

September 2021

Theme: **Symbolism in Asia**

Topics included:

- ❖ Lesser Sunda Island Weaving
- ❖ Symbolism behind Dragon Robe & Lotus Shoes
- ❖ Symbolism of Animals in Quilts
- ❖ Nagas and Serpentine symbolism
- ❖ Javanese Batik
- ❖ Swastikas
- ❖ Buddhist Symbols
- ❖ Symbolic meanings of elephants
- ❖ Symbolism in Contemporary Arts of SE Asia
- ❖ Tattoos
- ❖ Rice
- ❖ Symbolism in Australian Aboriginal Art
- ❖ Symbolism in Dance
- ❖ The Merlion of Singapore

April 2021

Theme: **Country Connections**

Topics included:

- ❖ Linguistic connections - India and Europe
- ❖ Food connections - India and Imperialists
- ❖ Modern Art Exchanges in India and Japan
- ❖ How Shanghai become a safe haven during WW2
- ❖ A visit by the French Corvette "La Favorite" to Asia in 1830-1833
- ❖ History of Japanese in Singapore
- ❖ Holland & the Spice Islands (Banda)
- ❖ Relationship of Thailand & Burma over time
- ❖ Portuguese Influence on Asian food
- ❖ The art of Sireh
- ❖ Japanese Influence on European Art
- ❖ Early SE Asian connections w/ Australia
- ❖ India / China - From Buddha to Borders
- ❖ Hadhrami Arabs influence in Singapore
- ❖ Ramayana Connections
- ❖ Colonial influences on Singapore food culture

January 2021

Theme: **Asian Cities: Historical, Modern & Mythical**

Topics included:

- ❖ Palambang & Pakuan
- ❖ Ethnic enclaves in Saigon and Hanoi
- ❖ Tokyo
- ❖ Garden Cities
- ❖ Galle
- ❖ Luang Prabang
- ❖ Singapore Urban Planning – modern
- ❖ Penang
- ❖ Chang’an
- ❖ Seoul
- ❖ Amaravati – India
- ❖ An Australian City – Hobart
- ❖ Canton
- ❖ From Patliputra to Patna
- ❖ Bagan
- ❖ Ayuttaya

November 2020

Theme: **Open Mike SG Season**

Topics included:

- ❖ Badass!
- ❖ Salt
- ❖ Veni, Vidi, Vici: a presentation on chillies
- ❖ Finding Nagaland
- ❖ Singapore River – Her Story
- ❖ The Blue
- ❖ Silk Road Diet
- ❖ The Great Divergence between the Orient & the Occident: or about the IR

September 2020

Theme: **The Silk Road**

Topics included:

- ❖ Zoroastrians and the Silk Road
- ❖ Islamic Architecture on the Silk Road
- ❖ The Radhinites
- ❖ The Sogdians
- ❖ The Belt & Road Initiative
- ❖ What is the Silk Road?
- ❖ Music on the Silk Road
- ❖ Slavery on the Silk Road
- ❖ Goods flowing east on the Silk Road
- ❖ Ibn Battuta & his journey
- ❖ The Maritime Silk Road
- ❖ Caravanseria & Caravans
- ❖ Timur & the Timurid Empire
- ❖ Cave Temples at Dunhuang
- ❖ Buddhist Art in the Magao Caves
- ❖ Food on the Silk Road

June 2020 (two themes ran concurrently)

Theme: **Art & Politics**

Topics included:

- ❖ Art of North Korea
- ❖ Woke in Wood- Woodcuts in Asia
- ❖ Political Cartoons
- ❖ Political films in Bollywood
- ❖ The reflection of traumatic experiences in the artworks of a Cambodian diasporic artist.
- ❖ M.F. Hussein: painter or provocateur
- ❖ Photography & Politics
- ❖ Ai Weiwei
- ❖ Dressed to Express: Role of Fashion in Asian Politics
- ❖ Socio-politics in Contemporary Art: Indonesia Thailand & Philippines
- ❖ Activist-Artist Vasallen Sitthiket
- ❖ Graffiti

- ❖ Revolutionary Art

June 2020 (two themes ran concurrently)

Theme: **The Built Space: Architecture & Urban Planning**

Topics included:

- ❖ Futuristic Architecture in China
- ❖ Ancient Religious Architectural Propaganda
- ❖ The HDB story: The Singapore Story
- ❖ Japanese Gardens
- ❖ Dome of the Rock
- ❖ Marina Bay Sands
- ❖ Chettinad Mansions
- ❖ I.M Pei - Iconic buildings in Asia
- ❖ Astronomy in Hindu Temples
- ❖ Ottoman Architecture
- ❖ Contemporary Hindu Architecture

April 2020

Theme: **The Blue World**

Topics included:

- ❖ Sea Mermaids of Korea
- ❖ Water and its properties
- ❖ Singapore River History
- ❖ Asian Water Disasters
- ❖ Water Puppets of Vietnam
- ❖ Drinking Water
- ❖ Corals and Mangroves
- ❖ Naval History of the Chola
- ❖ The Ganges River or Ganga
- ❖ The Great Wave off Kanagawa
- ❖ Water deities in Hindu mythology
- ❖ Pirates - Old & New
- ❖ The Singapore Port
- ❖ The Mekong Delta
- ❖ The 9-Dash Line

- ❖ Wetlands & wetland birds of Asia
- ❖ Water and the Aboriginal Culture
- ❖ Death of the Dead Sea
- ❖ Yangtze River and Yellow River
- ❖ The Ring of Fire - submerged volcanoes & tsunamis
- ❖ They live by the water: The Lighermen of Singapore
- ❖ The Sama Badjao
- ❖ Pearls

January 2020

Theme: **Food!**

Topics included:

- ❖ The march of General Tso's chicken
- ❖ Food, politics, and Caste
- ❖ Breakfast in my hometown
- ❖ Indian Superfood
- ❖ Parsi cuisine
- ❖ Honey and Sugar
- ❖ Where does the heat come from? Capsaicin
- ❖ Japanese New Year Food, Osechi
- ❖ Kaiseki
- ❖ Peranakan Cuisine
- ❖ Soyabean
- ❖ Dining Etiquette and Taboos
- ❖ Pickles
- ❖ Salt
- ❖ Seaweed
- ❖ Food Security
- ❖ Honey
- ❖ Israeli Food
- ❖ The Spice Trade- How nutmeg changed the world
- ❖ Food and Repurposing of Food
- ❖ Food in Asian Movies
- ❖ Gourmet Foods

September 2019

Theme: **Myths, Legends and Folktales**

Topics included:

- ❖ Protectors & Saviors of SE Asia
- ❖ The Palace of Illusions – Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni
- ❖ Kumano Kodo Trail and Japanese Creation Myths
- ❖ Superstitions of the Philippines
- ❖ Singapore Places & Streets
- ❖ Singapore Ghost Stories
- ❖ Japanese Myths
- ❖ Myths & Legends associated with Indian temples
- ❖ Chinese Cosmology
- ❖ Animism in Borneo
- ❖ Vietnamese Myths and Legends
- ❖ The Legend of White Snake – a Chinese folk tale
- ❖ Contemporary Art inspired by Asian Mythology
- ❖ Japanese Ghosts
- ❖ Zodiacs of Asia – how they are alike and different
- ❖ Journey to the West
- ❖ Feng Shui and Vastu Shastra
- ❖ Uzbeki Myths

April 2019

Theme: **Asian Crimes & Courts**

Topics included:

- ❖ Van Trong Nguyen
- ❖ Sharia Law
- ❖ Prostitution in Singapore & Asia
- ❖ *Midnight in Peking* – a murder in 1937 Beijing
- ❖ The Mumbai Blasts
- ❖ Ponzi Schemes in Asia
- ❖ Opium in Singapore
- ❖ Art Crime in China & Indonesia
- ❖ Ethnic conflicts in Southeast Asia
- ❖ Comfort Women
- ❖ Yakuza
- ❖ Guilty as charged: Crimes that have shaken Singapore since 1965

- ❖ Cyber heist
- ❖ Animals and Crime in Asia
- ❖ Single Child Policy in China

January 2019

Theme: **Great Journeys of Asia: Road, River, Rail, Religious & Personal**

Topics included:

- ❖ Travel in Japan prior to the Shinkansen
- ❖ The Journey of the Red Pepper
- ❖ Caravanserai on the Silk Road
- ❖ Luxury Train Journeys
- ❖ Biology enables; Culture forbids
- ❖ Admiral Zheng He
- ❖ Islam's Journey into the Far East & South Asia
- ❖ The Hajj
- ❖ Kailash Mansarovar
- ❖ Journey of Buddhism Eastwards
- ❖ Kumbh Mela
- ❖ Yoga and meditation journey to the West

September 2018

Theme: **Singapore & Asia in 1978** (in honor of FOM, founded 1978, turning 40)

Topics included:

- ❖ Singapore Visual Arts - Second Generation Nanyang Artists
- ❖ The Singapore Floods of 1978
- ❖ China's Open-Door Policy 1978
- ❖ Air India and Jahangir Ratanji Dadabhoy Tata
- ❖ Fashion and lifestyle in Singapore in 1978
- ❖ Sentosa and land reclamation
- ❖ A history of Sony Corporation
- ❖ The Hippie Trail
- ❖ HDB Apartment Buildings
- ❖ Singapore - then and now
- ❖ Hanae Mori: a history of this iconic Japanese fashion designer
- ❖ Games We Play - the start of video games in 1978
- ❖ Kuo Pao Kun; Singapore playwright
- ❖ Sachin & India: how far both have come since 1978

- ❖ The Vietnamese / Cambodian War
- ❖ Singapore Government Social Campaigns

April 2018

Theme: **The Arts in Asia since 1950**

Topics included:

- ❖ The Inkstone & Oil: Crossroads in Art of SEA 1950-1970
- ❖ Paik Nam June: Korean Founder of Video Art
- ❖ Revival of Traditional Craft & its application to the modern world
- ❖ Art under Communism
- ❖ M.F. Husain: Modern Indian Painter
- ❖ Indochina Diaspora Artists & the Legacy of the Vietnam War
- ❖ Condo Architecture from HDB to Contemporary Design
- ❖ Black & Whites to modern single-family houses in Singapore
- ❖ The Theft of Pavarti
- ❖ Japanese Anime & Manga
- ❖ How Bollywood evolved over time
- ❖ Zaha Hadid
- ❖ Creativity in Captivity: Htein Lin
- ❖ Female leads & sexuality in Bollywood films
- ❖ Contemporary Chinese Art

January 2018

Theme: **Asian Empires: *Tycoons, Dynasties & Monarchies***

Topics included:

- ❖ Joseon Dynasty
- ❖ Tragic tales of Korean Dynasties & Korean TV Drama
- ❖ The Mongols
- ❖ Timur (Tamerlane) & the Timurid Empire
- ❖ Alibaba & Jack Ma: Chinese e-commerce empire
- ❖ The Last Emperor of the Yuan Dynasty & Empress Ki
- ❖ Tata Group
- ❖ Japanese Emperors
- ❖ Tang Dynasty
- ❖ Angkor Wat; when civilisation stops & nature takes over
- ❖ Maratha Empire

- ❖ Persian Empire
- ❖ Vijayanagara: Almost forgotten kingdom
- ❖ The role of women in Asian family business empires
- ❖ Kim Dynasty / North Korea
- ❖ Female Dynasts in the Indian subcontinent
- ❖ Nehru / Gandhi Empire
- ❖ Dalai Lama

October 2017

Theme: **Tribes of Asia**

Topics included:

- ❖ Laos Tribes & Textiles
- ❖ The Journey of the Chinese Script in East Asia
- ❖ The Hmong
- ❖ Headhunters
- ❖ The Nias Islanders of Indonesia
- ❖ The Ainu of Japan
- ❖ Tribes of Papua New Guinea
- ❖ The Dani Tribe of PNG
- ❖ Port City Immigrants
- ❖ Geography & Migration - why some stay put
- ❖ The Rohingya

April 2017

Theme: **Asian Women Who Inspire**

Topics included:

- ❖ Amma vs. Amma
- ❖ Badass Mongal Queens
- ❖ Datin Seri Endon (Malaysian batiks & kebaya)
- ❖ Aung San Suu Kyi
- ❖ Warrior Women
- ❖ Kiran Bedi
- ❖ Priyanka Chopra

January 2017

Theme: **Hatch, Match & Dispatch: *Birth, Marriage & Death Customs***

Topics included:

- ❖ Asian Marriage Food Customs
- ❖ Toraja Death Rituals
- ❖ East Timorese Animist Traditions
- ❖ Mummy-to-be Taboos
- ❖ Minangkabau Traditions
- ❖ Singapore Cemeteries & Burial Customs
- ❖ Chinese Marriage
- ❖ Chitti Melakan Style Weddings
- ❖ Initiation Rites for Myanmar Boys
- ❖ Hindu "Saat Phere"
- ❖ China One Child Policy
- ❖ Shinto Wedding Customs
- ❖ Marriage Drinks
- ❖ Filial Piety Traditions
- ❖ Balinese Child Ceremonies & Customs
- ❖ Hindu Rituals of Hatch, Match & Dispatch

September 2016

Theme: **The Silk Road**

Topics included:

- ❖ Pre-Islamic Sogdiana
- ❖ Karez of Xinjiang
- ❖ Travelling the Silk Road
- ❖ Marco Polo
- ❖ Caravanserai & Caravans
- ❖ Ship Building
- ❖ Geography of the Silk Road
- ❖ New Silk Road
- ❖ Wealth & Power of City States
- ❖ Mongols
- ❖ Religions Along the Silk Road
- ❖ An Indian City Along the Silk Road
- ❖ Rice & Rummi
- ❖ Dumplings & Noodles
- ❖ Visit to Port Cities at ACM

Theme: **SG50**

Topics included:

- ❖ SG50 through contemporary art
- ❖ Landmark Buildings
- ❖ HDBs
- ❖ Underground Singapore
- ❖ Nature Reserves
- ❖ Historic Sites
- ❖ Changi Airport
- ❖ Theatres of Old Singapore
- ❖ Water Management
- ❖ Land Reclamation

Some previous study group themes:

- Costumes and fashions of Asia
- UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Asia
- Arts and Architecture of Asia
- Migration: The quest for a better life
- Mountains of Asia
- Rivers of Asia
- Spices