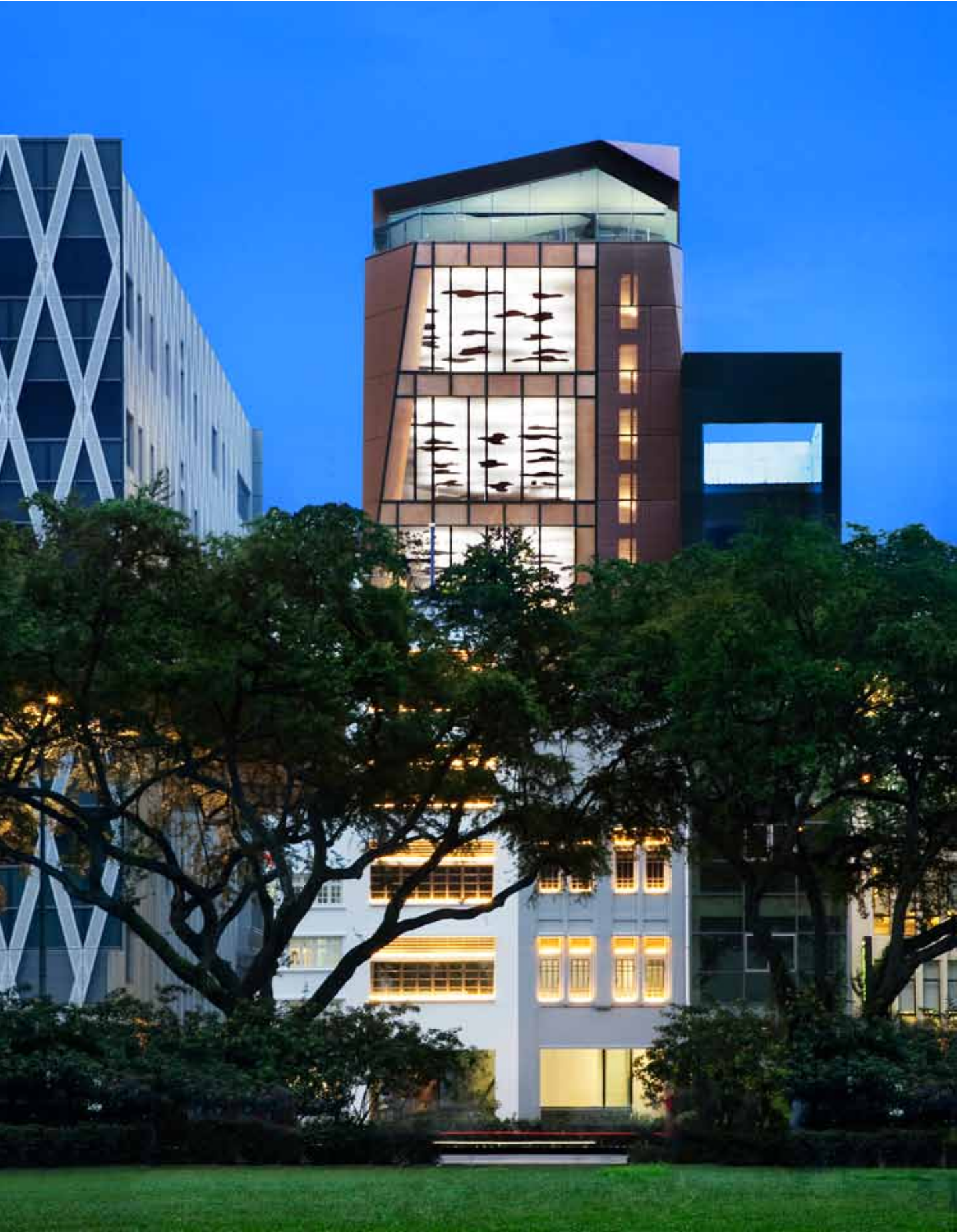
» *Low Ching Ling is Writer, BeMUSE*





“SHAPED BY THE TIGHT  
CONDITIONS OF THE SITE,  
IT ORIGINATED FROM THE  
NEED TO COMPLY WITH  
AUTHORITY REQUIREMENTS  
OF HAVING SPLAYED CORNERS  
AS THE BUILDING IS  
BOUNDED BY THREE ROADS.”

- WOHA





**“URA’S GUIDELINES FOR THE ATTIC ROOF FURTHER NECESSITATED A CHAMFERED ROOF PROFILE, RESULTING IN A FOLDED EXPRESSION THAT WAS CARRIED THROUGH IN BOTH PLAN AND ELEVATION, TAKING THE FORM OF INTERNAL ANGLED WALLS AND EXTERNAL SLANTED PLANES, REVEALING A CONCAVE CURTAIN WALL OF CRYSTAL EMBEDDED IN THE LOWER STRATA, LIKE QUARTZ IN A ROCK.”**

- WOHA

### *A brief history of North Canal Road*

North Canal Road, also known as “kau kia ki”, or “side of the little drain”, was named after the adjacent Singapore Canal that was constructed in the early years to drain the swamps of where the financial district is located now. The road was part of a larger settlement around the Singapore River where early trading commerce flourished. Shophouses sprouted and spread from the river banks towards where Chinatown is today. Many shophouses along North Canal Road were businesses that sold wholesale fruit, vegetables and dried seafood.

Hong Lim Park, one of the earliest public gardens in Singapore, lies across the road. It was a focal point for political rallies in the 1950s and 1960s, and was also used as a cricket ground and recreational space. In September 2000, the Government established the Speakers’ Corner at the park to allow citizens to hold demonstrations and debate publicly about national issues.

With the wet market and the Thong Chai Medical Institution (designated a national monument in 1973) at the nearby Eu Tong Sen

Street, the shophouses along North Canal Road were strategically located in the commercial hub. But as Singapore rapidly developed and wholesale trading of primary produce relocated to the Pasir Panjang Wholesale Centre, the shophouses were readapted for commercial use- though the trading of luxury items like shark’s fin and bird’s nest remained in some quarters.

The shift to a finance-centric economy also saw the commercial centre moving to what would be today’s Shenton Way. The Singapore Canal was subsequently filled up to accommodate the widening of the road as a thoroughfare to the present-day financial district.

In November 2004, the Upper Circular area – bounded by Upper Circular Road, South Bridge Road, North Canal Road and New Bridge Road – was marked for conservation. The three- to five-storey buildings there, built mainly in the 1930s to the late 1960s, reflect different modern architectural styles and serve as important markers of how architectural tastes have evolved over time.

# Oh, Leh!

*The land is so barren and the passes  
so high, that only the worst of enemies or  
the best of friends would visit.*

— *Old Ladakhi Quote*

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by *Sandeep Singh*

---

In June last year, I found myself at the airport, backpack in tow, about to embark on an unusual 15-day sojourn. I was headed to a place few had heard of, accompanied by five other travellers I barely knew.

Our itinerary included volunteering at a local school, pre-dawn lessons in meditation and five-hour treks over vast mountain ranges – all while coping with sub-zero temperatures at high altitudes and very modest living conditions.

/ travel



## WHAT ON EARTH WAS I THINKING?

My destination was Ladakh, a predominantly Buddhist region in northern India famed for its stark mountains, unforgiving cold, and rugged Mars-like terrain. Known as the “Land of High Passes”, Ladakh is inhabited by people of Indo-Aryan and Tibetan descent and is one of the most sparsely populated regions in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

## PLANNING AN ADVENTURE

Historically, Ladakh derived importance from its location at the crossroads of modern trade routes found in China, India and Pakistan. However, after Chinese authorities closed the borders between Tibet and Central Asia in the 1960s, international trade dwindled.

The area retains a strong military presence, with frequent road-blocks and several army camps dotting the region. But in recent times, the Indian Government has encouraged tourism in Ladakh by featuring its landscape in popular culture, including in Bollywood movies.

My interest in Ladakh started in early 2012, when a friend introduced me to Travel With Metta, a non-commercial initiative with an emphasis on ‘voluntourism’: travel combined with volunteering opportunities and philanthropy.

We contacted one of the initiative’s founders, who was organising a fortnight-long visit to the Himalayas. Part of the trip would be spent teaching 14- to 16-year-olds basic entrepreneurial skills. I jumped at the chance to get out of my comfort zone, do something meaningful and experience a unique way of life.







That was how I ended up at the airport last June, taking off for my two-week adventure with a motley group of companions: two shy undergraduates, one high-flying banker, one free-spirited freelancer and one tough cookie who managed a team of over 100 employees. As we made small talk, it felt like we were back in school again – tentatively sussing out one another’s personalities and secretly praying that the trip wouldn’t turn into a fight club.

Surprisingly, for all its perceived inaccessibility, Ladakh is just a one-hour plane ride from New Delhi. As our plane approached its airport in the capital city of Leh, I caught glimpses of jagged brown rock formations gradually being bathed in a golden sunrise.

The plane flew close enough to the mountain range for us to discern traditional Ladakhi homes – rectangular blocks of white-washed concrete and wooden frames, perched precariously on the mountainside.

As soon as I stepped off the plane, my cheeks were greeted with cool, fresh air. Ladakh’s low temperatures are a welcome respite from the rest of India, where brutal summers from April to July are marked by temperatures rising to a very unfriendly 50 degrees Celsius.

It was my first time in the Himalayas and I stood for a moment on the tarmac, mesmerised. The snow-capped mountains seemed close enough to touch; the sky was a brilliant blue; and all around were friendly Tibetan people, on whose rosy, tanned faces were deeply etched the stories of their simple lives. For a moment, I forgot I was in India.

Our first day in Leh was spent acclimatising. At an altitude of 3,524 metres, travellers to Ladakh require 24 hours of bed rest and low-energy activity to reduce the incidence of altitude sickness. Otherwise, its dreaded symptoms of headache, giddiness and nausea will extinguish any last iota of wanderlust.



ASHOK BOGHANI - FLICKR.COM    SANDEEP SINGH

Despite having ample rest, basic activities such as walking up stairs or showering initially left us breathless and exhausted, with our insides tingling as if pricked by a thousand icy needles.

### LAIDBACK LADAKH

The next few days were spent visiting hilltop temples and sprawling monasteries, and wading through handicraft markets overflowing with shawls, singing bowls and trinkets that sparkled in silver, turquoise, ruby and amber.

Popular places of interest in the area include Alchi Gompa, one of the oldest religious shrines in Ladakh; Thiksey Monastery, noted for its resemblance to the Potala Palace in Tibet; and the spectacular Pangong Tso, the world's highest salt water lake. The six-hour car ride to Pangong Tso is not for the faint-hearted, though – the bumpy terrain and narrow, tightly meandering roads had me keeping my head in my hands for most of the journey, again wondering what on earth I had been thinking to come here.

Our evenings were spent gorging on chocolate momos (dumplings), cheese balls and apricot lassi, as well as bonding over kimchi and pancakes at the only Korean eatery in Ladakh.

It is difficult to fully encapsulate Ladakh's beauty in words. No number of superlatives will do justice to the surreal landscape, which resembles a watercolour painting. Lush meadows filled with green and yellow pine trees and white birch end abruptly, giving way to austere mountain ranges covered with slippery rocks in blue, purple and green. Rope bridges cut across freshwater streams that eventually join into cobalt-blue water bodies, blurring the distinction between earth and sky. Endearing road signs put up by the local authorities caution drivers against speeding with tongue-in-cheek messages such as "Darling I love you but not so fast" and "Be gentle on my curves".



At dawn and dusk, the valley echoes with the soothing drone of chanting monks and tinkling bells from grazing horses and cows. As there are no street lamps in Ladakh, we spent long nights in our room huddled around a candle, playing countless rounds of Bridge and sipping hot butter milk, as the wind howled outside.

### BACK TO BASICS

After seven days of sight-seeing, we arrived at The Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL). The organisation was founded in 1988 by a group of young Ladakhis who hoped to reform the educational system. Ladakhi is the main vernacular in the region, followed by Hindi. English is not widely used or spoken. As a result, Ladakhi students have trouble keeping up with the Indian educational system, which relies heavily on English-language textbooks to conduct lessons.

After years of struggling to catch up with their more English-educated peers, many students in Ladakh end up failing their examinations and dropping out of school. Those who do make it to college are required to travel to neighbouring cities in Jammu, Kashmir, Punjab or Delhi to continue their studies, as Ladakh currently lacks reputable institutes of higher learning.

Even then, further studies are expensive for most families that rely on subsistence farming. Several youths give up on higher education to try their hand at tour guiding, driving taxis or joining the army – occupations which provide a secure and steady income stream.

With this in mind, our five-day entrepreneurial workshop at SECMOL aimed to provide students with the foundational skills to create unique and sustainable business models. The workshop encouraged creative thinking and dialogue, and hoped to open up opportunities for Ladakhi youth beyond conventional career paths.







ASHOK BOGHANI - FLICKR.COM

It was wonderful to witness the team spirit and camaraderie among the students as they cheerfully carried out their daily chores before settling down for various lessons throughout the day. They were earnest in their efforts to broaden their horizons, and eagerly practised speaking English with our team and with the other volunteers whenever they had pockets of time to spare.

Although they came from humble backgrounds, the students had a fierce desire to prove themselves and realise their dreams. I found this inspiring, and it reinforced my belief that people everywhere share similar aspirations – regardless of background or social standing.

My stay at SECMOL also exposed me to the harsh realities of rural living. There were no toilets, just holes dug in the ground and covered with sand after use. Hot water, a necessity in the freezing cold, was available for only five hours. Missing that window of time meant braving an icy shower, or – for the faint-hearted like me – making do with wet wipes. A manual hand pump downstream provided water for drinking and washing, while meals were simple affairs consisting of thukpa or noodle soup, dhal and the local bread, khambir.

## HAPPY SMILES, RELUCTANT GOODBYES

As the date of our departure quickly approached, we greedily tried to take in as many experiences as we could. Against the backdrop of the Himalayas and the cool, crisp atmosphere, each moment and every interaction we had with the community was amplified and celebrated.

.....

Exiting the airport at the height of summer, for our transit in New Delhi, felt like stepping into a furnace. Blasts of hot air permeated our beings and weighed us down, while the tooting of horns, calls of street vendors and smell of exhaust clung to our bodies like the sticky sweat gathering at the base of our backs. It was an unfathomably stark contrast to the tranquil and serene oasis just 60 minutes away – where the smell of freshly-made apricot jam and burning wood lulled you into a deep slumber every night.



ASHOK BOGHANI - FLICKR.COM SANDEEP SINGH

My motley crew of travel companions did not end up becoming my best friends, but we have kept in touch since our Himalayan adventure. Some of us have even been on a few other journeys around South-east Asia. We do not meet very often, but when we do there is a special bond that brings us together, a bond that arises from having shared an extraordinary experience not easily erased by the ravages of time. ❁

» *Sandeep Singh is Manager, Education & NHB Academy, National Heritage Board*





**BEST  
MERCHANDISE  
DESIGN**

INTERNATIONAL  
DESIGN  
COMMUNICATION  
AWARDS WINNER 2013



AVAILABLE AT

ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM  
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE  
SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM

# WHAT'S ON

JANUARY -  
MARCH 2014

## // ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM

### **Secrets of the Fallen Pagoda: Treasures from Famen Temple and the Tang Court**

16 January – 4 May 2014

The capital of Tang China (618 – 907), Chang'an (present day Xi'an), was a hub for economic and cultural exchange. Nearby lies the Famen Temple, one of the most revered Buddhist sites in China. A finger bone relic of the Buddha and magnificent Tang dynasty objects of gold, silver, ceramics, and glass were sealed within an underground crypt there. For more than 1,000 years, these treasures were forgotten until their chance discovery in 1987. Together with objects from other leading museums in Shaanxi, this exhibition is a rare showcase of Tang aesthetics and culture for the first time in Southeast Asia. This exhibition is co-organised with Shaanxi Provincial Cultural Relics Bureau and Shaanxi Cultural Heritage Promotion Centre, People's Republic of China.

### **Curator Tour**

Fridays, 21 February & 21 March 2014,  
7.30pm – 8.30pm  
Asian Civilisations Museum  
\$15 per person

Join curator Kan Shuyi to learn about courtly arts and the cosmopolitanism of the Tang dynasty on this private tour of the exhibition, Secrets of the Fallen Pagoda: Treasures from Famen Temple and the Tang Court.

### **Beginning of the Becoming: Batak Sculpture from Northern Sumatra**

Until 1 June 2014

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

### **Lunchtime Concerts at ACM**

Fridays, 14, 21, 28 March &  
4, 11 April 2014 12.30pm – 1.30pm

Featuring talented young musicians from the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, the popular lunchtime concerts return in March with exciting classical and jazz music from winds, strings, brass, and woodwinds. Free admission.

### **Ladies' Night**

Saturday, 8 March 2014 5pm – 10pm

The Asian Civilisations Museum celebrates International Women's Day with a delectable selection of pampering pursuits. Explore a range of lifestyle stations at our Beauty Quarters, enjoy classical performances from the height of Tang culture, and spend a relaxing evening touring the museum's latest special exhibition. Free admission.

### **In Conversation with Tim Yip**

Friday, 7 February 2014 (in English)  
7.30pm – 8.30pm Saturday, 8 February  
2014 (in Mandarin) 2pm – 3pm

In collaboration with Esplanade's *Huayi – Chinese Festival of Arts*, the Asian Civilisations Museum is pleased to present two talks with artist Tim Yip (one in English, one in Chinese). Winner of an Academy Award and BAFTA Award for his production and costume design work on Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Tim will speak about his philosophy on design, art, and fashion. Visit [www.acm.org.sg](http://www.acm.org.sg) for more details. Free admission.

## // INDIAN HERITAGE CENTRE

### **Street Cred, Photography Workshop in Little India**

11 & 18 January 2014  
9am – 1pm  
Temporium, Little India

Be enthralled by the pulse and vibrancy of the urban landscape and people of Little India! Delve into the 'poetics of the everyday' as you wander through the alleys and discover the fundamentals of street photography. Take great shots by learning how to position yourself, use light and anticipate action. This is your chance to capture the festivities at Little India while its streets transform to celebrate the harvest festival, Pongal. Some of your pictures may even be featured in the galleries of the Indian Heritage Centre!

## // MALAY HERITAGE CENTRE

### Galleries Alive! Of Sound and Sight

Music Performances  
Thursdays, 2 & 16, 30 January, 13 & 27  
February and 13 & 27 March  
Saturday, 15 February  
11.00am to 11.45am & 2pm to 2.45pm

### Wayang Kulit Workshop

Thursdays, 9 & 23 January,  
6 & 20 February and 6 March &  
20 March / 11.00am to 11.45am  
& 2pm to 2.45pm  
Kesenian [Bangsawan & Filem] Gallery

Make your own wayang kulit [shadow puppets] characters, and be enthralled as these entertainers from the past come alive with live performances of traditional music in our Muzik Gallery.

Registration for performances and workshop is required. To register, please email your contact details to [nhb\\_mhc\\_programmes@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_mhc_programmes@nhb.gov.sg).

All programmes are free but admission charges to the permanent galleries may apply.

For more information about Galleries Alive!, please call 6391 0450 [Tue-Sun: 10am – 6pm] or email [nhb\\_mhc\\_programmes@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_mhc_programmes@nhb.gov.sg).

### Let's Play!

Every Tuesday,  
Until March 2014  
11am & 2pm  
Malay Heritage Centre  
Admission to workshop is free

Learn more about traditional Malay games at the Malay Heritage Centre! Learn skills you will need for the wau [traditional Malay kites], main lereng [wheel spinning], congkak [traditional Malay board game], batu serembat [five stones] and more! This 45-minute workshop will also invite participants to create and bring home their own traditional games through fun craft activities.

Walk-ins are welcome. Registration is required for group bookings.

For more information about the games available or registration, please call 6391 0450 or email [nhb\\_mhc\\_programmes@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_mhc_programmes@nhb.gov.sg).

### Neighbourhood Sketches

Last Fridays and Saturdays of  
the month, 24 January 2014 to  
23 August 2014  
8.30pm to 9.30pm  
Bussorah Mall, Kampong Glam

Set along the vibrant esplanade of Bussorah Street, visitors will get a chance to sample the rich Malay culture presented in the style of street performances. From martial arts to songs of worship, Neighbourhood

Sketches will have something for every type of culture vulture.

All performances will be held at Bussorah esplanade on every last Friday and Saturday of the month from 24 January 2014 to 23 August 2014.

The dates and timing of Neighbourhood Sketches will be published on MHC's website and may be subjected to change.

For more information about performances, please call 6391 0450 or email [nhb\\_mhc\\_programmes@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_mhc_programmes@nhb.gov.sg).

## // NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE

### A Changed World: Singapore Art 1950s–1970s

Until Sun 16 Mar 2014 | 10am–7pm

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

### Special Guided Tour with a Curator By Daniel Tham, Assistant Curator, National Museum of Singapore

Thursdays, 20 February &  
6 March 2014 7.30pm – 9pm  
National Museum of Singapore

What kind of social change was Singapore undergoing in her post-war and early-independence years, and how did these changes shape the development of local art? Join Daniel Tham, co-curator of the exhibition, *A Changed World: Singapore Art 1950s – 1970s* in a special tour as he tackles these questions and discusses the displayed works in light of their socio-historical contexts and artists' biographies. Daniel joined the National Museum of Singapore in 2010, and holds a Masters degree in Sociology.

\*Registration is required. Please email your contact details to [nhb\\_nm\\_lectures@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_nm_lectures@nhb.gov.sg)

### TD 30: An Experiential Showcase

Sat 15 February – Sun 23 February 2014  
Various Timings  
Free for Singapore Citizens and  
Permanent Residents

What does it take to keep our country safe, our people united, and our future secure? On the 30th year of Total Defence, let us reaffirm the important role that Singaporeans play in keeping Singapore strong. TD 30: An Experiential Showcase is an interactive exhibition that presents insightful and honest perspectives on how Singaporeans from different walks of life understand the concept of Total Defence and act it out in their daily lives.

### 50 Years of Television: An Exhibition

From now until Sun 19 January 2014  
10am – 6pm  
Stamford Gallery, Level 1  
Free Admission

*50 Years of Television: An Exhibition* celebrates the arrival and development of the television and how it has shaped entertainment and lifestyle habits in Singapore from 1963 to today. This exhibition will examine the social and cultural changes resulting from the advent and growth of television broadcasting and consumption, and the role of the television in recording and reflecting the nation's defining moments. Remember the times when you gathered to watch television at the community centre or in your neighbour's house? These endearing memories show how the television has always been an integral part of our lives. While social habits and behaviour around the television have evolved, the television still remains highly relevant in today's ever-changing media landscape.

## // THE PERANAKAN MUSEUM

### Straits Family Sunday

Sundays, 12 January, 9 February & 9 March 2014 1pm – 5pm

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

## // PRESERVATION OF MONUMENTS BOARD

### Istana Open House Tours

Saturday, 1 February 2014

Visit the Istana and make it a memorable one with a 45-minute guided tour of the Istana building led by the Preservation of Monuments Board (PMB) volunteers. Hear interesting stories about this well-loved 144-year-old national monument which has witnessed Singapore's colonial past, tumultuous years and independence in 1965. The tour will interweave human interest stories as well as cover selected architectural details of the neo-Palladian style building. Get to visit its stately function rooms which have welcomed royalty, presidents and other VIPs throughout its history. Tour participants will receive a special Istana souvenir brochure and an exclusive Istana collar pin. All proceeds collected from the tours will go towards Community Chest.

#### Tour Details

Tour timings to be announced, please visit [www.nhb.gov.sg/NHB Portal/Sites&Monuments](http://www.nhb.gov.sg/NHB Portal/Sites&Monuments) for more information.

#### Registration:

Limited places per tour. Registration is on a first come, first served basis. Register at the Istana Building Guided Tour booth on the day of the Open House.

## // SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM

### Singapore Biennale 2013 – If The World Changed

Until 16 February 2014

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

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

### Untitled: Not Against Interpretation

Until 27 April 2014

While the appreciation of art has largely been perceived to be a visual affair, it is also a process that is often mediated by text. After all, artistic intentions and artwork subject matter are frequently conveyed to viewers through words, writings, and most of all, artwork titles. If names matter, what can we say about untitled artworks that seem to say nothing, or quite possibly everything? To what extent do text and image attach meaning to art? Without titles and established commentaries, is it yet possible to gain a genuine encounter with art? *Untitled*, the second edition in the Singapore Art Museum's Not Against Interpretation exhibition series, draws from a selection of the National Heritage Board collection of works by Singapore artists that are untitled.

While artists' motivations for presenting their works as untitled ones may vary, many untitled works are frequently meant to allow viewers to discover meaning through their own perspectives. Besides artistic intent, viewers' interpretations of artworks also play a significant role in the definition of an artwork. In this exhibition, visitors are welcome to suggest suitable titles, placed alongside the artwork, as part of the exhibition

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

### Learning Gallery:

#### People and Places

Ongoing

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

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

## // SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM

### Spice Is Nice

Until May 2014

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

### Spicy Saturday

Saturdays, 18 January, 15 February & 15 March 2014 10am – 12pm

Visit the *Spice Is Nice* exhibition, then go on a walk to Fort Canning Garden to learn about spices, their origins and uses. Complete a special origami spice frame to take home. Great for parent and child bonding!

### Seeing is Believing: Unusual Stamps Exhibition

Until May 2014

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

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

### My Mailbox

From January 2014

View the beautiful creations of young children, students and families – they have decorated unique mailboxes with paint, stamps and more!

### Horses for Courses

31 January – June 2014

Horses for Courses exhibition explores the history and development of horses from the early wild years to present day's highly selective breeds. With domestication, numerous cultures around the world have seen horses partnering man in work and play. The exhibition also features a range of philatelic materials highlighting the horse's role in agriculture, postal delivery, war, equestrian, racing and even legends. From rodeos to carousels, horses have provided transportation and recreation for man.

Man relied on horsepower before the advent of motorised transportation. Letters and parcels were delivered by men on horses or by carriages. In the US, the Pony Express was a relay system which spanned from Missouri over the Rocky Mountains and ended in California.

It took the horseback riders about 10 days to cover a distance of over 3,000 km.

### // SUN YAT SEN NANYANG MEMORIAL HALL

#### Festival of Spring: Lunar New Year Celebrations

Tuesdays to Sundays  
31 January 2014 – 16 February 2014  
10am – 5pm

Usher in the Year of the Horse at the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall with an array of music and dance performances by students, arts and craft demonstrations, workshops and other exciting programmes over fifteen days of the Chinese New Year! Check out our special Chinese zodiac exhibition and lantern riddles where you stand a chance to win a free gift from us when you answer the riddles correctly. All activities are free. For more details, visit [www.wanqingyuan.org.sg](http://www.wanqingyuan.org.sg)

#### Love and Revolution: Dr. Sun Yat Sen & Madam Soong Ching Ling

Tuesday – Sunday,  
7 March 2014 – 7 September 2014  
10am – 5pm

"Love and Revolution" exhibition marks the first collaboration among the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall and Soong Ching Ling Memorial Residence in Shanghai, Soong Ching Ling Mausoleum of the PRC and Shanghai Archives Centre. Unlike our previous temporary exhibitions which focused on the revolutionary lives of Dr. Sun Yat Sen and his supporters, this exhibition will provide insights into Dr. Sun's wife, Madam Soong Ching Ling and her efforts in championing Dr. Sun's causes after his death. The exhibition will also showcase her achievements in the areas of world peace, welfare of women and children where more than 130 artefacts ranging from photographs to personal belongings of Dr. Sun and Madam Soong will be displayed to highlight her experiences and involvement in the major milestones in the history of China.

### // THE NATIONAL ART GALLERY, SINGAPORE

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

Now until 30 April 2014

How does the abstraction of Wu Guanzhong relate to the abstraction of artists in Southeast Asia? This exhibition, titled *In/sight: Abstract Art by Wu Guanzhong and Artists from Southeast Asia*, presents a selection of abstract works from the national collection to illustrate the diverse motivations for abstraction amidst distinct and varied backgrounds.

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

This is a special research exhibition by the National Art Gallery, Singapore, held at the Singapore Art Museum.

# JANUARY- MARCH 2014

# WHAT'S ON





**BEST  
MERCHANDISE  
DESIGN**

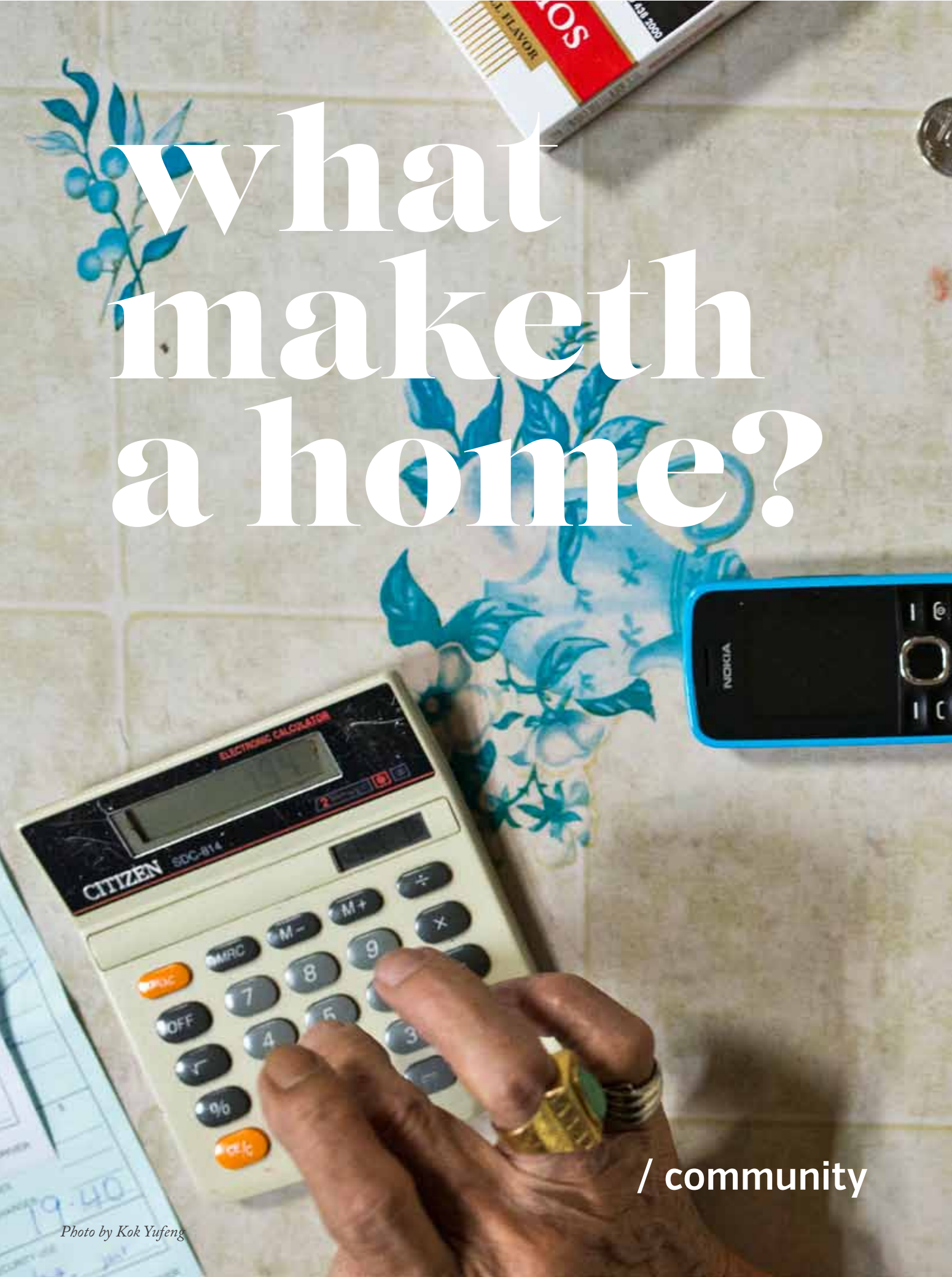
INTERNATIONAL  
DESIGN  
COMMUNICATION  
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NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE  
SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM

# what maketh a home?



/ community

Photo by Kok Yufeng



Pak. HANAN HIR

by David Chew

The idea of home and where we live transforms otherwise neutral and passive spaces into sites loaded with meaning – sites where our personal identities evolve and manifest themselves. A group of 9 students from the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information (WKWSCI) ventured out into different corners of Taman Jurong, one of the oldest towns in Singapore, to document what makes it uniquely home to its residents. The project, titled *Taman Jurong: A Place Called Home* was done by the students for their Advanced Photojournalism course, and features photographs and interviews with Taman Jurong residents. The exhibition runs from 23 Dec 2013 to 4 May 2014 at Our Museum@Taman Jurong.



**#1** – SOME RESIDENTS HAVE LIVED HERE ALL THEIR LIVES; OTHERS HAVE CHOSEN TO MOVE HERE FROM OTHER ESTATES - BUT WHAT EXACTLY MAKES TAMAN JURONG HOME? IN “BUS STOP CONFESSIONS”, BENJAMIN LIM CHATS WITH RESIDENTS AT BUS STOPS IN TAMAN JURONG AND UNCOVERS THEIR MEMORIES OF LIVING IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, AS WELL AS THEIR HOPES FOR A BETTER HOME.

*Photos by Benjamin Lim*







**#2** – JURONG LAKE, A FAMILIAR HAUNT FOR MANY SINGAPOREANS, IS MORE THAN JUST A RECREATION AREA. “DÉJÀ VU”, AN ESSAY BY JACQUELINE AMBROSE, CAPTURES THE ELEMENTS THAT MAKE THIS MAN-MADE BODY OF WATER A MULTI-FUNCTIONAL SPACE THAT ADDS VIBRANCY TO THE TAMAN JURONG NEIGHBOURHOOD.

*Photos by Jacqueline Ambrose*







**#3** – WET MARKETS, INCLUDING THE ONE AT TAMAN JURONG, ARE ON THE DECLINE DUE TO THE LABORIOUS NATURE OF THE BUSINESS, THE YOUNGER GENERATION'S RELUCTANCE TO TAKE OVER AND STIFF COMPETITION FROM MODERN SUPERMARKETS. IN "THE DISAPPEARING TRADE", CINDREY LIU TELLS THE STORIES OF STALLHOLDERS WHO PERSEVERE AT THEIR TRADE, SERVING RESIDENTS OF THE AREA.

*Photos by Cindrey Liu*







**#4** – “AFTER DARK”, BY HARIZ BAHARUDIN AND TAN PEI LIN, TELLS THE STORY OF A DIMLY-LIT CORNER WHERE PEOPLE’S LIVES ARE MADE BRIGHTER BY THE HOPE AND KINSHIP THEY FIND THERE. EVERY NIGHT, A GROUP GATHERS AT THE VOID DECK OF BLOCK 65 YUNG KUANG ROAD. SOME OF THEM ARE RESIDENTS AT THE APARTMENT BLOCK, WHILE OTHERS ARE FORMER RESIDENTS. AS CHATTER AND GUITAR STRUMMING FILL THE AIR, THESE PEOPLE LEAVE BEHIND THE HARDSHIPS IN THEIR LIVES AND TAKE COMFORT IN ONE ANOTHER’S COMPANY.

*Photos by Hariz Baharudin & Tan Pei Lin*

**#5** – TAMAN JURONG IS NOT ONLY HOME TO ITS RESIDENTS BUT ALSO TO THOSE WHO SPEND MOST OF THEIR TIME WORKING THERE. IN “WORK IN PROGRESS”, LOUISE EVANGELINE NG PROFILES THOSE WHO CALL TAMAN JURONG THEIR WORKPLACE, EACH OF THEM WITH A DIFFERENT STORY TO TELL.

*Photo by Louise Evangeline Ng*





**#6** — FOR 42 YEARS, THE TAMAN JURONG  
RADIOPHONE TAXI SERVICE HAS BEEN  
SERVING RESIDENTS AND THOSE WHO  
COMMUTE TO THE SURROUNDING FACTORIES  
AND OFFICES. BUT MANY ARE UNAWARE  
OF WHAT GOES ON BEHIND THE TINTED  
WINDOWS OF THE COMPANY'S TAXI STAND  
AT YUNG KUANG ROAD. KOK YUFENG TAKES A  
PEEK IN “TAMAN JURONG, LAST CALL”.

*Photos by Kok Yufeng*





**#7** – “MISCHIEVOUS”, “DISRUPTIVE” AND “PLAYFUL” ARE WORDS MANY WOULD USE TO DESCRIBE THESE BOYS GOOFING AROUND WITH PAINT, BUT THEY ARE REALLY TAMAN JURONG YOUTHS WHO HAVE BEEN TASKED WITH PAINTING A MURAL AS PART OF THEIR BEACON OF LIFE ACADEMY LEARNING PROGRAMME, LED BY FORMER GANGSTER KIM WHYE KEE. IN “CHOICES”, ISAAC TAN AND OLIVIA NG FIND OUT HOW THIS INSPIRATIONAL LEADER AND BIG BROTHER TO THE YOUTHS USES HIS OWN LIFE EXPERIENCES TO STEER THEM ONTO THE RIGHT PATH.

*Photos by Isaac Tan & Olivia Ng*



❁  
» *David Chew is Assistant Director cum Curator, Community Institutions & Outreach, National Heritage Board*







STAMPS  
OF  
APPROVAL



by Lucille Yap

If you think stamps are boring – here’s an exhibition that will not only change the way you look at – but smell, hear, touch, and yes – taste them.

But first, a little history: Postage stamps were introduced by Englishman, Sir Rowland Hill, in 1840 as a form of prepayment for postal delivery service. It was one of the most important inventions of the 19th century as stamps provided a cheap means of sending letters and paved the way for mass communication. Since then, the role of postage stamps has evolved. Stamps today are used to document a country’s historical milestones, achievements, aspirations, arts, culture, and biodiversity. The wealth of information encapsulated in these miniature pieces of art are collected and studied as a hobby by many.

In today’s IT age, postal communication remains vital, especially with the popularity of internet shopping. In the spirit of innovation, philately – the study of stamps and postal history – has kept up with the times. Postal authorities court buyers by using technological advancements to produce dazzling arrays of stamps; advanced printing technology and innovative printing techniques allow stamp designers to express their creativity. Much to the delight of users and collectors, some stamps these days are designed and printed on non-paper materials and incorporated with interesting and quirky features that bring out their beauty.

Some of these are now on display at the Singapore Philatelic Museum – many for the first time. Spanning over 47 years of collection, the exhibition which features more than 300 unique stamps not only buck traditional expectations that stamps are always and only printed on paper – they even tickle one’s senses of sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch!

It is simply a visual treat to see stamps bejewelled with precious stones like diamond, crystal and gem; and precious metals like gold, silver and bronze. There are also stamps that are made of unusual materials such as lace, cork, wood, and embedded with real pearl, sea salt and volcanic ash. Some can even glow in the dark or feature 3-D moving images, while others smell of coffee, chocolate, fruits and flowers.

If this is not fascinating enough, there are even talking stamps that narrate poems and play folk songs, and DVD stamps that show videos of the country. To top it all, there are stamps that taste of the food they depict when being licked!

# Precious Stone

Special techniques and glues are used to affix diamonds and crystals onto the stamps. These precious stones must be firmly and securely adhered to the stamps to survive the postal system if they are used on mail.



*Four crystals decorated the stamp featuring the Henri Delaunay Cup for UEFA EURO 2008.*

SWAROVSKI CRYSTALS, AUSTRIA, 2008  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION

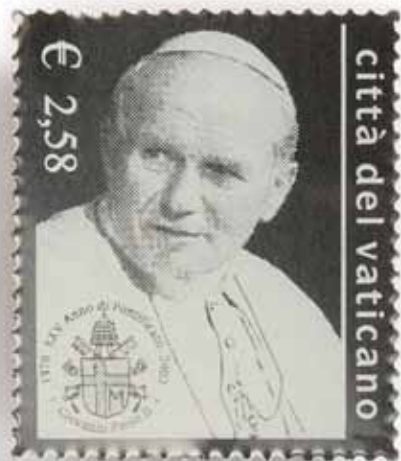
*(Right): A genuine 1.25mm hand-cut diamond is affixed on the crown worn by Queen Elizabeth II on the miniature sheet. The Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012 marked 60 years of her reign.*

QUEEN ELIZABETH II DIAMOND JUBILEE, JERSEY, 2012  
EXHIBIT ON LOAN FROM CARTOR SECURITY PRINTING



# Precious Metal

Genuine 22- and 24-carat gold, silver, bronze and platinum are some of the precious metals used to produce some of the stamps on display. They are either in the form of solid metal similar to ingots, or in the form of foils that are pressed onto the printed stamp surfaces using a combination of heat and pressure.



*The Pope was honoured by Vatican City in the form of genuine silver ingot.*

POPE JOHN PAUL II, VATICAN CITY, 2003  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION

*The entire stamp is embossed on gold foil, featuring the stamp exhibition held in Osaka, Japan, in 1970.*

OSAKA 70, GABON, 1970  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION



*The Snake on the “Gold and Silver Stamp Sheetlet on Lunar New Year Dragon/Snake” issued by Hong Kong Post is affixed with 22K gold-plated lace metal. It is considered a world-first for the application of 22K gold-plated lace metal to a postage stamp.*

YEAR OF THE SNAKE, HONG KONG, 2013  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION





# Unusual Materials

## FOOTBALL MATERIAL

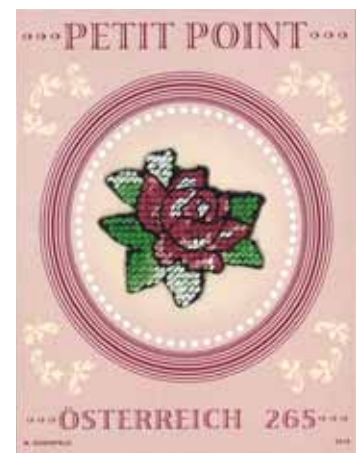
The stamp is made of synthetic material used for the outer surface of footballs. The football championship was held in Austria and Switzerland in 2008.

UEFA EURO 2008, AUSTRIA, 2008  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION

## EMBROIDERY

This series of embroidery stamps is created in Lustenau, the centre of the Vorarlberg embroidery industry by Austrian embroiderer Häemmerle and Vogel. The first two issues are entirely embroidered while the third issue is affixed with an embroidered rose – meticulously pasted by hand.

EMBROIDERY STAMPS SERIES 1, 2 AND 3  
AUSTRIA, 2005, 2007, AND 2010  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION

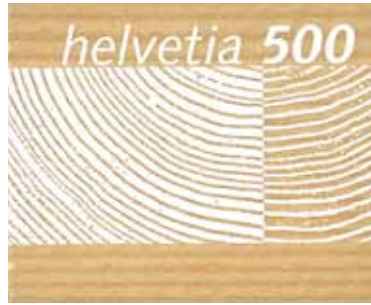




### **CORK MATERIAL**

*This stamp features a cork tree and is made from wafer-thin “paper cork” with a thickness of just 0.35mm. Portugal is the world’s biggest producer of cork.*

CORK TREE, PORTUGAL, 2007  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION



### **FIR TREE WOOD**

*The trees used to produce the stamps were about 120 years old, and come from the Aargau municipalities of Seon and Staufen in Switzerland.*

SWISS WOOD - NATURALLY,  
SWITZERLAND, 2004, EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION



### **LACE**

*This stamp is made entirely of lace which was made exclusively for its issue. The lace is embroidered using polyester thread on a high-quality, satin-weave, polyester base.*

ST GALLEN EMBROIDERED LACE,  
SWITZERLAND, 2000, EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION



### **FLOCK**

*Flock material used on these stamps is produced through a special process. Very fine cellulose fibres with special gum are sprayed onto the stamp paper to create a soft, smooth textured feel to the surface. It has a velvety, fabric-like finish.*

100 YEARS OF FIFA, SINGAPORE, 2004  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION



### **SILK**

*Queen Sirikit’s 78th birthday was celebrated with this issue of silk stamps. The Royal Peacock emblem was granted by the Queen as a quality guarantee for the silk. 15,000 sets of stamps were handmade from about 6,000 metres of silk.*

ROYAL THAI SILK, THAILAND, 2010  
LIMITED EDITION OF MINIATURE SHEET ON LOAN FROM CARTOR SECURITY PRINTING

# Quirky Features



## PEARL

Half a pearl is affixed onto the bottom left-hand corner of each stamp.

PEARL DIVING TOOLS, SAUDI ARABIA, 2005  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION



## BEADED STAMP

The world's first beaded stamp is designed in a unique pouch shape, and is intricately pasted by hand with caviar beads. It is inspired by the exquisite beadwork which is a distinctive aspect of Peranakan culture. The stamp was issued to commemorate the opening of the Peranakan Museum in 2008.

PERANAKAN MUSEUM COLLECTION, SINGAPORE, 2008  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION



## ROCK PARTICLES

This miniature sheet is printed with a special technique: Sandstone dust particles are added to create a rocky feel to its surface.

PA HIN NGAM NATIONAL PARK, THAILAND, 2007  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION

MARINE FAUNA, SLOVENIA, 2013  
EXHIBIT ON LOAN FROM CARTOR SECURITY PRINTING



## SEA SALT

Using a very special thermograph technique, part of the design on the stamps are covered in real salt from the Piranske Soline salt-work in Secovlje.





**STAMPS PERFORATED WITH HOLES**

The stamps resemble the old folk art of paper cutting in China. The intricate design is created using state-of-the-art laser technology. The Zodiac Year of the Dragon was celebrated in 2012.

CHINESE NEW YEAR OF THE DRAGON, LIECHTENSTEIN, 2012  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION



LIGHTHOUSE IN MALAYSIA, MALAYSIA, 2013  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION



GO TO ZERO - TRAFFIC SAFETY, BELGIUM, 2013  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION

**GLOW IN THE DARK**

Special ink with phosphorus is used to produce these stamps. The ink works by absorbing surrounding light and when the environment is dark, light is released.

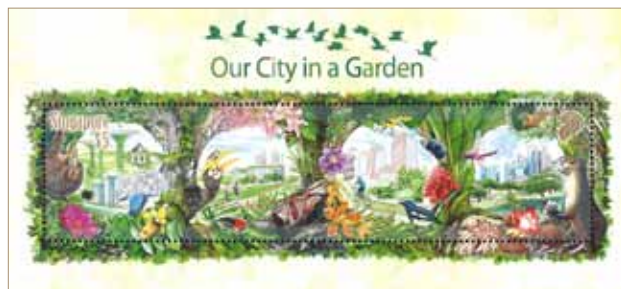


**TENNIS COURT CLAY**

The miniature sheet is printed with fine clay particles from the actual venue – the tennis court of Bercy Hall in Paris.

DAVIS CUP WINNER 2002, RUSSIA, 2003  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION

# Quirky Features



(Above) To commemorate 50 years of Singapore's green movement, the \$5 stamp is embedded with the seeds of *Portulaca grandiflora* – a flowering plant once popular among many Singaporeans.

OUR CITY IN A GARDEN, SINGAPORE, 2013  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION

## PLANT SEEDS

These stamps carry plant seeds which can be removed and planted. The stamps will gradually decompose in the soil, and provide protective mulch for the seedling.

(Below) The seed of the indigenous Ghaf tree is covered in the tree fibre and affixed onto one of the two stamps. The Ghaf tree is an integral part of the United Arab Emirates' environment and heritage.

SAVE THE GHAF TREE, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, 2011  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION



# Stamps with aroma and taste

Scented stamps can be created by using different techniques. One uses the micro-encapsulation of small amounts of perfume; scent is released when the surface is gently rubbed. Another method is to add scented essence to the varnish that coats the surface of the stamps.

Some scented stamps also come with flavours! Food essence is added to the glue before being applied to the back of the stamp, so that users who lick the stamps will taste the food.

The five stamps depict chocolate in various forms: sprinkles, pralines, chocolate spread, pieces of raw chocolate and bars. These stamps taste and smell of dark chocolate. Cocoa-oil is added to the gum to give it even more flavour.



BELGIAN CHOCOLATE, BELGIUM, 2013  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION

# Action Stamps

*This stamp shows the legendary goal scored by Andi Herzog, Austria's record-breaking international player. 48 frames of images taken from television recordings are put together to produce this three-second dynamic and fluid action.*

EURO 2008 FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP, AUSTRIA, 2008  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION



KUNQU OPERA, CHINA, 2010  
EXHIBIT FROM SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM COLLECTION

# Scan & Watch

*Watch a Kunqu Opera performance by scanning these stamps. Kunqu Opera (昆曲) is one of the oldest forms of Chinese opera still performed today. The ancient art form was placed in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2001. The opera developed under the Ming dynasty (14th to 17th centuries) in the city of Kunshan, situated in the region of Suzhou in Southeast China.*

» Lucille Yap is Senior Curator,  
Singapore Philatelic Museum





**:Not Against  
Interpretation**

/ art

While the appreciation of art is largely perceived to be a visual affair, it is also an experience often mediated by text. After all, art and their creators' intentions are frequently conveyed to viewers through words, writings, and most of all, the use of titles.

If names matter, what can we say about untitled art that seem to say nothing, or quite possibly everything? To what extent do text and images attach meaning to art? Without titles and commentaries, is it possible to gain a genuine understanding of the work itself?

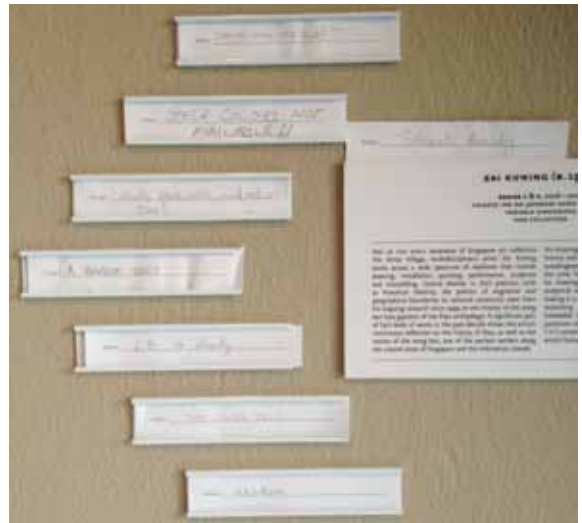
*Untitled*, the second edition in the Singapore Art Museum's *Not Against Interpretation* exhibition series, draws from the National Heritage Board's collection of early drawings, paintings, prints and sculptures by Singapore artists Cheo Chai-Hiang, Chua Ek Kay, Goh Beng Kwan, Lim Tzay Chuen, Joseph McNally, Anthony Poon, Tang Da Wu, Tang Mun Kit and Zai Kuning, amongst others. All of these works are untitled.

Whatever the artists' motivations for presenting their works without a title, many are frequently meant to allow viewers to discover its meaning through their personal perspectives. Untitled works, without prescribed names and textual connotations that can influence viewers' opinions, also prevent a rigid and absolute interpretation of it.

Besides artistic intent, viewers' interpretations of artworks also play a significant role in its definition. In this exhibition, visitors are invited to suggest suitable titles, placed alongside the artwork, as part of the exhibition's objectives of opening up new readings in the experience of contemporary art.

*Not Against Interpretation* is an experimental platform aimed at nurturing appreciation for contemporary art, by inviting visitors to interpret the artworks in their own way, based on their experiences with the works in front of them.





(Top): Names suggested for Zai Kuning's *Series 1 & 2*  
 (Above): Ahmad Abu Bakar's *Untitled (Chair)*

These are some of the titles suggested by visitors for a selection of the works in the exhibition. Many of the submissions are clever, surprising and amusing – elevating the appreciation of the works for other visitors who are seeing them for the first time, who may then be moved to give their own interpretations. We invite you to visit the exhibition and express your own creative take on the artwork titles.



Zai Kuning's *Series 1 & 2* (detail)

**SUBMITTED NAMES:**

WESTLIFE SINGS DEPECHE MODE  
FREUDIAN PROBLEM  
RITUAL OF NATURE  
A VERY DEPRESSED FOUR-YEAR OLD  
LOST IN DECADENCE  
WHEN YOU ARE IN HELL  
IT WAS NOT YOUR FAULT  
THE UGLY SIDE OF SOCIETY  
IN NEED OF HEALING  
ARTEFACTS UNBOUND





Joseph McNally's *Untitled*

**SUBMITTED NAMES**

IMPERFECTION LOOKING FOR GOD

WAY TOO PROUD

THE SWAN SONG

THE STORM IS COMING

LAST GOODBYE

FLIGHTLESS GRACE

RENEWAL

YEARNING

MATING DANCE

NEVER-ENDING LOVE



Baet Yeok Kuan's *Untitled #2 Horn*

**SUBMITTED NAMES**

DADA'S PENDULUM

HANGING SILENCE

CENSORSHIP

EAVESDROPPING

UNPLAY

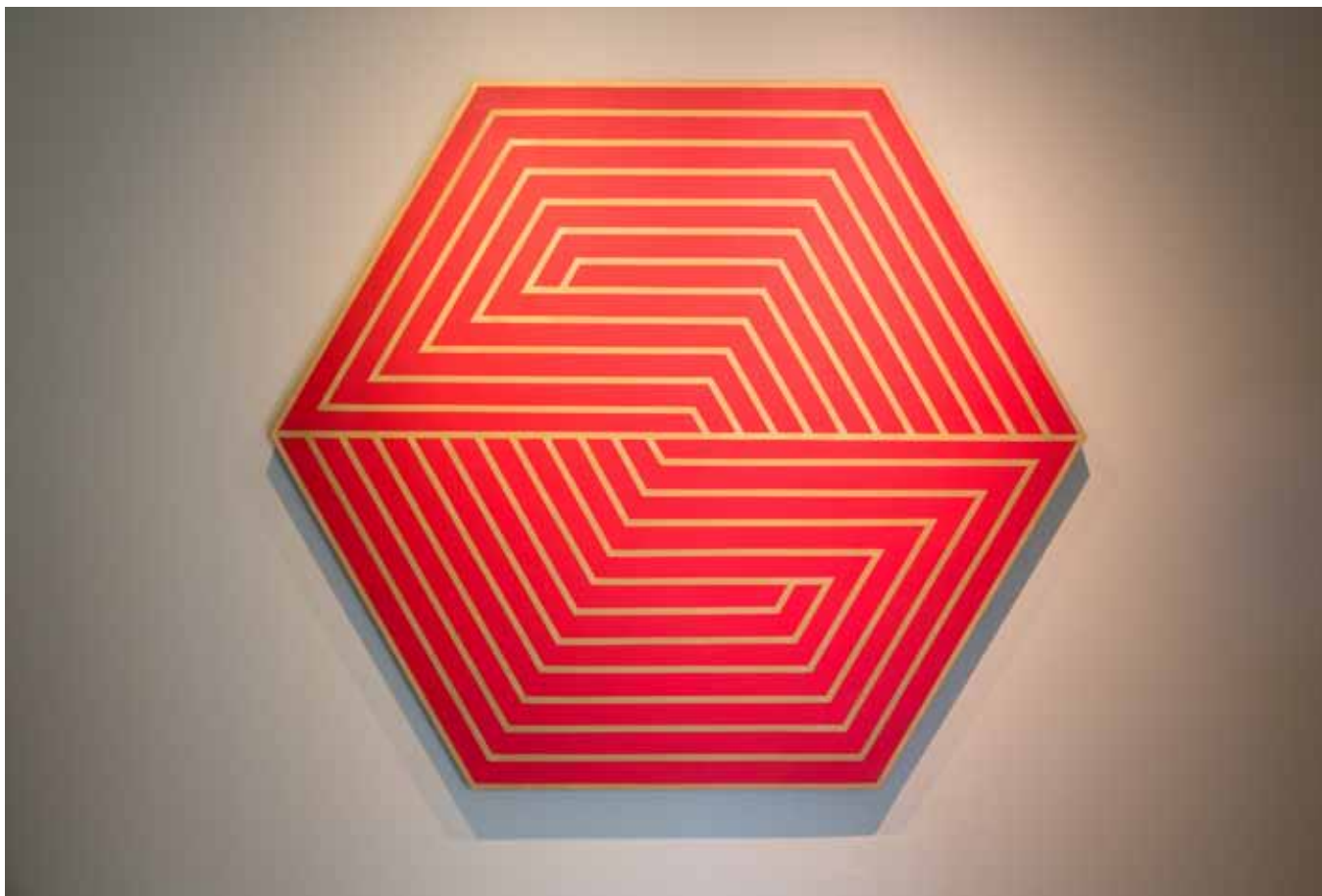
THE UNSPOKEN

A VERY LONG TOOT

MELODY AGAINST GRAVITY

LONG WINDED

RESONANT



Anthony Poon's *Untitled (Hexagonal - Red/Gold)*

**SUBMITTED NAMES**

EVERY JOURNEY HAS AN END

PARALLEL WAYS

RED TAPE

A MAZING

KITE

IN BALANCE, IN CHAOS

THE COMPLICATED MIND

SUFFOCATION

ANG KU KUEH

SMRT 2015 MAP



Cheo Chai-Hiang's *Untitled (Miles to go before I sleep)*

**SUBMITTED NAMES:**

LANGUAGE BARRIER  
STUMPED SLUMBER  
SECRET WINDOW  
UNFINISHED  
MISSING  
HIDDEN MESSAGE  
NATURE "MADE"  
BURN AFTER READING  
FROSTED WOOD  
SLEEPY HOLLOW



Lim Tzay Chuen's *Untitled*

**SUBMITTED NAMES:**

RIGID FREEDOM

METAMORPHOSIS

INNER DEMONS

CLAW ABSTRACTION

UNCHAINED MELODY

AS MY SINS TAKE FLIGHT

GINSENG

IN NEED OF HEALING

BEAUTY IN A BEAST

PUNISHMENT



*Tang Da Wu's *Untitled**

**SUBMITTED NAMES**

SACRILEGE  
STRUGGLE AND EQUILIBRIUM  
AMORPHOUS DANCING WITH ABSTRACT  
BLEEDING FEMALE FALCON  
AXE WOUND  
FREEDOM BOUND  
MY SISTER'S HEART  
TO KILL A NIGHTINGALE  
THOR'S HAMMER  
SOUL ORGAN, ORGAN OF THE SOUL



» *Nabilah Said is Manager, Marketing and  
Communication Dept, Singapore Art Museum*

» *Michelle Ho is Curator, Curation & Collections  
Dept, Singapore Art Museum*



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