

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

October 2020 to September 2021

Friends of the Museums, Singapore (FOM) offers volunteering and learning opportunities for FOM members and the community at large, with a focus on the history, art and culture of Asia. We organize events, activities and training sessions towards this purpose.

In the financial year 2020-21, the challenges of Covid continued. At FOM we adjusted and adapted to the evolving situation. Docent led tours were paused several times due to concerns for the safety of our docents. Despite limited guiding opportunities, FOM docents guided many in person and online tours. Our museum, activity and communication leaders took the changes in their stride and sought new opportunities to keep our members engaged. FOM's Public Information Morning and Open Morning were both held virtually. I am pleased to share with you some of the key initiatives undertaken this year.

Museum Programmes

Service to Singapore's museums and institutions is at the heart of FOM's mission. Our docents conduct tours for the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM), National Museum of Singapore (NMS), Singapore Art Museum (SAM), The Peranakan Museum (TPM), Gillman Barracks (GB), Indian Heritage Centre (IHC), Malay Heritage Centre (MHC), STPI Creative Workshop & Gallery (STPI), Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall (SYSNMH) and walking tours of the four Chinatown Precincts, Kampong Gelam and Little India.

The concern for docent safety led the council to suspend guided tours several times this year. Even with limited opportunities, FOM docents led 1,774 tours for 8,594 visitors this financial year. Of these, our Japanese Docents (JD) led 282 tours for 1,020 visitors. The tours were delivered both in-person and online. With the implementation of vaccination differentiated safe management measures and rapid increase in vaccination rate in Singapore, currently suspended docent led Public Tours are scheduled to resume from 10 Jan 2022.

FOM docents guided several special exhibitions this year, such as *Life in Edo/ Russel Wong in Kyoto, Home, truly: Growing Up with Singapore, 1950s to the Present, Modern Women of the Republic: Fashion and Change in China and Singapore, Urang Banjar: Heritage and Culture of the Banjar in Singapore, Sikhs in Singapore: A Story Untold, Music for Everyone: Variations on a theme, Singapore Art Week 2021 and Proposals for Novel Ways of Being.*

In addition, our docents guided tours for Inter-Religious Organization to encourage inter-faith dialogue, and social media influencers to reach the younger demographic, live-stream guided tour for students at LASALLE and NUS, and led multiple Student Guiding Workshops, including for Tamil speaking students. They also video and audio recorded information about select exhibits for visitors. These were just some of the initiatives undertaken in addition to regular guiding. Docents from all museums continued to research and share their knowledge with fellow guides at Docent Ongoing Training (DOT) sessions held via Zoom.

The minimum guiding requirement for FOM docents was waived for April 2020-March 21 guiding year. From April 2021 to March 2022, a new Docent Commitment Points (DCP) system has been rolled out with the aim of keeping docents engaged with their museums and docent community.

After a year's break, Docent training returned with a hybrid model of online and in-person training sessions for 2021-22. Docent Training for ACM, NMS and IHC started with 68 trainees in September, while SYSNMH is recruiting for a Feb 2022 start. The Malay Heritage Foundation Kampong Gelam (MHF-KG) conducted training for 15 trainee docents. GB added 10 docents. Japanese Docents trained 13 new docents. Docent training was also conducted for two new venues: *Changi Chapel and Museums* and *Fort Siloso*, for 13 and 19 docents, respectively.

Member Activities

Participation was healthy across all activity groups. Asian Study Group, Asian Film Study Group, Textile Enthusiasts Group, Monday Morning Lectures, Friday with Friends and the Asian Book groups met online for the most part. Curio, FOM Members Care and Explore Singapore! groups met in person when allowed. Explore Singapore! hosted many sold-out events which included *Tiong Bahru Heritage Walk, Redhill tour and City Trees Walk*, just to name a few. Study Tours continued to be on hold this year. The unique, fully subscribed, certificate program, *Asian Art & History for Museum Enthusiasts* (AAHME) concluded in December 2020 with 151 Museum Enthusiasts hailing from 27 countries participating in the course. FOM Docents and friends, currently overseas,

led virtual tours of museums in their cities in a new online series titled *Museums Around the World with FOM*. Our members joined us on Zoom from all over the world to conduct and attend these tours.

Communications

FOM Newsletters have been revamped based on member feedback. We now deliver Weekly Newsletters detailing the upcoming week's offerings and a Monthly newsletter that provides an overview of FOM activities. The website is regularly updated. Most of our events and activities continue on Zoom. FOM's bi-monthly magazine, *PASSAGE*, continues to be delivered to members consistently every two months. Members can stay informed on all FOM events and activities via FOM Website, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter page, Newsletters, and *PASSAGE* magazine.

Volunteer Recognition and Appreciation

This year, 383 volunteers were invited to attend FOM's Volunteer Appreciation event held over a three-day period at NMS. Of these, 43 volunteers were eligible for a 3-year pin, 54 for a 5-year pin, 13 for a 10-year pin, 3 for a 15-year pin and 3 for a 20-year pin to acknowledge their years of volunteering with FOM. The Salome De Decker Award, given to a volunteer who epitomizes hard work and humility, was awarded to Mr. Sim Chong Teck for his service.

Philanthropy

The *FOM Members Care* (FOMMC) activity group provided many opportunities for FOM members to get involved and give back to Singapore. To support Singapore's *One Million Trees Movement* 64 FOM members and friends undertook tree planting along Ang Mo Kio Avenue 8. FOM members also participated in the *Walk for Rice* event once again in December 2020 where 94 participants walked 641 KM, earning 2137 bowls each of white rice, brown rice, and oatmeal for those in need. FOM docents shared guiding tips and advice with visually impaired individuals to help train them to lead guided tours at ACM at the museum's invitation.

FOM is committed to continue giving to education through the FOM-NHB Heritage Grant which provides our museums' education and program staff members with the opportunity to gain valuable experience with world's leading museums. The FOM Grant awarded in 2020 to Shireen Tan and Mandy Lim was not utilized due to Covid-19 travel restrictions. There were no nominations in 2021. The grant money has been set aside for next year.

FOM was awarded the Patron of Heritage Award (POHA) by the National Heritage Board again this year to acknowledge FOM's contribution to heritage causes.

The Future

We are looking to a return to guiding Public Tours in the new year. In the interim, we have launched *FOM Members Only* tours and tours to support docent training. Several of our valuable docents have relocated this year. However, a new cohort of docents will join FOM upon completion of 2021/22 training which will help replenish our docent numbers. This year we successfully moved our accounts from Citibank to DBS and now offer *PayNow* as an easy payment option. While FOM has healthy reserves to fall back on, we have to continue to be careful with our expenses in the coming year. We continue to seek fresh opportunities to retain and grow our membership of approximately 1500 members with a host of new offerings. With the gradual reopening of Singapore and the world, the future looks bright.

My sincere thanks to all our volunteers for their invaluable contributions, our members for standing by us, and our partners for their steadfast support throughout the year.

Thank you.



Garima G. Lalwani

President
Friends of the Museums, Singapore