

# PASSAGE

Friends of the Museums Singapore

March / April 2019

art  
history  
culture  
people



# President's Letter

**Dear Friends,**

The year began with a flurry of activities for FOM members. I hope you managed to take advantage of a few of them. Monday Morning Lectures and Fridays with Friends resumed. These free lectures are an opportunity to learn something new, often on select topics presented by leading authorities. Monday Specials (previously known as Gallery in Focus) are tours that take visitors through the galleries on a journey based on a unique idea or theme created especially for that tour. Perhaps the lectures and tours will spark your curiosity and lead you on your own journey of discovery. You may decide to join the Asian Study Group or go on a study tour with other FOM members. This issue of *PASSAGE* chronicles a number of recent FOM study tours to whet your appetite for more.

In March, study tour participants will travel to Bhutan to understand and appreciate the concept of Gross National Happiness and its Four Pillars via the sights and sounds of Bhutan. Did you know that Bhutan is the only country in the world that measures its citizens' happiness? This concept led to worldwide discussions on the role that happiness plays in the lives of a country's citizens. This led to the United Nations launching the International Day of Happiness in 2013 and member nations now celebrate the day on 20 March.

After extensive renovations, the Ancestors and Rituals Gallery and the Islamic Art Gallery at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) are open for visitors. Spread over 377 square metres, the Ancestors and Rituals Gallery has more than 240 works, some of which used to be part of the old Raffles Library and Museum collection. The special exhibition, *Raffles in Southeast Asia: Revisiting the Scholar and Statesman*, is now on show and runs through 28 April at the ACM. I hope you can take time out with your family to see this historically important exhibition.

While some of our museums are opening, others are closing for renovations, including the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) and SAM at 8Q. The Peranakan Museum is scheduled to close for renovations at the end of March. Before it all goes into temporary storage, do visit one last time to view items from Peranakan culture: the exquisite wedding outfits and the richly decorated textiles covered in embroidery and beadwork. Another aspect of Peranakan culture is being showcased at the Indian Heritage Centre, in the exhibition *Chetti Melaka of the Straits – Rediscovering Peranakan Indian Communities*. This exhibition concentrates on the Peranakan descendants of Tamil traders who married local Malay and Chinese women and who consider Melaka their place of origin. FOM docents offer tours of this special exhibition, which runs until 5 May.

The Malay Heritage Centre's docent training commences in March. That same month, several of the other docent training sessions will come to an end and the trainees will start preparing for their mentor tours. Best wishes to the docent trainees from the Asian Civilisations Museum, National Museum of Singapore, Indian Heritage Centre and the URA/FOM Chinatown Heritage Trails for their upcoming mentor tours.

In January, we welcomed new members during a coffee morning held at the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall (SYSNMH). Council members and other FOM leaders were on hand to answer questions. Most of the attendees went on a docent-led introductory tour of SYSNMH. Kudos to the docent community who, in addition to their regular guiding commitments, are always willing to take on the many tour requests that come up. In just the last five years, FOM docents have guided a quarter of a million visitors across all the museums where docents provide tours.

Thank you to all FOM volunteers for helping us stay a strong and vibrant organisation!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Garima".

Garima G Lalwani  
FOM President 2019



## PASSAGE

A publication of  
Friends of the Museums Singapore

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MICA (P) 108/01/2019

ISSN 1793-8619

UEN: T04SS0218E

### Supported by



National  
Heritage  
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## Welcome PASSAGE

President's Letter

i

## Features

Letters that Illuminate the Past <i>by Liz Gielewski</i>	2
ArteFact: Nataraja, Lord of Dance <i>by Aparna Balasubramaniam</i>	4
Museum Watch: Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum, Bangkok <i>by Caroline Carfantan</i>	5
Habitat: Pek Sin Choon: A Singaporean Tea House <i>by Arlene Bastion</i>	6
Traces: An Exhibition that Gives One Pause for Thought <i>by Patricia Bjaaland Welch</i>	7
William Farquhar: An Officer and a Gentleman <i>by Vidya Schalk</i>	8
In the Buddha's Footsteps <i>by Priya Seshadri</i>	10
Melaka: A Reprise of FOM's First-Ever Study Tour <i>by Tara Dhar Hasnain</i>	12
Amritsar: A Spiritual Journey <i>by Harman Deol</i>	14
The FOM Trip that Didn't Happen <i>by Gisella Harrold</i>	15
Israel Study Tour: A Four-Thousand-Year Tapestry <i>by Jonathan Asherson</i>	16
Half-Day Art Stroll through Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam <i>by Sabine Gebele-Pham</i>	18
Shifting Perceptions: from Primitive to Global <i>by Soumya Ayer</i>	20
Island Notes: Shophouses <i>by Darly Furlong</i>	29

## FOM Reports

Showcasing Singapore through Augmented Reality and Art <i>by Durriya Dohadwala</i>	23
Cyanotype: Instant Pictures Before the Polaroid <i>by Tina Walton</i>	25

## FOM Member Activities

Explore Singapore!	26
Study Group	26
Monday Morning Lectures	27
Japanese Docents	28
Textile Enthusiasts Group	28
Coordinators Contact List	32

## Museum Information and Exhibitions

Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM)	30
Gillman Barracks	30
Indian Heritage Centre (IHC)	30
Malay Heritage Centre (MHC)	30
National Museum of Singapore (NMS)	30
NUS Museum, NUS Centre for the Arts	31
Peranakan Museum (TPM)	31
Singapore Art Museum (SAM)	31
STPI	31

**On the Cover:** The cover photo shows part of the Western Wall, also known as the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. The wall is the only remnant of the Second Jewish Temple, which was destroyed in 70 CE by the Romans and is one of the holiest sites for Jews. It is a tradition to press a written prayer into the cracks of the Wailing Wall. Photo by Gisella Harrold.

FOM is a volunteer, non-profit society dedicated to providing volunteer guides and financial support to Singapore's museums and cultural institutions and to delivering programmes to enhance the community's knowledge of Asia's history, culture and art.

FOM is an Associate Member of the World Federation of Friends of the Museums.

FOM member privileges include free admission to NHB museums (excluding special exhibitions); access to FOM programmes including docent training, lectures, study tours, volunteer opportunities; a subscription to the FOM magazine, *PASSAGE*, and discounts at selected retail outlets, theatres and restaurants. Membership in FOM ranges from \$30 (senior) - \$120 (family) depending on category of membership.

For more information about FOM, visit our website [www.fom.sg](http://www.fom.sg) or contact the FOM office.

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On 1 February a new special exhibition, *Raffles in Southeast Asia: Revisiting the Scholar and Statesman*, opened at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM). 2019 marks the 200-year anniversary of Sir Stamford Raffles and Major William Farquhar landing in Singapore and securing a settlement for the British that could be used for trade. The exhibition, which is co-curated by the ACM and the British Museum, features 265 artefacts that come from museums in Amsterdam and Leiden in Holland, the British Museum, The British Library, the Museum Nasional in Indonesia, the National Museum of Singapore, ACM, the National Archives of Singapore and many others. The exhibition will run until the end of April and its primary focus is on Raffles' career prior to his landing in Singapore and features some of the extensive collection of artefacts Raffles acquired while in Southeast Asia.

Among these are two beautifully illuminated letters that hint at a story of death and intrigue in the royal Bendahara family. The first letter, and one of the exhibition highlights, is said to have come from Sultan Mahmud Syah of Johor and Pahang. In 1811, as a result of the Napoleonic Wars, the French were in control of Holland and by extension, in control of the Dutch colony in Java. Raffles had persuaded Lord Minto, Governor General of India, that Java was the "India of the East" and should be taken from the French. In his preparations for invading Java and securing it for the East India Company (EIC), Raffles wrote letters to all the important chiefs and sultans in the Malay world, asking for their support. In the letter, Sultan Mahmud thanks Raffles for his letter and gifts and agrees to send an armed warship for the British expedition to Java. The letter is dated 5 January 1811.

The significance of this letter is that nine days after it was written, Sultan Mahmud died without officially announcing his successor. In the Malay world, a sultan cannot be buried until his successor has been appointed. As the elder son was away getting married, pressure was placed on the second-born son, Abdu'r Rahman, to become sultan. This choosing of the second son was quite controversial and Sultan Mahmud's fourth wife, who was in possession of the royal regalia needed for the official appointing of a new sultan, refused to hand it over.

The second letter is from Engku Sayed Muhammad Zain al-Kudsi who was the *syahbandar* or Harbour Master of Lingga. This letter, according to Ahmat Adam in his book *Letters of Sincerity*, tells Raffles that Engku Sayed wasn't able to deliver his letter to the sultan asking for a supply of boats and refers to the sultan as Abdu'r Rahman. This letter is dated 6 January 1811, a full eight days before Sultan Mahmud is said to have died. So of course it contradicts the first letter, purportedly from Sultan Mahmud. In his book *A History of Johore (1365-1895)* R O Winstedt strongly suggests that there were rumours that the Sultan had been poisoned by a Bugis chief who was trying to dislodge Hussein as the rightful heir because of a family feud and replace him with Abdu'r Rahman – the second son.

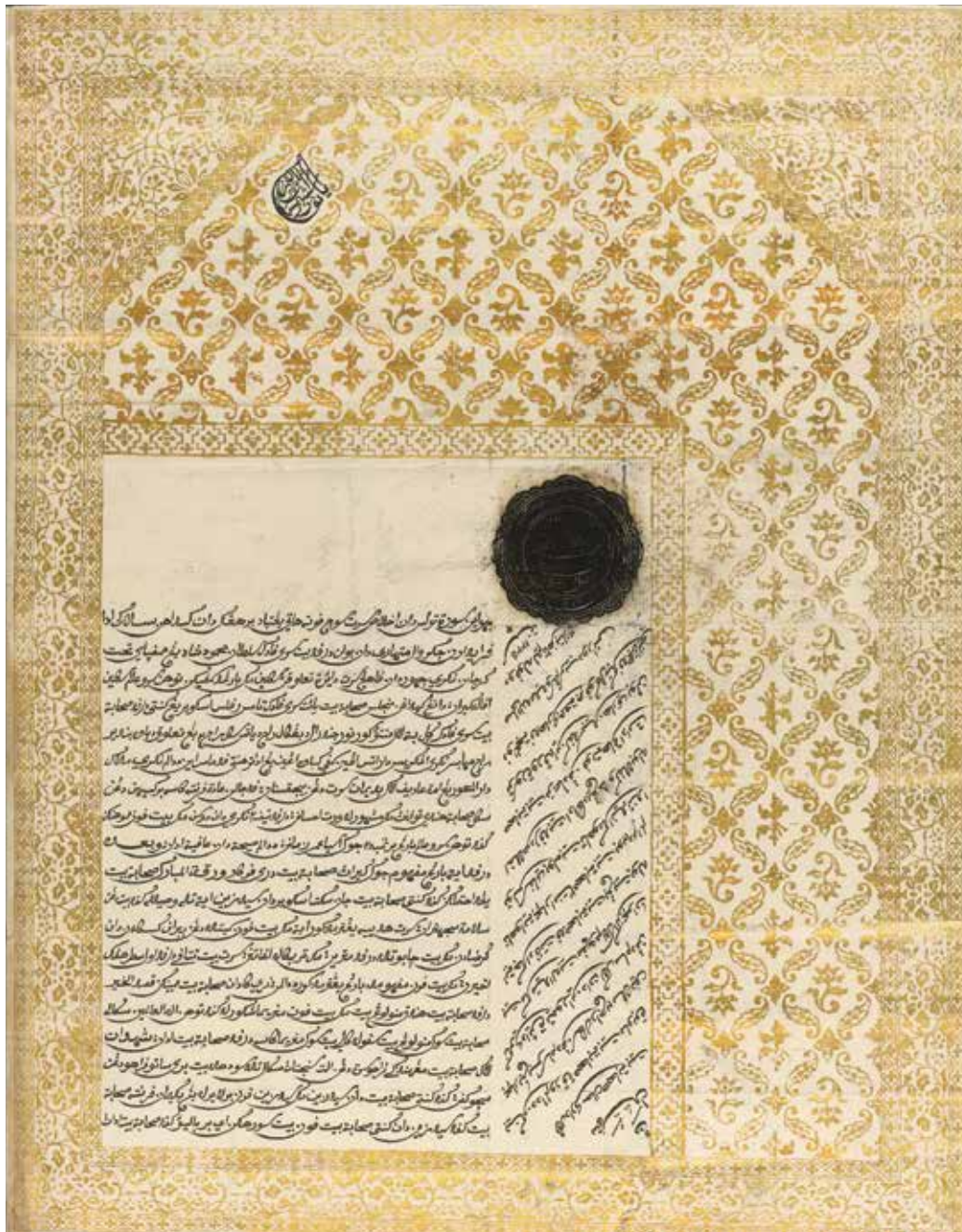
In November 1818, the new Governor General of India, Lord Hastings, gave Raffles permission to look for a settlement that the EIC could use for trade. Hastings had told Raffles not to cause any trouble with the Dutch, so initially he set his sights on Karimun Island, which was considered separate from Riau, but they found it uninhabited and covered in jungle. Singapore was their next port of call. When Raffles, Farquhar and a sepoy landed on 29 January, their first question was whether there was a Dutch settlement on the island. When they were told there wasn't, Raffles started negotiations with the *Temenggong* or chief.

Raffles knew that Riau, which was occupied by the Dutch, had the second son, Abdu'r Rahman, as its sultan and that William Farquhar had even signed an agreement acknowledging Abdu'r Rahman as the sultan. However, he also knew that the real ruler of the region was Abdu'r Rahman's uncle, the Bugis chief who was supposed to have poisoned Sultan Mahmud. So Raffles chose to ignore this agreement and paid two men to fetch Hussein. On 6 February, Raffles organised a grand, red-carpet ceremony and Hussein was installed as the Sultan of Johor. A treaty was signed by Hussein, the *Temenggong* and Raffles giving the EIC the right to establish a factory or settlement for trade purposes in return for annual payments of \$5,000 to the sultan and \$3,000 to the *Temenggong*, paid in Spanish silver dollars.

Although the second letter's date of 6 January does cast some doubt on whether the first letter really was from Sultan Mahmud, it was Mahmud's lack of appointing a successor that allowed Raffles to manipulate events to suit his cause. The

# minate the Past

Gielewski



Illuminated letter from Sultan Mahmud Ri'ayat Syah (1762 -1811) to T S Raffles, 5 January 1811, acknowledging Raffles' letter and request for a sea vessel

appointing of the younger son without an official ceremony left an opening for Raffles, which he used to his full advantage. In fact, Abdu'r Rahman was not officially installed as Sultan of Riau and Lingga until 1823 when the Dutch, in desperation, stole the royal regalia from the fourth wife.

The way Raffles solved the succession dispute sealed Singapore's fate and it first became a Straits Settlement, then a British Crown Colony, before becoming part of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963 and finally achieving independence in 1965. And of course, although these letters concern Raffles' Java campaign in 1811, they would mark an event that would gain special significance eight years later.

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**Liz Gielewski** is a docent at both the ACM and NMS and describes herself as a Singapore 'tragic' as she loves finding out about Singapore's colourful past.

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Image© British Library Board Mss Eur F 148/4 f105.

# Nataraja, Lord of Dance

By Aparna Balasubramaniam

Shiva is the most complex of all Hindu deities. He is frequently portrayed as the ultimate symbol of fertility, the *lingam*, but neither of his two sons was conceived in the conventional way. As Omkara, he is the originator of the primordial symbol *Om*, which signifies creation. As Kala Bhairava, he is the destroyer of the universe, paving the way for a new cycle. But above all, Shiva's best-known form is Nataraja, the God of Dance.

How did this dance begin? Deep in the forest of Tarakam, lived a group of sages who did not believe in Shiva, so he decided to confront them. He went to the forest disguised as a beggar, accompanied by Vishnu as Mohini (his female form) and Adi Sesha, the serpent. Very angry upon seeing Shiva, the sages began praying in front of a fire. From the fire a fierce tiger emerged to attack Shiva who smiled and stripped the tiger's skin off with the nail of his little finger. He then tied the skin around his waist. Next, a snake appeared, but Shiva used it as a belt or garland and began to dance. He danced the *Ananda Tandava*, or the Dance of Bliss. However, the sages were not done; a dwarf demon emerged. Shiva pressed down on the demon with one foot and continued to dance. The sages finally realised they were no match for Shiva and bowed before him. He stopped dancing and blessed them. Then Adi Sesha begged Shiva to continue dancing, so Shiva promised to appear in Thillai, the Centre of the Universe, and dance again for his devotees. This is the site of the most famous Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram, in Tamil Nadu.

Nataraja first appeared in stone sculptures around the fifth century, but it was in the bronzes from the Chola dynasty from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards that images of the Nataraja became immortalised. In these images, Nataraja typically wears a headdress of *kondrai* (cassia) leaves, with the crescent moon, a skull and a cobra on his head. He carries a drum in his upper right hand and this not only supplies the beat for his dance, but is also the first sound of creation. Conversely, in his upper left hand, he holds *Agni*, or fire, a force that can destroy the universe. The



11<sup>th</sup> century Chola bronze, courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of R H Ellsworth Ltd in honour of Susan Dillon, 1987

lower left hand points towards the raised foot. This gesture offers shelter for the soul. The lower right hand is in the *abhayamudra* or 'do not fear' gesture. The raised leg offers salvation or release from this world. The foot on the ground tramples the dwarf demon, who signifies ignorance.

The dance is very vigorous and the energetic movements make Shiva's clothes and hair fly. The arch surrounding him is a ring of fire, which both creates and destroys. The circle represents the cyclical nature of time, the constant motion of the earth and the boundaries of the universe. Nataraja dances within its confined space, touching it with his head, hands and feet. The dance itself represents the *Panchakritya* or five activities of Shiva – Creation, Preservation, Destruction, Refuge

and Salvation. Historian and philosopher Ananda Coomaraswamy said, "It is the clearest image of the activity of God that any religion can boast of."

Nataraja doesn't just mean 'God of Dance', it also means 'King of the Stage'. Shiva's theatre is the entire universe. It is the movement of the sun and the moon, of the earth and the wind and the skies. Modern physicists have drawn parallels between the cosmic dance of Nataraja and the movement of particles. In fact, a two-metre-tall bronze statue of Nataraja is on display outside the European Centre for Research in Particle Physics in Geneva, Switzerland. Fritjof Capra, an eminent physicist said "The rhythm of life and death is the essence of all matter. Shiva's dance is the dance of subatomic matter. The metaphor of the cosmic dance thus unifies ancient mythology, religious art and modern physics."

To his devotees, Nataraja's dance has three meanings – the dance itself is the source of all movement within the universe; it helps release souls that are chained by fear, illusion or ignorance, and *Chidambaram*, the centre of the universe where the dance takes place, is within our hearts.

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**Aparna Balasubramaniam** is a docent at the Asian Civilisations Museum.

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# Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum, Bangkok

By Caroline Carfantan

There are multiple reasons to visit Bangkok, it has so much to offer: history, culture, street food, shopping, etc. When you travel with a group of ceramic enthusiast FOM friends and Southeast Asia Ceramic Society members, you wander off the beaten path to a place that rarely makes it into the top 20 on Trip Advisor lists: the Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum.

This museum is located in the grounds of Bangkok University, approximately 40 kilometres north of central Bangkok. When you arrive, the first thing you notice is that you can't actually see the building.

It sits below ground level, in harmony with the earth. The museum's roof is covered by an expanse of lawn, imitating ancient Thai kilns, which were built partially underground. The entrance is like an amphitheatre and faces an artificial waterfall. The building is an architectural interpretation of ceramics – earth, when wet with water, becomes clay, which can then be moulded in a cohesive mass that retains its shape. Most of the ancient ceramics in the museum, more than 16,000, were donated by Mr Surat Osathanugrah, the founder of Bangkok University.

The museum's permanent collection explains the development of Southeast Asian ceramics, especially those from Thailand's important kiln sites. The story of the ceramics trade is also traced through shipwrecks and kiln sites dotted throughout Southeast Asia. The way the pieces are displayed reflects the area where they were found rather than chronologically. This underlines the portability of ceramics along the main regional trade routes, revealing not only the cultural and economic prosperity of the various peoples of Southeast Asia, but also their development of ceramic production technologies.

I am a haptic person, so to truly understand an object, I like to touch it. No wonder one of the showcases in this museum was especially appealing to me – it has holes you can put your hands through and probe the edges of a shard with your fingers, gauge its weight, and feel the smoothness of the glaze. Most of the objects in this showcase come from kiln sites; some are warped and so became waste. This warping happens during the firing process when the stacked layers of bowls fuse – a beautiful metaphor for perfection and failure welded together.

One of the highlight pieces in the museum is a green and white-glazed Khmer elephant jar from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. According to experts, the jar is unique in the Khmer ceramic repertoire because of its exceptionally large size, elaborate decoration and pristine condition. Four short legs support



*Two sides of a green and white-glazed jar in the form of an elephant, 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century*

the round elephant body, the short neck and wide mouth. An ornately decorated *howdah* (a carriage on the back of an elephant) is held in place by rope straps. It is a rather complex piece based on its design and the technologies involved. According to the curator, the form was created with rectangular coils, which were used to build up the walls of the jar to the desired size; then the coils were smoothed out on the exterior. Afterwards the jar was shaped and trimmed on a turning device, while the legs were formed from lumps of wet clay applied to the body of the jar and adhered with a slip (a liquid mixture of clay and water), the short neck and mouth were potted separately. According to the art historian Dawn Rooney: "In view of its uniqueness, an assumption can be made that this jar was intended for ritual or ceremonial use by royalty and the elite. While small and medium-sized pots and jars in animal shapes (many of elephant form) were used as lime containers for the universal custom of betel chewing, it is not a likely function for this jar as there are no traces of calcified lime on the interior."

The round body of the vessel is covered with scenes depicting skillfully hand-modelled little figures. While each scene has a narrative, the meaning of the iconography remains a challenge for the experts. Whatever the interpretation of this elephant jar may be, 800 years later it showcases the genius of the potter's creativity and his skilful workmanship.

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**Caroline Carfantan** is a French ACM docent and ceramics enthusiast. She visited the museum on a curator-led tour with members of the Southeast Asian Ceramic Society.

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*Photos by the author*

# Pek Sin Choon: A Singaporean Tea House

By Arlene Bastion

Look around as you enter and there's a baby bouncing on a buffalo, a ping-pong player and a pugilist taking a stance. The baby on the buffalo is the company trademark, the others are the brand logos of Pek Sin Choon, a Singaporean family-owned tea-merchant. The family has been engaged in both the wholesale and retail trade of original and unique tea blends for over 90 years, one of the oldest such businesses here. They blend their own tea leaves and stock over 100 of their own blends, supplied from a decades-long partnership with four to five tea growers in China's Fujian and Yunnan provinces. You can think of them as tea 'designers'.



The company's delivery van circa 1940s, photo courtesy of Pek Sin Choon

The shop is rather like a museum. You could tumble over the jumble of tea bric-a-brac, memorabilia, and tons of tins of different teas such as antique *pu erh* costing a fortune. A tiny table and miniscule stools have somehow been squeezed in. On the table is a half-eaten cake. We had interrupted, what else, a tea break.

Pek Sin Choon's shop is also a living museum. You can observe the tea being roasted and packed, hence the shop's signature greeting, the continuous fragrance of onsite roasting tea. On a counter, the roasted tea rests on a woven basket tray, then it is manually measured out and transferred to individual pink paper squares, to be deftly folded and packed into tins. The paper-folding is a skilled craft; the lady packers are artists. One has been here for 70 years. Their company's master blender worked with the family for four generations. Kenry, the present owner, is the third-generation owner. Their store manager, Eng Wah, now in his forties,



Artisan tea packer



Lid featuring a baby boy on the back of a buffalo

has been with them since his junior college days. Tea runs through their blood.

The shop and its wares are impressively unpretentious. No need for frills since their full-of-flavour fresh teas sell themselves. They can also custom blend or recommend one just for you, as they have done for a famous *bak kut teh* (Pork Ribs Soup) eatery and several prestigious Chinese restaurants.

Their brand name remains unchanged even though it seems quaint for our modern age. In full it reads *Shepherd Boy on Buffalo*. The first owner was Mrs Bai-Zhuang Dan Niang and her son, Pek Kim Aw, was nicknamed 'Buffalo Head' for his integrity. Also, 1925 was the Year of the Buffalo and marks the founding of the company. At the shop, tea is served in a pot whose lid features a baby boy beaming blithely from the back of a buffalo. Jade carvings and bronze statues of the pair abound.

Tea, termed "liquid jade" by a tea scholar, was among the main exports that moved through Singapore's port since it was founded in 1819. Tea is part of Singapore's history, as is Pek Sin Choon.

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**Arlene Bastion** is currently a part-time lecturer at a Singapore university.

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Unless otherwise noted, photos by the author



Shop Scene



# Traces: An Exhibition that Gives One Pause for Thought

By Patricia Bjaaland Welch

It's hard enough to remember what it was like being a child, much less imagining the world a child with ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) lives in, and if you weren't unlucky enough to have been a child touched by misfortune, it's probably impossible.

A recent public exhibition in the LASALLE Library, however, opens that door. The nine installations by final year MA art therapy trainees is the thoughtful result of a series of children's museum visits to the Singapore Art Museum's *Imaginarium*. The nine LASALLE installations are not meant for children; they are meant to remind us of children's vulnerabilities and teach us how children living with adversity see the world.

*Please do not* consists of a simple sticker that reads 'PLEASE DO NOT'. How often do children hear this refrain and how does it affect them? One of the first things we tell children when they visit our museums is 'not to touch'. Children's museums, on the other hand, cry out "Pull me! Push this button! Turn this wheel! See what happens!" As adults we live in a world of freedom. Try to imagine living in a 'Do not' world.

A table, chairs and place-settings for an imaginary family of four constitutes the display *Deformation*. Approach and you see it's not a normal table. The place-settings have been deformed, as are children who come from dysfunctional families where meals are not a loving common ground for communion but torture. The beautifully placed menus above each place-setting that list "Charred Brussel sprouts with cream, halloumi and a pinch where it hurts most" as the 'Starter' and "Chilled blueberry cancer ADHD and autoimmune disease" as 'Dessert' remind us that children with ACE are four or more times as likely to develop heart disease and cancer.

Look up and you notice a mosaic tiled wall. But is it really just a wall? Move a bit further away and it seems to hold a hidden image. As you move farther back, the subtle outline of a fading child's face can just be discerned. Is this how some children feel? Invisible? Unnoticed in an



*Deformation. Plastic, table, chairs. By Lim Sue Lyn, Roshni Bhatia and Yoko Choi*



*Menu. Printed text on paper, plastic stand. By Chan Shu Yin*

overwhelmingly busy and bright world, classroom or family?

A performance artist dressed in the most outrageous outfit imaginable (mismatched clothing, garish yarn fringe, glitter, shoes on head) moves in and out of a group of normal students in the library quietly trying to join in; some are embarrassed and try to avoid or not look at her. Others just turn their backs. What does this teach us about all children's need for acknowledgement and love, and how people can react to 'otherness' even in children?

The exhibition's brochure helpfully provides the context of the works: "For art therapists art is both the conduit towards well-being and the language of the dis-ease/disease health discourse, be it through private clinical spaces or social action practices. *Traces* speaks of the intersection between both, aiming to observe and discover the therapeutic values of shared spaces such as museums and libraries."

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**Patricia Bjaaland Welch** is an author, former Overall Co-Head of Training for FOM, and an active ACM docent who enjoys researching.

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*Presence. Foam board and duct tape on tiled wall. By Lee Shulian, Roshni Bhatia and Yoko Choi*

*All photos by the author*

# William Farquhar: An Officer and a Gentleman

By Vidya Schalk

The first recorded birth in the Singapore Settlement was on 25 July 1819, that of Agnes Maria, granddaughter of William Farquhar. The story of his role in the founding of Singapore, as well as his feud with and abrupt dismissal by Raffles, has all the dramatic elements and intrigue that capture people's imaginations even after 200 years. In recent years, historians have begun to re-examine Farquhar's role in Singapore's founding and to give credit where it has long been overdue.

While there is considerable documented evidence about Farquhar's time in Singapore and Melaka, not much information exists about his early years. As is often the case with historical figures, Farquhar has faded into obscurity even in Scotland, the land of his birth. The process of piecing together his early years turned into a rewarding research project with people from Scotland pitching in to help fill many gaps and form a more complete picture of a man who was an integral part of Singapore's history.

William Farquhar was born on 26 February 1774 in Newhall (near Aberdeen, northeast Scotland), the youngest of Robert Farquhar and Agnes Morison's 11 children. She was the eldest daughter of James Morison, a merchant and also Aberdeen's provost (mayor) and chief magistrate from 1744 to 1746. Robert Farquhar married Agnes after his first wife, Margaret Rose, died at just 22. The wedding announcement of 18 June 1754 reads: "*Last night, was married, Mr Robert Farquhar, Merchant and Stationer, to Miss Morison, eldest daughter to James Morison, Esq, present provost of Aberdeen, a beautiful and most agreeable young lady.*"

By the time William was nine years old, both parents had passed away. Details of William's early years are incomplete, so we can only speculate about his upbringing, but he was not the only member of his family to achieve a distinguished career. One brother, Arthur, went on to become a Rear Admiral in the British Royal Navy, knighted for distinguished service during the Napoleonic Wars. We know that in February 1791, aged 17, William entered the service of the East India Company (EIC) as a cadet and arrived at Fort St George to become a part of the Madras (Military) Establishment, appointed to the Corps of Engineers.

On 16 August



Prince of Wales Island Gazette (Saturday August 7, 1819), announcing the first birth at the new settlement of Singapore on 25 July 1819, of Mrs Bernard's daughter (Agnes Maria Bernard). Also reporting people leaving Dutch-controlled Rhio for Farquhar's Singapore. Courtesy of the British Library



Newhall (near Aberdeen), William Farquhar's family home and where he was born. Reproduced with the permission of the Duke of Fife

1791 he joined an army led by Lord Cornwallis and served until the conclusion of a peace treaty with Mysore's Tipu Sultan, who had to cede half of his dominion and pay "3.3 crore sicca rupees in pagodas or gold mohurs" (its worth in silver or gold bullion) and was also forced to hand two of his sons over as hostages till the payment was made. This battle effectively changed the destiny of Mysore. As an officer with the corps of engineers, Adjutant Farquhar also participated in the capture of the French Settlement of Pondicherry in August 1793, bringing an end to French ambitions in India. The die was cast for a British Indian empire.

The British were making their moves in Southeast Asia as well and their next target was Melaka, which in 1641 had been captured by the Dutch from the Portuguese and became one of Holland's most strategic and prized possessions. On 26 August 1795, after a token resistance, Melaka was captured by a combined naval and military expedition under the joint command of Captain Henry Newcome and Major Archibald Brown. William Farquhar was appointed the principal engineer of this expedition and in July 1795 was present to witness the Dutch surrender Melaka to the British forces. Interestingly, 1795 was when 15-year-old Stamford Raffles became a clerk at the EIC in London. By this time William Farquhar was a veteran of many significant battles, with years of leadership experience.

From 1795 to 1803, five British Commandants/Residents governed Melaka. On 12 July 1803 William Farquhar took over as Melaka's chief civil and military authority, until the town was handed back to the Dutch on 21 September 1818. For a brief period in 1811, Major Farquhar was appointed to the expedition to Java, led by General Samuel Auchmuty, and was in charge of intelligence and guides. This was a joint action of the British Crown and the EIC, with British army ground troops, the navy with its contingent of Royal Marines and the EIC regiments of Madras and the Bengal Native Infantry and was significant enough for Lord Minto (Governor General of India) himself to participate in what was termed the "reduction of Java". At the Court of Jogjakarta, Farquhar was offered the post of British Resident, which he declined in order to return to his former

command at Melaka in October 1811. John Crawfurd went on to become the British Resident in November 1811 with Raffles as the Lieutenant Governor of Java. A different chapter of history might have been written had Farquhar taken the position in Java.

Perhaps it was his strong desire to return to his family in Melaka that prompted Farquhar to decline Lord Minto's offer. There is much speculation about his relationship with a local woman by the name of Nonio (Nonya) Clement who was of French-Malay descent and with whom he had five children (Esther, Elizabeth, Catherine, Andrew and Arthur). Relationships between European men and local women were not at all unusual in the late 1700s. European women were few and far between in this part of the world and no one expected the men to remain celibate. Descendants of such unions were undoubtedly common then, but later Victorian prejudice obliterated them from memory. Farquhar's daughter Esther married a European official in India and was an ancestor of Margaret Sinclair Trudeau, mother of Justin Trudeau (the current prime minister of Canada), a present-day example of those unions.

Farquhar rose through the ranks and was promoted because of his abilities, not through patronage. His mastery of diplomacy, bravery as a military soldier, care for the well-being of his troops and compassion for the multiracial population he governed in Melaka, earned him the affectionate title of the 'Rajah of Melaka'. After Melaka's handover to the Dutch in September 1818, Farquhar received provisional permission to proceed to Europe on a three-year furlough. On his way to Europe, he reached Penang on 29 December. Raffles showed up the following day with instructions from Lord Hastings in Calcutta to find a new footing before the Dutch re-established themselves in the region, now that they had returned. Raffles pulled rank over Farquhar and used his persuasive skills to recruit Farquhar for the expedition that resulted in the establishment of a British factory on the island of Singapore. Major General William Farquhar's three-year tenure as Singapore's Resident and Commandant, from 1819 to 1823, has been the subject of much debate. With public access to many of the archival documents and first-hand accounts, recent scholarship is challenging and revising some entrenched notions.

William Farquhar's story resonates in the hearts and minds of people to this day. People from different walks of life had a strong affection for Singapore's first resident, a man who left an indelible mark thousands of miles away from



Engraving of Melaka (for the eighth volume of Pinkerton's General Collection of Voyages) published in 1811 from sketches made by E H Locker in 1807. Shows the Dutch Christ Church (centre), Stadthuys or Government House (right). The figure about to descend the staircase with a dog may be William Farquhar. Courtesy of NMS



A View of Singapore from the Government Hill, Lithograph, 1824. This print is one of the earliest known of Singapore and shows an inscription at the bottom relating to William Farquhar's role in Singapore's early growth and success. Courtesy of NMS

his native land. Yet in Singapore today there is no landmark, street name or memorial in his name. His legacy was his love for this region and its people. His memory is kept alive in the collection of natural history drawings brought back to Singapore in 1995 and given as a gift to its people. It will continue in the soon-to-be-unveiled Farquhar Gardens at Fort Canning, part of the Bicentennial commemoration.



Farquhar Memorial at Greyfriars burial ground, Perth, Scotland. He died on 11 May 1839, age 66. Courtesy of Dr Ian McGregor, President, William Farquhar Society

After 200 years, it is time to take a realistic, fair and impartial look and rectify an oversight to shine light on the story and achievements of an honourable man who took care of and nursed an infant colony that has grown and flourished to become the economic powerhouse called Singapore.

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**Dr Vidya Schalk** is a research scientist by training and has embraced her love for history and art in the museums of Singapore to seek a balance between science and art in her life. She would like to thank Fiona Brown, Dr Ian McGregor, Penny Hartley and Tom Cumming for their generosity in sharing archival information, images and their encouragement.

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# In the Buddha's Footsteps

By Priya Seshadri

When travelling, I have always wanted to experience places in their entirety, to know and appreciate the history, the legends, the art and the architecture. For some time now, I have wanted to go on a curated tour so I could satisfy my curiosity as I immerse myself in the experience. It was with such vague desires in mind that I talked to Abha Kaul and told her how I wished I could accompany her to India to travel "in the Buddha's footsteps". I learned that someone had just dropped out of the group, so I immediately stepped in and was one of 23 FOM travellers.

This led to the best trip that I have ever had. Scheduled for February, the study tour experience started months before.

A reading list and study topics were given to each of us and at meetings in various homes each month we presented our research on a particular subject, covering such topics as the Buddha's life, Ashoka's edicts, famous pilgrimage sites and the legends associated with them.

We set off for New Delhi on 3 February 2018. The itinerary was detailed and covered a wide swathe of the Gangetic plain, areas the Buddha had traversed. We visited seven of the eight major Buddhist pilgrimage sites: Kapilavastu, where he grew up; Lumbini in Nepal; Shravasti, the site of famous miracles; Jetavana Monastery, where the Buddha delivered many sermons; Rajgir, the ancient capital of the Magadha Kingdom and the Buddha's home for decades; Vaishali with an intact Ashokan pillar; Kesaria; Kushinagar where he finally attained *maha-parinirvana* (the Great Passing Away); and Sarnath, where the Buddha taught the *Dharma* for the first time.

The long bus rides were bonding exercises and the surprisingly smooth highways were dotted with Thai monasteries that boasted the cleanest toilets you can ever want on a road trip. To us museum aficionados it is the add-ons, the museums and historical sites, that add flavour



Colourful decorations surround the votive stupas at Bodhi Gaya

and colour to a trip. We met the writer Gurucharan Das in Delhi and the erstwhile Raja of a small princely state in Avadh. There were also visits to fascinating monuments and heritage sites: the Gurudwara Harmandir Sahib in Patna, the Shia Imambara in Lucknow, the Barabar Caves outside Rajgir, the Jain Virayatan Ashram in Rajgir, the 16<sup>th</sup> century 'floating' mausoleum of Sher Shah Suri in Sassaram en route to Benares, and finally, the shops in Varanasi.

We walked among the ruins of the fifth century Nalanda University where we saw an amazing collection of artefacts in a small building with no security to speak of. It amazes me that such important items can be housed so cavalierly. Kumrahar is the site of Pataliputra, India's historical capital from the time of Emperor Ashoka. It was poignant to walk in grounds purported to have been part of Ashoka's grand palace. Buried in a swampy field, the grounds contain the many pillared halls that Megasthenes, Alexander's general had been awed by, too precious to be exposed.

What do we get in visiting these ancient sites? None of the preparations, presentations and readings prepare you for the visceral impact of these monuments: the artwork that has survived; the dedication of kings and commoners in venerating a noble soul and honouring his teachings; the art that inspires you and the stories; the history that enmeshes you into the heart of this land and the all-pervading peace that emanates even today, will fill your heart with hope. We read about these wondrous cities of yore, see them in pictures and even videos, but nothing prepares you for the feeling of actually being there. To tread on bricks laid down over 1,000 years ago, with every step you can feel the march of the centuries, of the multitudes in whose steps you now stand.

But what is a trip without some drama and excitement? One of the trip's most memorable events was at the Bihar Museum, a spanking new, modern building with the most definitive



The FOM group with the Didarganj Yakshi in Bihar Museum

collection of the region's archaeological finds. It is home to an iconic sculpture that dates from the second century BCE, the *Didarganj Yakshi*, a voluptuous maiden found by happenstance on the banks of the river. She resides in the museum, is featured in most books on art history and was the highlight of the museum that we were all so eager to see. So it was a shock to hear that we would not be able to see her; the gallery was being renovated and she was here, but in a crate! However, the museum was to witness firsthand the force of nature that is our intrepid tour leader. Abha and a very good friend Maniza took over and asked to speak with the curator or even better, the director of the museum.



*Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhi Gaya*

The latter very graciously listened and with a phone call, granted us permission to be escorted into the *Yakshi's* presence.

We had no idea of the gravity of the situation, how carefully and how well the *Yakshi* had been protected and stored. It was a monumental reveal as the crate was pried open, the outer cloth wrapping removed, then the layers and layers of tissue paper peeled off this graceful and voluptuous figure. This was like the dance of a thousand veils as a truly spectacular sculpture was revealed to us. We gazed with awe and wonder upon a figure crafted over 2,000 years ago, her sheen undimmed and her aura unmatched. Our visit actually featured in the museum's tweets, so for that moment, we were minor celebrities. This is the purpose of a curated tour; to experience the history and to do it in the companionship of like-minded friends, for indeed by the time we were nearing the end of the tour we were all friends.

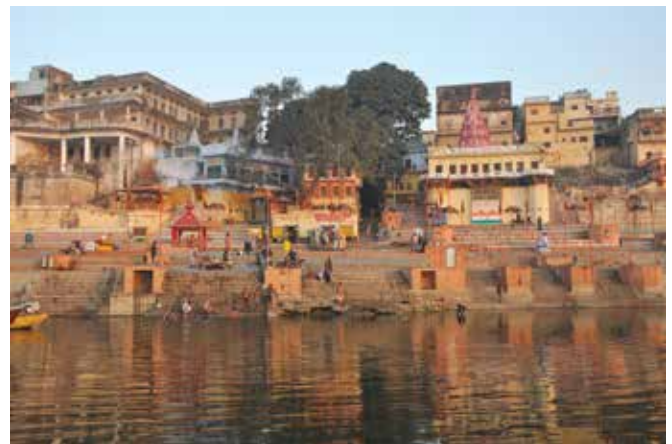
Places such as the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhi Gaya reinforce this: you can choose to immerse yourself in the peace and tranquility as an individual even as you are surrounded by your friends and the crowds that throng the temple. With flowers and lamps, monks and pilgrims from all over the world create beauty as they decorate the spaces around the votive stupas and the temple environs. It is a meditative exercise and a service to create beauty, however temporary, as a reminder of the Buddha's message of love and peace.

The one other experience that matched the tranquillity of Bodhi Gaya was an early morning boat ride on the Ganges, the source of spiritual rejuvenation in the Hindu world.



*The ruins of ancient Nalanda University*

When growing up, my mind and heart had been filled with stories from Indian mythology and epics. No rite of passage, important festival or ritual passes without a sprinkling of Mother Ganga's waters. She purifies our present and gives us hope for the ultimate union of the soul with the divine. To me, from the South of India, the pilgrimage to the banks of the Ganges was one all the elders in my family aspired to. So, to be on these waters in the misty pre-dawn, watching the sun rise over the horizon, was a surreal experience.



*Varanasi as seen from the Ganges River*

This trip exceeded all the expectations I had regarding FOM study tours. But, let us not discount the fun, we just won't disclose the extent to our families. This will remain my one indulgence and guilty pleasure, as I am quite addicted to the experience and am likely to become a serial traveller. My thanks to Abha for making this trip the most incredible one ever, for making the learning enjoyable, the journey easy and comfortable and for the care throughout.

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**Priya Seshadri** is a Singaporean who is connecting with her heritage through volunteering with the ACM and the IHC. She is passionate about history, cats and dragon-boating.

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*Photos by Martin Preuninger*

# Melaka: A Reprise of FOM's First-Ever Study Tour

By Tara Dhar Hasnain

On learning that the study tours committee was planning a short trip to Melaka, from 10-13 November, I was thrilled and decided to join it. I had visited the city in 1984 on my first visit to Southeast Asia from Geneva and had loved it. I carried a mental picture of the Dutch square with its city-hall and church, and of going to the beach on a hot, humid day. So I signed up for what promised to be a great tour, a reprise of the FOM study tour of 1979, with lots of interesting activities lined up. Of course, between 1984 and now a lot has changed and the city, now commonly called Melaka, has been inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage City.

Just days before our departure, I bought a book by Melissa De Silva called *'Others' is Not A Race*, which won a Singlit award in 2018. A Eurasian, de Silva traces her roots back to the Portuguese community in Melaka. I was halfway through reading the book as we started for Melaka, the perfect accompaniment for that trip, with details about the real *sugee* cake, their fishing community, their language Kristang, and much else.



FOM study tour members at the Porta de Santiago, photo by Heather Muirhead

We arrived bright and early at the coach stand on 10 November and were soon on our way. Apart from me, none of the other five had ever been on an FOM study tour. I felt relaxed at the thought of not having to pack and check into new hotels almost daily. As it was the weekend, we were delayed at the checkpoint and arrived in Melaka a few hours later than planned. Nevertheless, we made it to the elaborate Nonya buffet waiting for us. Then after checking



Cheng Hoon Teng Chinese temple, photo by Heather Muirhead

in, we hit the town. That evening we cruised on the Melaka River, followed by a foray into the famous weekend night market. From the river, we saw some striking murals and nice cafés. The night market was packed with people. We saw interesting foods and much else being sold, as well as the acrobatics of some of the vendors. I bought some 'wheels' of solidified *Gula Melaka*, the famous local palm sugar. What an aroma it exuded!

We also had our first glimpse of the historical Dutch Square that night. To us, the garishly-lit trishaws with flashing lights, decked out in 'Hello Kitty' type poster art and moving around with blaring music playing, were an eyesore. But the hordes of other tourists didn't seem to mind them.

At breakfast time the next morning on the hotel's 22<sup>nd</sup> floor, we had a panoramic view of many old monuments as well as the ocean. This was a full day of fun and sightseeing, including museums, with our well-informed and flexible tour guide, Desmond.



Tranquerah or Tengkerah Mosque, with its tiered roof, photo by the author



Riverside murals, photo by the author

The day began with a visit to the remains of A Famosa, the 16<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese-built fort where only the Porta de Santiago still stands. This was followed by a walk uphill to the damaged St Paul's church, which contains large gravestones of various Dutch dignitaries and has a huge statue of St Francis Xavier just outside. We also saw a Melaka tree, which the city is named after. Then, off again to the Dutch area, to see the *Stadthuys*, or City Hall, a fountain and an old church, where we sat in on part of the Sunday service.

Next was the Melaka History and Ethnography Museum, which was very interesting, quite large and included its own bread bakehouse from old times. Lunch was in a quirky shophouse café full of greenery, on famous Jonkers Street, then we walked around for a bit, admiring the old house fronts. After that we visited the famous Cheng Hoon Teng Chinese Temple and later,



Sri Poyyatha V Moorthi, Malaysia's oldest Hindu temple, photo by Heather Muirhead

the historical Tranquerah Mosque. Here we saw the grave of Sultan Hussein Shah, who signed the famous treaty with Raffles and the *Temenggong*, allowing the British East India Company to establish a port in Singapore. I found its roof architecture very interesting – no dome, just a tiered, pagoda-like roof structure, like old Javanese mosques and the old Sufi shrines of the Kashmir valley.

Susan Chong, our leader, was very keen to take us to the oldest Hindu temple of Malaysia, also on this street, but it was closed. She managed to get us in the next day. It is a simple, comparatively modest structure, but with some lovely floor tiles, built in 1781 and still functioning as a temple.

We went on to the Chetti Melaka Museum, followed by a

trip to the Melaka Straits Mosque, a large, modern structure, built in a scenic location, half over water. We reached it at sunset. However, it left me somewhat unmoved. Its architecture is rather 'Arabised', not in keeping with Malay native traditions. En route to it we drove through a mini-city built on reclaimed land, with many tall and impressive-looking buildings, but hardly any were inhabited, almost a ghost town. It seemed a huge waste of resources and money.

In the interests of space, I will mention only some of the highlights of the rest of this trip. We had the chance to savour many interesting types of foods, among them Peranakan and chicken-rice-balls, plus some street food such as string hoppers and *goreng pisang*, fried crispy bananas. We also went to an elegant Eurasian restaurant called Melba's, in a heritage mansion with a live pianist.

Another highlight of Melaka is its many museums. We visited the Baba Nyonya Museum, the Portuguese Museum, the Hang Tuah Museum, the Cheng Ho Museum, the Sam Po Keng Temple and a historic well at *Bukit Cina*, plus the old Kampong Morten, right next to the river. The kampong has some lovely, traditional Melaka-style houses, which we had learned about earlier in



Tham Siew Inn, a famous artist, photo by the author

the Melaka Museum. We also brushed up on the history of Melaka from pre-colonial times, as well as the waves of occupation by the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British, as we visited some of the sites and excavated digs.

One of my abiding memories is the morning we spent at the Portuguese settlement, learning more about this little-known hybrid culture. We were moved by their informality, their love of music and dance. We even did an impromptu jig as our guide sang and played the guitar.

It was saddening to see evidence of the negative impact of land reclamation around Melaka. This has done away with fishing, the traditional livelihood especially of the Portuguese/Eurasian Malaysians, as there is no shrimp in the waters any longer and the fish are also disappearing.

Other encounters that stand out in my memory are the chance meetings we had with artists, craftspeople, an art gallery owner, a skilled tailor trained in Singapore and a builder of intricately executed miniature traditional Malaysian-style houses. On returning to Singapore, we found many of them featured in a book about the arts and crafts of the people of Melaka.

Some of us managed to buy art pieces and beautiful *kebayas*, although there was not a lot of designated time for shopping, this being such a short jaunt. I hope this trip will mark the return of more of the popular shorter study tours.

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**Tara Dhar Hasnain** has many years of teaching experience. Currently she edits books, mainly for Marshall Cavendish International. She gives talks at the museum, especially on Buddhist topics, and enjoys writing for *PASSAGE* magazine.

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# Amritsar: A Spiritual Journey

By Harman Deol

In March 2018, 16 FOM members undertook a spiritual journey to Amritsar, the home of the beloved Golden Temple (Harmandir Sahib). This gurudwara is the most sacred temple of worship for people of the Sikh religion and is an open house of worship for all men and women, from all walks of life and faiths. It has a square plan with four entrances; one facing each direction, symbolizing openness to all.



The golden temple of Amritsar lit up at night

We visited this spiritual wonder on several occasions to experience the moods and feelings of the temple at various times of the day. We witnessed the moving, beautiful Procession of the Holy Scriptures (the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*) in the early morning, a transcendent experience. We visited in the evening to absorb the temple views lit by the evening hues. We ate at the *Langar* Hall (community kitchen) which provides free vegetarian meals for all and is managed year-round by dedicated volunteers. This particular *Langar* feeds 50,000 people every day and on religious occasions, up to 100,000 people. It is thought to be the largest free kitchen in the world and is mentioned in the Guinness Book of World Records and was also a Harvard Business School case study in logistics. And how lucky we all were to be able to take photographs within the temple's compound. As of January 2019, we have learned that the Indian government has banned photography inside the compound as it disturbs pilgrims when they are worshipping.

We also went to the site of the Jalianwala Bagh massacre of 1919. It was here that British troops under Colonel Reginald Dyer fired at unarmed worshippers, killing hundreds during a peaceful procession to advocate for India's independence from Britain.

We were also fortunate to visit the newly built Partition Museum located in the historical town hall. This museum, with artefacts curated with true passion, is dedicated to memorialising



FOM group at the town hall

the traumatic events associated with the birth of the nation in 1947, especially the partition of Pakistan from India, which resulted in the largest migration in human history and was strewn with violence.

We were invited to the first ever Literature Festival in Amritsar where we were delighted to hear famous Sikh journalists and authors as well as accomplished Sikhs from all walks of life speak. This event took place at Majha House, a venue where individuals passionate about art, literature and self-development meet.

Lastly, we witnessed the Wagah Border 'lowering of the flags' ceremony, which takes place every evening immediately before sunset. The security forces of India (Border Security Force, BSF) and Pakistan (Pakistan Rangers) have jointly performed this ceremony since 1959. It starts with a blustering parade characterised by elaborate and rapid dance-like manoeuvres and raising legs as high as possible by the soldiers from both sides and ends up in the perfectly coordinated lowering of the two nations' flags.

In addition to sightseeing, we spent some time shopping, admiring the famous Amritsari *jhottis* (closed shoes) that we all bought or the Phulkari *dupattas* (scarves) that some of us bought too many of.

After participating in so many FOM tours, we must conclude by saying that these journeys are truly insightful and will easily satisfy one's curiosity or thirst for knowledge, especially of the cultural and historical diversity of our world. The travellers are always an engaged group, which sparks off intellectual conversations that all of us gain from.



High-stepping soldier at the flag ceremony



Food being served in the community kitchen

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**Harman Deol** loves travelling and exploring the world and as an FOM study tour committee member, she has been able to combine both.

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Photos by Gisella Harrold



# The FOM Trip that Didn't Happen

By Gisella Harrold

Lester V Ledesma and I had planned an FOM photography and heritage sightseeing trip to Penang during the last days of the Hungry Ghost Festival. Lester, an award-winning photojournalist and photographer, knows Penang very well and has done many tours with FOM.

The Hungry Ghost festival is celebrated in many cities by Buddhist and Taoist communities during the seventh lunar month, but the celebration against Georgetown's historical background is particularly spectacular with lots of photo opportunities. Unfortunately, we could not get the minimum number of participants, but we decided to go ahead with the tour anyway. With its laid-back charm, Georgetown has everything a traveller can ask for. It still has traditional trades and unrenovated shophouses, which feature many Chinese decorations, yet it offers a modern lifestyle as well, with coffee shops, graffiti and art or craft shops.

One of our stops was Lee Beng Chuan, the last joss-stick maker in Penang. He is almost 90 years old, still makes joss sticks and is happy to tell his story. His joss sticks are special since he only uses natural ingredients with no artificial perfumes. His speciality is a set of joss sticks with Chinese characters for extra luck, prosperity and good health.

Penang is also famous for its excellent food in both street stalls and high-end restaurants. The good news is that the street food is safe to eat. We managed to cover almost all the well-known 'must try' dishes such as Penang laksa whose base is tamarind, rather than the coconut milk used in Singapore laksa. Every dish gave us the opportunity to practise our photography skills. In Little India we stopped at a roadside *Roti Jala* maker. This Malay dish consists of *roti* that looks like lace and is traditionally eaten with a curry, as a snack between meals. We went to the equally famous *Restoran Nasi Kandar Line Clear*, a 'hole in the wall' place where the chef mixes the gravy according



*Tai Soo Yah, the King of Hades, in his procession around Georgetown, Penang*



*Lester taking a photo of Lee Beng Chuan, the last joss-stick maker in Penang*



*A photographer being photographed, photo by Lester Ledesma*

to your order and your liking. However, our favourite was the dim sum restaurant where we had our breakfast. Its speciality was 'dragon head' a fried tofu dish with a sweet and sour sauce.

Late at night we went back to the tent area in the middle of town where after a pop concert is over, the entire tent is taken down, all decorations are piled up in the middle of the road and Tai Soo Yah, the King of Hades, is taken on a procession around town before his effigy is burned with lots of noise coming from the Chinese firecrackers that have been put around the fire. Entertainment for the 'hungry ghost' is very important, which is the reason that some of the temples stage Chinese operas. We had the opportunity to go backstage to watch the actors dressing up and putting on their makeup.

No visit to Penang would be complete without visiting *Kek Lok Si*, the largest Buddhist temple in Malaysia from where you have a beautiful view onto Penang, or the famous *Khoo Kongsi* clan house, which is truly spectacular. There are plenty of places which we didn't see owing to the limited time we had and we will definitely go back, maybe with an FOM tour group.



*Behind the scenes of a Chinese opera stage*

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**Gisella Harrold** is an active member of FOM, and over the years has organised and participated in many study tours. She is currently the coordinator of FOM-Curio.

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*Unless otherwise noted, all photos by the author*

# Israel Study Tour: A Four-Thousand-Year Tapestry

By Jonathan Asherson

From 11 to 21 October last year, Sarah Lev led a large group of 21 FOM members on a study tour to Israel, where none of us had been before. Our journey took in almost all of Israel's main regions starting in Tel Aviv, looping up the Mediterranean coast, over the Golan Heights, down the Jordan River Valley, through the West Bank, on to Masada and the Dead Sea and finally to Jerusalem. Four thousand years of history, both cultural and religious, interspersed with wonderful people and wonderful food. We walked across ancient mosaics in places with such evocative names as Caesarea, Acre (Akko), the Sea of Galilee, Jericho, Bethlehem and of course Jerusalem. Our guide Bena, wove a tapestry that completely and evocatively told the story.



FOM meets Prof Ido Bruno, the new director of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem

It is said that if you want fun you live in Tel Aviv, where the state of Israel was founded in 1948. Having had a walking tour around Rothschild Boulevard, famous for its Bauhaus-style architecture, we stopped at Independence Hall, a small art museum. The modest room in which David Ben-Gurion declared independence from the British Mandate has been left exactly as it was on 14 May 1948, and oozes history. The afternoon saw us in Jaffa with its medieval mosques, churches and seawalls with panoramic views of Tel Aviv. On the way to Acre we stopped off in Caesarea to visit the home of Pontius Pilot. 'Home' was a stunning villa, infinity pool and all, which he struggled to get back to from Jerusalem after some self-imposed trouble in the year 33. The adjoining theatre was the site of the first Christian versus lion encounters.

It is hard to identify highlights, every day presenting its own, but Acre was one for me. Four thousand years old with a blood-and-guts history almost without parallel. The



Group photo at Caesarea

crusaders' halls were breath-taking, as was their history.

In Israel when anyone digs down, for example to expand a basement, they are digging straight into history. One chap fell through a hole that appeared in his basement, thereby discovering one of the Knights Templar hospitals, well-preserved and now revealed in all its glory. The tunnels linking the main buildings with the ancient docks were eerie, even for those not affected by claustrophobia. That evening we witnessed a fantastic sunset from the roof of the equally fantastic Afandi Hotel.

On to Haifa after a wonderful evening at the Uri Buri Restaurant in Acre. Haifa, the business and industrial city of Israel, boasts Mt Carmel, home of the Carmelite order, and the worldwide centre of the Baha'i religion in the nearby town. A visit to a local synagogue in Safed, with headwear perched on the male tour participants' heads, gave us insights into the various Jewish factions. We became instant experts on distinguishing between an Ashkenazi

and Sephardic place of worship. Again, lunch was local and delicious, including a unique cheese bread called *Lahuh*.

A short journey and we were at the Golan Heights, sadly a region predominantly known for its recent battles, but extremely interesting. A million landmines were laid during the Six-Day and Yom Kippur wars; we drove a few feet from some of these as yet untouched monstrosities – an interesting perspective-changer. We were very close to the Syrian border which, given current events, was also 'interesting'. That evening we were privileged to be invited into the home of a Druze family in Hurfeish. We all participated in the cooking while learning about this fascinating religion and culture. Sitting under the pomegranate trees on a moonlit night getting to know each other a little better was wonderful.

Having overnighted in Tiberias, Galilee loomed both literally and in the imagination. The Sermon on the Mount (of Beatitudes), fish and loaves for 5,000, the oldest Christian church yet to be discovered – Tabgha, St Peter's Church, which incorporates remains from a church built in 300 CE – in Capernaum. In the latter, competing architects vied



Cooking at a Druze village



Lecture given at a kibbutz



*Very communal, the group is sitting in a Roman-era public toilet*



*The oldest synagogue in Safed built in memory of Rabbi Isaac Luria, known as 'the Ari'*

for bragging rights, with the synagogue winning over the Byzantine church built over St Peter's actual home. Light relief in the afternoon with a visit to the Pelter Winery – excellent, with a hint of history lingering on the palate. The evening included a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee. Our meal was in a steakhouse over the water and included excellent fare, wine and a singing hostess.

Unlike the song lyrics, the Jordan River is not actually very wide but it does border Jordan. Although no one knows where Christ's baptism occurred, it was probably near the site we visited, evident from the many pilgrims re-enacting their own versions of this ceremony. John the Baptist performed the ritual when it was revealed that Jesus was the Son of God. Standing in this place, the birthplace of Christianity in a very real sense, it was difficult not to be moved, at least historically.

The Roman town of Beit Shean was a fascinating stop on the way to Jericho. Its fantastically preserved columns and mosaics and a large public toilet made it easy to imagine life there. The evidence of the 749 CE earthquake is stark, adding to the feeling of being frozen in time. It was a real eye-opener to cross the border into the disputed region of the West Bank on the way Jericho, governed and secured by the Palestinian Authority and 300 metres below sea level – a weird feeling when the Mediterranean is only 60 miles away.

In Jerusalem we started by touring the Israel Museum where the new CEO, Professor Ido Bruno, greeted us. One highlight among many, was viewing the Dead Sea Scrolls, the real ones. Describing the route of the mainly walking tour we did in Jerusalem on day 2 helps one see how much history is compressed into a tiny space. Starting at the Mount of Olives, where Jesus wept over Jerusalem on the eve of his crucifixion and from where he is supposed to have risen from the dead three days later, we then visited the Church of all Nations. The room of the Last Supper and King David's tomb were... hard to find the words. Regardless of your religion, or lack of, these things happened to real people. We entered the Old City through the Zion Gate and walked along the ancient streets to end up at Temple Mount. Temple Mount is Judaism's holiest site and is also where the Islamic Dome of the Rock and El Aksa Mosque are located. We walked along the Via Dolorosa (stations of the cross), a route leading to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Although the route was only 'identified' some centuries after the event, it was weirdly relaxing, with Bena again eloquently evoking history.

The Western Wall – Herod-built, massive, massive history, massive impact, even today. We had the incredible luck (Bena again) to be allowed to 'dive' deep underground to a newly excavated section of the wall 20-30 metres down to the original street level of 2,000 years ago. A fascinating archaeological side trip, which included a small widened section where two or three women, and only women, were allowed to pray directly facing a section

of the newly excavated wall, which is a continuation of the existing Western Wall located slightly south-west of the Dome of the Rock. Day 3 in Jerusalem was also memorable, for a different reason. We visited the Holocaust Museum of Yad Vashem and were led by a docent who was the son of Holocaust survivors. He told the story we all know so well with supreme poise, making it all the more poignant.

From our Jerusalem base we visited the Dead Sea, Bena pointing out the cave where the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered. The Dead Sea is, well, dead. A weird experience but one well worth having. On the way back we visited Masada, Herod's summer palace on top of a 350-metre high rock. This was where 300 Jewish Zealot soldiers resisted 8,000 Roman troops for eight months. You could see the Roman encampments surrounding the rock far below, while they spent eight months slowly constructing an earthen ramp that would lead to certain death for the Masada Zealots. Breathtaking, the place and the story.



*Floating in the Dead Sea*

Our last day found us back in the Palestinian Authority area where Bethlehem is located, just outside Jerusalem. Again, the Shepard's Field and Church of the Nativity evoked a surreal atmosphere. The church is the world's oldest to be continually open, starting in the sixth century. The Crusader mosaics are superb.

Fittingly, our final stop was Herodian, a palace fort built on an artificial mountain. We explored deep into the foundations where the water cisterns were located and crawled across a narrow ledge to peer into the newly discovered and not yet completely excavated rooms of a small private theatre. A completely fitting end to an indescribably fascinating tour.

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**Jonathan Asherson** is retired and serves on several boards and councils, including SembCorp Industries Ltd, and is the chairman of the Singapore International Chamber of Commerce. He has lived in Singapore for 25 years.

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*All photos by Gisella Harrold*

# Half-Day Art Stroll through Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

By Sabine Gebele-Pham

Join me on an art stroll to experience the dynamic contemporary art scene in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). Any insight into this scene has to start with Galerie Quynh, the city's leading contemporary art gallery. Since it was first established in 2003 by Quynh Pham, the gallery has had a longstanding presence and relationship with both local and international Vietnamese artists. In December 2017, the gallery moved to 118 Nguyen Van Thu Street, where its exhibition space was expanded to 600 square metres. The gallery's neighbourhood is characterised by Vietnam's 'tube houses', whose main characteristic is their extensive length, a narrow façade and windowless sides, a consequence of property tax in Vietnam being based on the width of the building's street front. For the new exhibition space, the usual barred gates of a tube house's frontage were replaced with glass, creating an open, two-storey-tall entrance space, an intimate mezzanine floor and two additional exhibition floors above. Adding modern interiors while keeping the old structure, including an old, but still functional elevator, the gallery has the feel of a state-of-the-art exhibition space as well as the history of an old workplace.

Since moving to the new exhibition space, the gallery has held seven shows, including two group exhibitions of a selection of the gallery's long-standing artists, and five solo exhibitions. Of these, I would like to mention the Vietnamese-French artist Truc Anh's *8 Hearts*, in 2018, a truly exceptional experience. The artist not only exhibited paintings and sculptures in the gallery, but also used and transformed the gallery itself as part of one wholistic artwork, thereby creating a deep and lasting sensual impression on the viewer and showing the artist's rich portfolio of expression.

The exhibition opened with a spectacular entrance. The gallery's glass façade was covered with dark blue film with a cut-out in the centre in the shape of an oval emitting rays of light. The blue film toyed with the concept of different time zones and spaces – the inside and outside areas of the gallery's ground floor and shifts in day and night. Depending on the time of day, bright sunlight was filtered into the gallery's ground floor and at night, mild and warm light from the gallery's interior shone outward. Following this work on the entrance glass wall, there was a series of



Room where the small black and white photos are exhibited

intimate small, black and white, nuanced pencil on paper works on one wall, drawings using bleach on the other. These delicate works reflected the artist's various fears and nightmares.

Leaving the ground floor, visitors were drawn upstairs to the mezzanine floor, the centre of the show, a quasi-spiritual room where the entire floor was covered in dark blue fluorescent glitter. In the middle, a spiral-shaped body (of the artist) was executed in pale green glitter. Visitors were invited to walk through the room and over the figure. By stepping on sparkling glitter, the visitor was exposed to the physical sensation of losing balance and control. According to the artist, this room resembled his recent experience of a series of Nepalese spiritual rituals and his stumble and fall, reflecting on mortality and the afterlife. The room on the third floor showcased his experience of re-creation and rebirth in a series of fragmented abstract oil paintings in pastel colours watched over by a sculpture of the ancient Egyptian god Anubis, the god who ushered souls into the afterlife and attended the weighing scales during the "weighing of the heart", when it was determined if a soul could enter the realm of the dead. Since Galerie Quynh was selected to participate in Singapore's new initiative, S.E.A Focus, in January 2019, Singaporeans were able to get a glimpse of this work right at their doorstep.

On our art stroll, let's leave behind the busy District 1 and go to District 2 where in 2016, The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre opened its doors at 15 Nguyễn Ơ Dĩ, Thảo Điền. Because of its proximity to HCMC's centre, it's a vibrant and multinational residential area where a number of both foreign expats and Vietnamese live. The Factory is Vietnam's first large, purpose-built exhibition space with 500 square metres of open space designed for large installation projects. From the outside of The Factory, you see an undistinguished Vietnamese tin-roofed, factory building adjoining a 'container village'. The attention of passersby is seized by cleverly stacked freight containers, placed diagonally and on the inside, creating an open-ended staircase into the void. The large, open exhibition space is divided by rectangular metal



View of the entrance to Truc Anh's *8 Hearts*



The gallery on the mezzanine floor, covered with dark blue glitter



The Factory, photo by the author

and glass container shapes creating a front desk and reading room and, following a free-floating staircase to the second level, consisting of three secluded rooms for an intimate show space. The factory-like setting brings to mind the 1962 New York (Silver) Factory by the pop artist Andy Warhol and may have been the inspiration for the name 'The Factory'.

The Factory is a social enterprise and has contributed in several ways to the arts. First, it has utilised its unique open-space exhibition room for the curation of a number of expansive installation and multimedia video performances, as in the exhibition *Empty Forest* by Tuấn Andrew Nguyễn, co-founder of the well-known Propeller Group, in late 2006. Through a video installation, the exhibition questioned and explored the tension between traditional Buddhist doctrine, which sees animals as sentient beings that should not be harmed, vis à vis the use of animal parts in traditional Chinese medicine, despite it being scientifically proved that they have no medicinal effect and that their use is leading to the endangerment and even extinction of numerous animal species.

Vietnam possesses a rich aesthetic tradition that encompasses unique lacquerware, silk painting and woodblock printing techniques. These folk arts and their contemporary expression by artists after the 1970s and 80s are not much known to the general public. In this context, The Factory has strived to play a prominent role by curating exhibitions as well as documenting these techniques with accompanying research. These were exemplified in the *Galeria Autumn*



Sculpture of Anubis

exhibition in 2018. In the show, three contemporary artists experimented with lacquer, highlighting its uniqueness and its relevance for modern, contemporary use.

In collaboration with Art Vietnam in 2018, The Factory exhibited a retrospective of the Hanoi artist collective called the *Gang of Five*, one of the first art collectives of the early 90s following Vietnam's *Đổi mới* (New Change) policy. The Factory not only exhibited paintings and artwork but also showed an archive of supporting documentation including

original historical reviews, interviews and photographs from that time, putting the group into a historical context and filling a gap in Vietnam by undertaking the work of preservation and conservation.

Since 2017, the most recent addition to the local HCMC art scene is Salon Saigon, at 6D Ngo Thoi Nhiem Street in District 3, another well-known and prime residential area in HCMC because of its proximity to the city centre. The district is known for its French colonial homes although much of this historical architecture is disappearing owing to urban development. The colonial homes are characterised by symmetrically distributed windows with green wooden shutters on all four sides of the house, painted in warm yellow and with rich neo-classical decorations around the windows. Salon Saigon's two-storey villa has been given a new life by housing the exquisite, private art collection owned by John Tue Nguyen and curated by the French-Vietnamese artist Sandrine Llouquet. The approximately 30 pieces of locally and internationally recognised Vietnamese artists are on permanent display in a beautiful private home setting, with chairs and tables so you can sit and marvel at the exquisite artworks all around you.

Some of the artworks mentioned should be familiar to visitors to the Singapore Art Museum, as it has also exhibited those of the well-known artist Tiffany Chung as well as that of the Propeller Group, a cross-disciplinary platform founded in 2006 for creating multimedia and mass communication art projects. You can also see the work *Vietnam Inc. 4, 2007* by Vietnamese-American artist Dinh Q Lê, represented by a photo montage for which he interlaced and wove together strips of different photographs, using the Vietnamese grass-mat weaving technique, to create a new dimension of meaning within aesthetically pleasing colour combinations.

As Salon Saigon's name may suggest, it follows the tradition of literature salons, semi-private gatherings popular in Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, where people gathered under the roof of an inspiring patron who aimed to foster the exchange of culture and the liberal arts through conversation. Enjoy your stroll through the vibrant art scene in Ho Chi Minh City!

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**Sabine Gebele-Pham**, *passionate and curious about contemporary art all her life, started exploring the Vietnamese art scene during her six-year stay in HCMC before moving to Singapore and joining FOM.*

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*Unless otherwise noted, images courtesy of Galerie Quynh and Truc Anh.*

# Shifting Perceptions: from Primitive to Global

By Soumya Ayer

At the Asian Civilisations Museum's (ACM) Angkor exhibition last year, an illustration from a news magazine dated 1878 featured the Trocadero Palace, which housed the ethnographic museum of scientific expeditions, temporary home until 1936 to many of the artefacts that were on display. Besides material from French Indochina, the Trocadero Palace was also home to artefacts brought back by the French from South America as well as their African colonies. In 1907, approximately 30 years after the Trocadero Museum opened its doors, a talented 24-year-old artist paid a visit to the African section, which had a large collection of masks, among other objects that were considered to be ethnographic exhibits. He was inspired to do so because his friend had shown him a wooden sculpture created by the Vili people of Congo. The artist was seeking creative inspiration and the little figurine had intrigued him. The pieces that he encountered in the African section that day at the Trocadero Palace made such an impression on him that they shaped his creative expression. The artist was Pablo Picasso and the friend was Henri Matisse.

Of that visit to the Trocadero Palace, Picasso recalled that the place was disgusting, the rooms filled with the stench of



Batak mask, wood, mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, North Sumatra



Hudoq depicting Aso, Sarawak; Wood, 1900

mould that caught him by the throat, so depressing that he wanted to leave. However, he was drawn to the objects on display. He said that he then understood what painting was about, that "Painting isn't an aesthetic operation; it's a form of magic designed as a mediator between the hostile universe and us, a way of seizing power by giving a form to our terrors as well as our desires". From then on, he regarded his art as

an act of exorcism, freeing him from fears of the unknown.

The encounter of European artists with African art, considered primitive at that time, is one of the factors responsible for the emergence of modern art in Europe with Picasso being one of the pioneers of Cubism. Picasso said he had been influenced by Iberian sculptures, but he never gave credit to the African art that echoes in his work. In fact, when he was asked about the African influence in his work he said, "African art, never heard of it."

In Africa, unlike in Picasso's Europe, masks were considered to be enchanted. They were a manifestation of the invisible, an embodiment of spirits, those of ancestors or of nature. Masks could be passed down through the generations, thus increasing their power, promoting prosperity and fertility and warding off evil. As in Africa, in Asia masks are also considered to be sacred, talismanic, for use in dances and performances, to commune with the divine, or to be used as ancestor masks. Some of these masks, like their African counterparts, have stylised forms suggesting a different way of perceiving reality. Consider the examples of the *hudoq* (Pic 1) or the *topeng* (Pic 2) from Southeast Asia, which can be found in the ACM collection, or the *bhuta* masks from India, which were not regarded as works of art alone, but served as powerful intermediaries between the visible and invisible worlds.

*Topeng* were used by the Batak people of Sumatra during funerals to frighten and confuse the spirit of the deceased so that it would never find its way back to the village and cause trouble. The *Wayang Topeng* or masked dance was performed in Indonesia for hundreds of years. It is believed that the spirit of the character would enter the body of the dancer through a leather strip at the back of the *topeng*

that the performer gripped with his mouth in order to keep the mask in place. The *topeng* dancer was entertainer, philosopher and exorcist combined. The Dayaks of Borneo created the *hudoq* to represent gods, ancestors, demons and mythical beasts. The *hudoq* in Pic 1 represents the Dayak dragon goddess Aso, who is said to have the body of a crocodile, the head of a dog and the snout of a wild boar. These masks were able to ward off illness and pestilence. Dancing in the *bhuta* masks from Karnataka in South India for hours on end is a superhuman feat in itself. These brass masks could be modelled on boars, tigers, buffaloes or other creatures. *Bhuta* means spirit, and the wearer of this mask is an embodiment of the spirit or deity that doles out advice and settles disputes. The mask induces a transformation in consciousness both in the wearer and in the viewer. These different examples demonstrate the use of masks for ritual and supernatural purposes. Those African masks at the Trocadero had been divorced from their original context and had thus lost all meaning, dismissed as primitive. Although Picasso shared this prevailing view, he was superstitious, believing that these objects had magical powers.

Picasso began to collect African and Oceanic art and made his first purchase in 1907. It was a Tiki figure from the Marquesas. He travelled to Marseilles, where ships would arrive from the colonies, to purchase African sculptures. Much of Picasso's non-European art collection, masks forming more than a quarter of it, was dismissed as kitsch. However, he kept up this obsession of collecting for the rest of his life. Picasso bought a magnificent bronze head of an



Picasso's *Bust of a Man* (1907) compared to a *Dan* mask, photo by the author

Oba from Benin for 350,000 Francs in 1944, using one of his paintings as down-payment. This piece must have found its way to Europe following the 1897 sacking and looting of the Benin Palace by the British. Readers may recall the *Treasures of the World* exhibition held at the National Museum of Singapore in 2016, when some Benin bronzes were displayed.

A *Dan* mask (Pic 3) from Ivory Coast is an example of the masks that may have influenced Picasso's *Bust of a Man* (study for *Les Femmes d'Alger*), 1907. The *D'mba* mask (Pic 4) made by the Baga people of Guinea and acquired by Picasso in 1928, is a monumental mask of an older female. This mask would have been carried on a man's shoulders at weddings, funerals and harvest festivals, inspiring women to have children, men to work together and for ancestors to protect the community. Picasso thought of the *D'mba* mask as a goddess of fertility and you can see its influence on Picasso's bust of a woman (1931), a sculpture of Picasso's mistress at that time.

The photographs of the African masks and Picasso's works that are mentioned in this article, were displayed at a recent exhibition at the *Musée des Beaux Arts* in Montreal, Canada, titled *From Africa to the Americas, Face to Face, Picasso Past and Present*. This reflects the changing views of African art today and the acknowledgment of its influence on the Modern Art movement. Once regarded as primitive or ethnological curiosities, they have undergone a metamorphosis into works of art in their own right. This shift in perception encompasses artefacts from Asia that were also once viewed as curiosities rather than having any aesthetic value; consider the example of Batak or Dayak art. This shifting gaze, a decolonisation of perception, has been an intriguing journey in the terrain of the art historian's imagination, a passage from primitive to global.



*D'mba* mask compared to Picasso's bust of a woman (1931), photo by the author

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**Soumya Ayer** is a children's author and a docent at the ACM and IHC.

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Unless otherwise noted, images courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum, National Heritage Board

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# Showcasing Singapore through Augmented Reality and Art

By Durriya Dohadwala

Global campaigns to market a country as a tourist destination are common, but rarely do these events include an art exhibition that showcases artists' practices. The Singapore Tourism Board's (STB), Singapore Festival was therefore a pleasant surprise, as it introduced visitors to seven local artists via a technology-driven art exhibition. The festival is part of STB's global campaign *Passion Made Possible* that showcases the island state via activities ranging from sports and leisure to experiences in food, music, film and art. Titled *Atypical* the exhibition travelled to Russia in 2018 and was in Myanmar from 30 November to 2 December 2018. It was in India in February this year.

*Atypical*, an art and augmented reality exhibition, was curated by Khairuddin Hori, curatorial director and partner of Chan+Hori Contemporary and included the works of seven emerging Singaporean artists – Speak Cryptic (Farizwan Fajari), Muhammad Izdi, Gerald Leow, Eugene Soh, anGie seah, Amanda Tan and Daniel Yu. Works ranged from paintings to performance art and in Yangon they were installed in various spaces along downtown's iconic Bogalay Zay Street.



Daniel Yu, *Lunar Beast and Lunar Cleric*, 2018, Inflatable sculpture

The artworks revisited familiar themes in a variety of ways. The five stars on the Singapore flag, which represent the values of democracy, peace, justice, progress and equality, appeared on five painted gateways in Speak Cryptic's installation, while Izdi used the well-known story of lions and tigers in Singapore and re-imagined them in his digital images made up of GIF animations presented on TV screens. Leow created sculptures that reimagine the designs of traditional Austronesian house forms via the contemporary material culture of logs of heavy metal bands and Soh took recognisable Western paintings such as Georges Seurat's *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* and gave it a



Bogalay Zay Street in Yangon where the Singapore Festival was held



Speak Cryptic's, *S\*Gatte*, 2018, Acrylic on Wood.

Singaporean twist by digitally recreating it locally and calling it *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of Singapore*. The exhibition also included a three-hour durational performance by Seah, *Stars are Made from Dust*, which examines the paradoxes that surround us, and a two-channel video work by Tan on the idea of identity in a melting pot of cultures such as Singapore's. Yu, a well-known toymaker, created a larger-than-life Chinese lion dance character and paired him with a playful cleric, then named his work *Lunar Beast and Lunar Cleric*.

Getting the public to engage with artworks in a street festival is challenging. The ambience and crowds don't make audio guides or docent tours a feasible option. *Atypical* tried to overcome this by using technology and augmented reality to increase audience interaction with the artworks. Visitors were given little cards with QR codes, which when scanned on a hand phone, opened up an augmented reality interaction between the artwork and the individual.

The most popular part of the festival was without doubt the *500 Kyat Food Fair*. Pairing Myanmar food with similar Singaporean fare to make it understandable to local visitors, the 20 stalls introduced visitors to Singaporean favourites such as chilli crab, *prata*, *rojak* and *char kway teow* at 500 kyats (SGD 50 cents) per dish. The most popular offering turned out to be Chef Chan Hon Meng's Soya Sauce Chicken Rice. Queues snaked down the street for this dish, testifying to his well-deserved recognition as one of the world's first Michelin-starred hawkers.

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**Durriya Dohadwala** writes about contemporary South and Southeast Asian art. She is also a docent at the Singapore Art Museum and STPI Creative Workshop and Gallery

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All images courtesy the author

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FRIDAY 22 MAR 2019**  
5.15-5.45 pm  
Mangala Isai  
6.00-6.25 pm  
Arrival of GOH  
**Inauguration of Festival**  
6.30-8.30 pm  
Carnatic Vocal  
Vishnudev Namboothiri  
Nellai Ravindran (Violin)  
V M Sai Akhileshwar (Mridangam)  
8.45-10.00 pm  
Kathak  
Amrapali Bhandari

**DAY 2  
SATURDAY 23 MAR 2019**  
9.00-10.15 am  
Hindustani Vocal  
Tanya Venkatesh  
Sonali Sinha Biswas (Harmonium)  
S upriyo Banerjee (Tabla)  
10.25-11.00 am  
Carnatic Vocal  
Anuradha Rajaraman  
Shruthi Kumar (Violin)  
S Shivanesh (Mridangam)  
11.10-11.30 am  
Tabla  
Abhishek Prasad  
& Advait Srinivasan  
11.40-12.00 noon  
Tabla  
Manognya Narasimha,  
Vivek Venkatram,  
Abhinandan Rao  
12.10-1.25 pm  
Hindustani Vocal  
Vyshnavi Narayana Doss  
Sonali Sinha Biswas (Harmonium)  
Supriyo Banerjee (Tabla)  
4.00-5.30 pm  
Hindustani Harmonium  
Debasish Adhikary  
Susantha Choudhury (Sitar)  
Mihir Kundu (Tabla)  
5.40-7.10 pm  
Carnatic Vocal  
Sripriya Vijay  
Srividya Sriram (Violin)  
Bombay R Subramanian (Mridangam)  
Devarajan (Morsing)  
7.20-8.20 pm  
Kathak  
Aastha Mishra & Shradha Sapra  
8.30-9.45 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Ashmita Jayaprakash

**DAY 3  
SUNDAY 24 MAR 2019**  
9.00-10.30 am  
Hindustani Flute  
Santosh Kamat  
Lakshmanan Senthil (Tabla)  
10.40-11.15 am  
Carnatic Vocal  
Shradha Sriram & Nandini Ganesh  
Swathi Kumar (Violin)  
Niranjan Sunthara Ramanan (Mridangam)  
11.25-12.00 noon  
Carnatic Violin  
Vedagnya Narasimha  
Arun Panchapakesan (Mridangam)  
12.10-1.10 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Srilekha Chandrashekhara  
8.00-9.30 pm  
"SAPTADVIKA"  
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Esplanade Recital Studio

**DAY 4  
MONDAY 25 MAR 2019**  
6.30-8.00 pm  
Carnatic Vocal  
Janaki Sadagopan  
Naveen Kumar (Violin)  
Tripunithura Sreekanth (Mridangam)  
Shankar Rajan (Kanjira)  
8.15-9.30 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Archana Pradeep Kumar

**DAY 5  
TUESDAY 26 MAR 2019**  
6.30-8.00 pm  
Carnatic Vocal  
Nandhitha Gurnunath  
Srinath Iyer (Violin)  
Devarajan (Mridangam)  
Sreenivasan (Morsing)  
8.15-9.30 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Madhuri Suresh  
& Varsha Viswanath

**DAY 6  
WEDNESDAY 27 MAR 2019**  
6.30-8.00 pm  
Hindustani Sitar  
Bedekar Priya Parag  
Mihir Kundu (Tabla)  
8.15-9.30 pm  
Kathak  
Prerna Datta

**DAY 7  
THURSDAY 28 MAR 2019**  
6.30-8.00 pm  
Carnatic Vocal  
P.B.Madhavan  
Pavan Sugghosh (Violin)  
Satish Chandra Sista (Mridangam)  
Muthusubramanian (Kanjira)  
8.15-9.30 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Muskan Anshuman Rao

**DAY 8  
FRIDAY 29 MAR 2019**  
6.30-8.00 pm  
Hindustani Vocal  
Namita Mehta  
Debasish Adhikary (Harmonium)  
Mihir Kundu (Tabla)  
8.15-9.30 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Gurumoorthy Swarna Varsha

**DAY 9  
SATURDAY 30 MAR 2019**  
9.00-10.15 am  
Carnatic Vocal  
Aarthi Ravichandran  
Sharadh Rajaraman (Violin)  
Gopalan Sivakumar (Mridangam)  
10.25-11.55 am  
Carnatic Violin  
Sharadh Rajaraman  
Krishnan (Mridangam)  
12.05-12.25 pm  
Tabla  
Kishan Hebbar  
1.00-2.00 pm  
Art Talk  
"S.Rajam, The Artist and the Artiste"  
Dr.Prameela Gurumurthy  
2.00-4.00 pm  
Culinary Workshop: Sacred Offerings by  
Rakesh Raghunathan  
(Pullyyogare Travels)  
4.00-5.30 pm  
Carnatic Flute  
Chaitanya Kumar  
Naveen Kumar (Violin)  
Tripunithura Sreekanth (Mridangam)  
5.40-7.10 pm  
Carnatic Violin Duet  
Nellai Ravindran  
& Bombay Anand  
Subramanian (Mridangam)  
Muthu Subramanian (Mridangam)  
7.20-8.35 pm  
Kathak  
Minhaz Khan  
8.45-10.00 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Banupriya Ponnarasu

**DAY 10  
SUNDAY 31 MAR 2019**  
9.00-9.35 am  
Hindustani Vocal  
Gaura Jha, Amvrin Paul, &  
Siddhangana Bose  
Shibani Roy (Harmonium)  
Advait Srinivasan (Tabla)  
9.45-10.20 am  
Hindustani Vocal  
Amara Rama  
Sonali Sinha Biswas (Harmonium)  
Lakshmanan Senthil (Tabla)  
10.30-11.05 am  
Carnatic Flute  
Kartik Raghunathan  
Kishan Hebbar (Violin)  
Niranjan Sunthara Ramanan (Mridangam)  
11.15-11.50 am  
Carnatic Vocal  
Aarabi Ahilan  
Swathi Kumar (Violin)  
Arun Panchapakesan (Mridangam)

12.00 noon-12.35 pm  
Hindustani Vocal  
Ahana Malashetti  
Sonali Sinha Biswas (Harmonium)  
Lakshmanan Senthil (Tabla)  
12.45-2.00 pm  
Bharatanatyam MasterClass  
Jayalakshmi Raman & Christopher  
Guruswamy  
2.15-2.50 pm  
Kathak  
Isha Rajadhya  
3.00-3.35 pm  
Kathak  
Saanika Zanwar  
3.45-4.20 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Netra Easwaran  
4.30-5.05 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Amrita Srinivasan Anand  
5.15-5.50 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Diya Subramanian  
6.00-6.35 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Shreya Murthy  
6.45-7.20 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Khushi Raju  
& Isha Chandra Gowda  
7.30-8.05 pm  
Kathak  
Jiya Khandelwal, Sharanya Saxena,  
Shriya Aggarwal, & Tejashri Jhanvi  
Rideshkumar  
8.15-8.50 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Pallavi J Varma, Mythili Ganesh, Neha  
Ramesh, Aarya Ramesh, & Kritika Suresh  
9.00-9.35 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Hiranmayi Ananthanarayanan

**DAY 11  
MONDAY 1 APR 2019**  
6.30-8.00 pm  
Carnatic Vocal  
M.S. Vidhya  
Nellai Ravindran (Violin)  
Tripunithura Sreekanth (Mridangam)  
Devarajan (Morsing)  
8.15-9.45 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Kalyani Hema Nair

**DAY 12  
TUESDAY 2 APR 2019**  
6.30-8.00 pm  
Hindustani Vocal  
Roopali Banerjee  
Debasish Adhikary (Harmonium)  
Supriyo Banerjee (Tabla)  
8.15-9.30 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Lavanya Rengarajan &  
Shivani Rajaraman

**DAY 13  
WEDNESDAY 3 APR 2019**  
6.30-8.00 pm  
Carnatic Vocal  
Shruti Anand  
Surup Sowmithri Thathachar (Violin)  
Muthusubramanian (Mridangam)  
Sreenivasan (Morsing)  
8.15-9.30 pm  
Kathak  
Sneha Tilak

**DAY 14  
THURSDAY 4 APR 2019**  
Day Dedicated to Tamil Language  
Festival  
6.30-8.00 pm  
Carnatic Vocal  
Lavanya Balachandran  
& Bharati Murali  
Srividya Sriram (Violin)  
Mahesh Parameswaran (Mridangam)  
8.15-9.30 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Shalini Mohanakannan

**DAY 15  
FRIDAY 5 APR 2019**  
7.00-7.35 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Vismaya Dinesh  
7.45-8.20 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Diya Mahesh  
8.30-9.45 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Sambhavi Rajagang  
7.00-8.30 pm  
@ PGP Function Hall  
Hindustani Music Master Class  
Pt. Rajan & Sajan Misra

**DAY 16  
SATURDAY 6 APR 2019**  
9.00-10.15 am  
Hindustani Vocal  
Sukrut Yogesh Gondhalekar  
Jasraj Shintre (Harmonium)  
Sachin Bhide (Tabla)  
10.25-11.00 am  
Carnatic Vocal  
Tanishqa Verma, Dhruvi Bhatta,  
& Deeksha  
JagannadhRao Vijapurapu  
Kishan Hebbar (Violin)  
S. Haripriya (Mridangam)  
11.10-11.40 am  
Layavinyasam  
Arun Panchapakesan (Mridangam) &  
Niranjan Sunthara Ramanan (Mridangam)  
& Tony Makarome (Morsing)  
11.50 am-12.50 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Periyachi Roshini  
1.00-2.00 pm  
Natyatra Yatra Production - a Panel  
discussion  
Moderator: Nalina Gopal (IHC)  
7.30-10.00 pm  
"MADHURAVRISHTI"  
Hindustani Vocal  
Pt. Rajan & Sajan Misra  
Pt. Dharam Nath Misra (Harmonium)  
Pt. Kumar Bose (Tabla)  
Esplanade Concert Hall

**DAY 17  
SUNDAY 7 APR 2019**  
9.00-10.30 am  
Hindustani Sitar  
Shailesh Venkatraman  
Mihir Kundu (Tabla)  
10.40-11.15 am  
Hindustani Vocal  
Tanishqa Verma, Dhruvi Bhatta, &  
Deeksha  
Jasraj Shintre (Harmonium)  
Sachin Bhide (Tabla)  
11.25 am-12.40 pm  
Carnatic Violin Duet  
Shruthi Kumar & Swathi Kumar  
K.Srinivasan (Mridangam)  
Gopalan Sivakumar (Kanjira)  
4.00-5.30 pm  
Orchestra  
SIFAS Alumni  
5.40-7.40 pm  
Hindustani Vocal  
Samrat Pandit  
Debasish Adhikary (Harmonium)  
Mihir Kundu (Tabla)  
7.50-9.50 pm  
Carnatic Vocal  
Aishwarya Srinivasan  
& Soundarya Srinivasan  
Nellai Ravindran (Violin) Tripunithura  
Sreekanth (Mridangam) Mahesh  
Parameswaran (Ghatam)

**DAY 18  
MONDAY 8 APR 2019**  
6.30-8.00 pm  
Carnatic Vocal  
Divya Padmanabhan  
Pavan Sugghosh (Violin)  
Sai Akhileshwar (Mridangam)  
8.15-9.30 pm  
Kathak  
Shivangi Duke Robert

**DAY 19  
TUESDAY 9 APR 2019**  
6.30-8.00 pm  
Carnatic Veena  
Thayapari Niranjan  
Balasubramanian (Mridangam)  
Gopalan Sivakumar (Ghatam)  
8.15-9.30 pm  
Kathak  
Vandna Kaushal

**DAY 20  
WEDNESDAY 10 APR 2019**  
6.30-8.00 pm  
Carnatic Flute  
Sreenivasan Ramaseshan  
Srinath Iyer (Violin)  
K.Srinivasan (Mridangam)  
8.15-9.30 pm  
Bharatanatyam  
Aarthi Devarajan

**DAY 21  
THURSDAY 11 APR 2019**  
Day Dedicated to Poochi  
Sreenivasa Iyengar Centenary  
6.30 - 7.05 pm  
Carnatic Vocal  
S Sreepriya  
Shruthi Kumar (Violin)  
S. Haripriya (Mridangam)  
7.15-9.15 pm  
Carnatic Vocal  
Neela Ramgopal  
Bombay Anand (Violin)  
T.R.Sundaresan (Mridangam)

**DAY 22  
FRIDAY 12 APR 2019**  
8.00-10.00 pm  
"NATYA YATRA"  
A SIFAS Dance Production  
Esplanade Theatre

**DAY 23  
SATURDAY 13 APR 2019**  
9.00-10.15 am  
Hindustani Vocal  
Sripriya Srinivasan  
& Kuntha Chelvanathan  
Shibani Roy (Harmonium)  
Supriyo Banerjee (Tabla)  
10.25 - 1.55 am  
Hindustani Sarod  
Abhishek Lahiri  
Pt.Parimal Chakraborty (Tabla)  
12.05-12.45 pm  
Layavinyasam  
Bombay R Subramanian (Mridangam)  
Mahesh Parameswaran (Mridangam /  
Ghatam)  
Muthusubramanian  
(Mridangam / Kanjira)  
1.00-2.30 pm  
Bharatanatyam Lec-Dem by Dhanajeyans  
7.30-10.00 pm  
"MADHURAVARSHI"  
Carnatic Vocal  
Abhishek Raghuram  
Akharai Subhalakshmi (Violin)  
Anantha R Krishnan (Mridangam)  
Vazhappally Krishnakumar (Ghatam)  
Esplanade Concert Hall

**DAY 24  
SUNDAY 14 APR 2018**  
9:00 am  
Mummoothigal Vizha

# Cyanotype: Instant Pictures Before the Polaroid

By Tina Walton

We've always had an appetite for the fast and instant – instant noodles and instant messaging, but nothing seems to define our modern culture more than the ubiquitous instant sharing of selfies and other pictures snapped from hand-held devices.

However, decades before our current obsession with instant pictures, the American scientist Edwin Land puzzled over this when his daughter asked why she couldn't see their holiday pictures immediately. The result was his invention, the Polaroid Land Camera, or simply the Polaroid camera, as we know it today. Land's invention was a one-stop process for developing and printing a photograph with the click of a shutter and it was 1943's answer to immediate gratification.

Currently at the National Museum of Singapore (NMS), *In an Instant: Polaroid at the Intersection of Art and Technology* chronicles the evolution of Land's Polaroid cameras alongside the science of his other notable invention, the polarised lens. (Land had over 535 patents in his 50-year career.) The exhibition also highlights Polaroid photographs by artists Ansel Adams, Andy Warhol and David Hockney, who experimented with Land's new cameras. Arranged in a thematic flow, the exhibition shows the range of size, style and mood that artists were able to create with Polaroid film.

In conjunction with the Polaroid exhibition, NMS held a one-day workshop on cyanotype, a camera-free, instant photographic process that preceded the Polaroid camera by a century. Led by an educator from DECK Photo Gallery, participants were introduced to cyanotype, also known as sun printing.

A short slide presentation gave a brief history and the chemistry of cyanotype. Invented by Sir John Herschel in 1842, cyanotype was an inexpensive and fast way for the astronomer to copy his notes. But it was Anna Atkins, a Victorian botanist, who popularised the use with her collection of 424 cyanotypes in her book *British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*. Two main chemical compounds – ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferricyanide – are responsible for the resulting Prussian blue colour. This solution, when applied on paper, reacts with the sun's UV rays to create an image.

Participants got to try their hand at creating cyanotype



Photographs 'developing' in the sun



Finished pictures drying in the sun

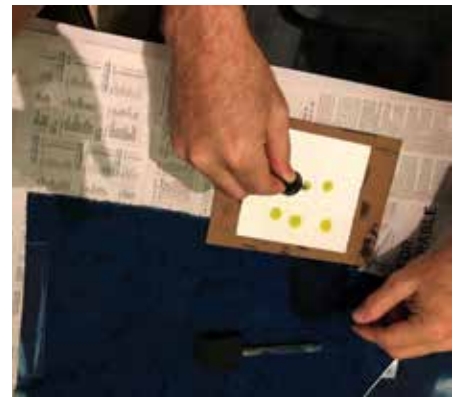
photographs. We donned aprons and prepared to get messy.

After collecting our subjects – flowers, foliage, feathers, even negatives – we washed a few drops of the mixed chemicals onto thick watercolour paper. Then we pressed our

subjects onto the paper and exposed it to direct sunlight. In the high UV-index Singapore climate, the chemical process took only a few minutes, leaving a contrast of our object's image on the print.

A water stop-bath washed away excess chemicals and once dried, the photo was finished, but an additional bath in hydrogen peroxide gave the print a more vibrant blue colour. Alternatively, a final bath in tea-steeped water lent a more yellowed, vintage look to the print.

Cyanotype is a simple process that allows room for experimentation and artistic freedom. The workshop gratified the modern-day participants, allowing us to put our phones down long enough to create an instant photograph the old-fashioned way.



Mixed solution dropped onto the watercolour paper



Cyanotype: The Art of Sun Printing in The Salon on 17 Nov, led by DECK Photo Gallery instructor, Juhardi



In an Instant: Polaroid exhibit at NMS until 31 March

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**Tina Walton** is a Korean-American writer and lifelong learner. She writes children's and young adult fiction and teaches English in Singapore.

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Photos by the author

# Explore Singapore!

To join an ES! event, please go to the FOM website to register online or register at the ES! table at any Monday Morning Lecture.



## Explore Singapore!

*Tiong Bahru Heritage Walk*  
Thursday 14 March  
10.00 am – 12 noon  
Fee: \$25

Today the district of Tiong Bahru is a trendy, hipster enclave, but in the 1930s it was one of the first areas to be developed by the Singapore Improvement Trust, the precursor to the HDB. Its iconic Art Deco blocks tell of days gone by. We will take you on a guided walking tour, to hear stories of the past and see the many facets of early Singapore.



## The Fascinating World of Jewellery and Gems

Thursday 28 March  
10.00 am - 12.30 pm  
Fee: \$25

Few people know that Singapore has an international school that teaches the art of jewellery design. Join Explore Singapore! on this fascinating tour to find out about the school and what it takes to design a unique piece of jewellery and also see how a piece of quality jewellery is produced.



## Feng Shui and the Design of Buildings

Thursday 4 April  
9:30 am – 12:30 pm  
Fee: \$35

The ancient art of Chinese geomancy, Feng Shui 风水 meaning 'wind and water', is based on the principle of humans living in harmony with nature. Join Explore Singapore! on this tour to learn how Feng Shui has influenced the exterior and interior designs of some prominent buildings in Singapore. Please note that this tour will involve the use of public transport and quite a lot of walking.



## Kranji Countryside - Singapore's Wild, Wild West

Thursday 25 April  
9.30 am – 1.00 pm approx.  
Fee: \$45

Travel with Explore Singapore! on a bus trip through the Kranji countryside; no high-rise buildings to be seen, only peaceful green farms and smallholdings. Our first stop will be a hydroponic and aeroponic farm, next, one that grows wheatgrass and mushrooms. The final stop will be a walking tour through the Bollywood Farm followed by a delicious lunch of the farm's produce (included in the fee).

# Study Group

Want to learn more about Asia in a friendly, relaxed way? Join our group. A study group consists of 10 to 16 members who meet weekly to improve their knowledge of a specific theme. Each week, we have two 40-minute presentations; each one researched and given by a member of the study group. Members choose their own topic within the theme.



The current study group started in January and will continue through the beginning of March. Our theme is Great Journeys of Asia; River, Rail, Road and Religious Travels. The study group was fully subscribed with 16 people. We have not picked the theme for the next study group that will start in late March or early April. More information will be available on the FOM website. Possible topics include Great Crimes in Asia, Public Transport in Asia, Performance Art: Ancient and Contemporary or Asian Migration: the Quest for a Better Life.

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# Monday Morning Lectures

The lectures will be held in the Ngee Ann Auditorium (in the basement) at the Asian Civilisations Museum, 1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555 and will begin promptly at 11:00 am. Refreshments will be provided. Latecomers are asked to enter via the rear door.



## 4 March • Verismo Opera and Poetry: An Everlasting Love Affair Speaker: Jassy Husk

In Singapore, we can witness an incredible diversity of opera performances owing to the country's delightful tapestry of cultural traditions. Poetry underpins the creation of the majority of opera genres. And while this area of classical music may have changed in both scope and sources of inspiration, composers continue to rely on poets to provide tempo and meaning for the very human stories that all operas tell.



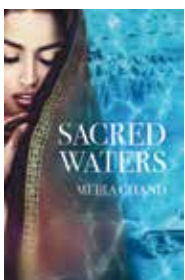
## 11 March • United at Sui, Flourishing at Tang Speaker: Maura Rinaldi

The Sui (589-618 CE) united China while the Tang (618-907), with its formidable emperors and one extraordinary empress, founded an empire that extended over Central Asia, thus increasing international trade. Their capital, Changan (Xian), became the largest and most cosmopolitan city in the world. Prosperity fostered the most significant artistic period in China, known for its great poets, innovative painters and musicians. Notable inventions include porcelain and woodblock printing, this being fundamental in spreading Buddhism.



## 18 March • Dharmacakra: The Buddhist 'Wheel of the Law' and the Dvaravati Culture Speaker: Hunter Ian Watson

A *dharmacakra* is a Buddhist artefact. This Sanskrit word is often translated as the "Wheel of the Law". The *dharmacakra* is a symbol representing Buddhist doctrine and in particular, the first sermon the Buddha gave in the Deer Park at Sarnath. Therefore, *dharmacakra* are often depicted with representations of deer. The Dvāravatī culture, which was located in what is now the Chao Phraya Basin of central Thailand, is known for having produced exquisitely carved stone *dharmacakras*. This lecture will present the *dharmacakras* of the Dvāravatī artistic tradition.



## 25 March • Sacred Waters: Giving Voice to History's Forgotten Women Speaker: Meira Chand

The novel, *Sacred Waters*, explores the life of an illiterate Indian woman, Sita, through her inner journey to awareness and empowerment, and her outer journey as a warrior woman in war-torn Singapore and Burma. The talk will explore how the transformative space of fiction allows the novelist to give voice to a band of brave but now forgotten women.



## 1 April • Ikebana Speaker: Angela Kek

The Japanese art of floral arrangement, Ikebana, has always been a fascinating subject for many. Ikebana is also known as 'Kado' (way of flowers). It is a state of mind and brings nature and arranger together in a state of harmony. What makes it so intriguing to the mind? How did it begin? Is it an evolving art? Join us for this lecture to learn about the art and practice of Ikebana, the current scene in Japan, the world and also locally in Singapore. The session will include a demonstration at the end.



## 8 April • The Potters Who Made History Speaker: Tim Clark

It started in Staffordshire, in the Midlands of England, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when potters began to produce ceramic figures that chronicled all the important characters and events of the day. They recorded royal and military figures at significant moments in their lives. They commemorated performers, politicians, clerics, sportsmen, explorers, criminals and other folk heroes of the day. Each piece told a story and decorated the mantelpieces of the masses who couldn't afford the ostentatious porcelain figures coveted by the wealthy. These anonymous potters recorded the history of Victorian England in clay and created a unique form of tribal art.



## 15 April • The Wilkes Expedition - The Remarkable Story of the Last All-Sail Naval Squadron to Circumnavigate the World Speaker: Vidya Schalk

In the US Library of Congress there exists a rare and valuable collection of Malay manuscripts, one of the first Asian books to enter the library's collections. How did the library become home to this unique collection? The astonishing story of how it was brought to the United States in 1842 on a sailing vessel commanded by Lt Charles Wilkes is truly extraordinary. The Wilkes Expedition or the US Naval Exploring Expedition which visited Singapore, was unprecedented in that it circumnavigated the globe from 1838 to 1842, collecting and cataloguing thousands of artefacts, plants and animals, which went on to become the Smithsonian's foundation collection.

**There will be NO lectures on 22 April and 29 April owing to the Easter and Labour Day holidays.**

## Japanese Docents

### Unexpected Experiences in Singapore

Singapore is my fourth overseas posting with my husband; the first was to the United States in the late 1980s, the second to Shanghai, China, in 2002, and the third to the Netherlands between 2006 and 2010. I tried to have some cultural experiences in each country, for instance, I learned the traditional Chinese tea ceremony in Shanghai and in the Netherlands, I earned a diploma in flower arrangement. After our children grew up, I accompanied my husband without them, but had an empty feeling, and I did not like to go out because of Singapore's hot weather. While I was in a sinking feeling mode, a friend of mine recommended that I join the JDs.



*A Japanese docent guiding at the Peranakan Museum*

Although Singapore is my fourth overseas stay, it is my first in Southeast Asia. Because I was not fully aware of the culture and history here, the JD training made me study very hard to learn all I could. As far as I remember, I had never ever studied so hard in my life; however, I have become more interested in Southeast Asian culture and history. This mixture of cultures is unique and so attractive. I enjoy seeing fabulous women's traditional dresses, Nonya wares, tableware and decorations and wearing the kebaya with beaded sandals. I have visited Peranakan houses in Melaka and Penang as well as my favourite Peranakan Museum in Singapore.

My friends and my husband often ask me not only about Peranakan culture, including the food, but also about the arts and history of Southeast Asia. I am proud to be able to answer their questions and give them some guidance so they can enjoy the culture here. I am sure that I will never forget my JD experience and I really believe that this museum volunteer system works very well even among non-Singaporeans, thanks to Friends of the Museums. I intend to volunteer regardless of where I live in the future because of my JD experiences.

**Mami Nagoya, JD Coordinator 1**

## Textile Enthusiasts Group

Online Registration: Textile Enthusiasts Group at [www.fom.sg](http://www.fom.sg)

**Programme:** Fashion Victims

**Speaker:** Margaret White

**Date:** Friday 22 March

**Time:** Arrive at 10:00 am for 10:30 start

**Hostess:** Janet Stride

The inspiration for this talk came from the exhibition: *Fashion Victims: The Pleasures and Perils of Dress in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* at the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto, Canada in 2015. In this illustrated talk, Margaret White will discuss the effects of the use of chemicals and the mechanical changes in clothing production which altered the natural silhouette of the body. Many have paid a high price to be fashionable. An overview from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day provides an insight into the fascinating world of the fashion industry. Are we willing 'fashion victims' today?



*Potential hazard of arsenic use. Image courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*

### About the Speaker:

Margaret returned to Australia in 2011 after residing in Singapore for almost 20 years. During that time, she held numerous positions in FOM, including that of FOM president and as a member of the TEG committee.

**Programme:** Shared Passion

**Date:** Friday 12 April

**Time:** Arrive at 10:00 am for 10:30 start

**Hostess:** Kim Arnold

TEG members always look forward to Shared Passion month. This annual show-and-tell event is a wonderful opportunity to share and learn from fellow members.



Bring one of your favourite textiles to share with the group – a piece that is either something you wear or keep as a collector's item. It would be helpful if you knew the weaving technique and provenance of your selected piece, but even if you don't, you have the opportunity to draw upon the knowledge of other members. Each member will be given a chance to speak about their textile piece. Please note that it is not required to bring one; you are welcome to attend for the learning experience.

### Textile Enthusiasts Group Committee (TEG)

Kim Arnold                      Holly Smith

Lynelle Barrett              Jo Sochi

Jyoti Ramesh                  Janet Stride

Email: [fomtegsingapore@gmail.com](mailto:fomtegsingapore@gmail.com)

Website: [www.fom.sg](http://www.fom.sg)

## Island Notes

# Shophouses

By Darly Furlong

Have you noticed the classic, colourfully painted, narrow terraced houses in Singapore? They are called shophouses. Traditionally, shophouses would have had a running business in the first level and a living space in the upper levels, with mouldings and other decorations on the façade. Today, many of them have retained or touched up their beautiful façades, but the buildings have been repurposed to be purely residential spaces.

Historically, shophouses evolved from the bamboo houses of southern China. So, do take long walks around Katong, Joo Chiat, Chinatown, Tanjong Pagar and Emerald Hill, to get your fill of these cultural icons of Singapore – they are truly Instagram-worthy.



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# Museum Information and Exhibitions

## Asian Civilisations Museum

1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555  
Tel: 6332 7798  
[www.acm.org.sg](http://www.acm.org.sg)



### Opening hours:

Daily 10:00 am - 7:00 pm  
Fri 10:00 am - 9:00 pm

### FOM guided tours:

Mon to Fri 11:00 am, 12:30 pm, 2:00 pm and 3:30 pm, Fri 7:00 pm (English)  
Mon to Fri 10:30 am and every second Saturday 1:30 pm (Japanese)  
First Wed of the month 11.30am (Korean)  
Second Thursday of the month 11:30 (Spanish)  
Third Thursday of the month 11:30 (French)

### Understanding Asia through Singapore

The new and renovated galleries at the ACM use Singapore's history as a port city as a means of understanding the interconnections among Asian cultures and between Asia and the world.

### Raffles in Southeast Asia: Revisiting the Scholar and Statesman (through 28 April)

Sir Stamford Raffles was stationed in Southeast Asia between 1805 and 1824. He is known for establishing modern Singapore as a British port, as the author of *The History of Java*, and as a collector of natural history and cultural materials. Opinions of Raffles have changed over time. He has been viewed as a scholarly expert on the region, a progressive reformer, a committed imperialist, and even a plagiariser.

This exhibition is co-curated with the British Museum, to mark Singapore's bicentennial anniversary and presents a multi-layered picture of Raffles that illustrates that his legacy is more complex than often understood.

## Gillman Barracks

9 Lock Road, Singapore 108937  
[www.gillmanbarracks.com](http://www.gillmanbarracks.com)



A cluster of 11 contemporary art galleries and the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA), Gillman Barracks features an ever-changing selection of contemporary art exhibitions.

Opening hours: Tues to Sun – Refer to individual gallery pages on-line for opening hours  
Closed Mondays & Public Holidays

### FOM guided tours:

Sat 4:00 pm: Art & History Tour  
Sat. 5:00 pm: History and Heritage Tour  
To register please visit [www.fom-gillman-barracks.eventbrite.com](http://www.fom-gillman-barracks.eventbrite.com)

## Indian Heritage Centre

5 Campbell Lane, Singapore 209924  
[www.indianheritage.org.sg](http://www.indianheritage.org.sg)



Open Tuesday to Sunday & public holidays. Closed on Mondays.

Tues to Thurs 10:00 am to 7:00 pm, Fri & Sat 10:00 am to 8:00 pm

Sundays & public holidays 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

### FOM guided tours: Tues-Fri

11:00 am for the permanent galleries  
2:00 pm on Wed and Fri for the special exhibitions  
Tamil tours (FOM) 11:30am on the first Friday of each month for the special exhibition

The Indian Heritage Centre (IHC) celebrates the history and heritage of the Indian diaspora in Singapore and the Southeast Asian region. From early contacts between the Indian subcontinent and this region, the culture and social history of the community after the arrival of the British, through to the early stirrings of nationalism and political identity, and the contributions of Singapore's Indian community – the five galleries take visitors on a fascinating journey through the Indian diaspora. Located in Singapore's colourful and vibrant Little India precinct, the centre opened in May 2015 and is our only purpose-built museum.

### Chetti Melaka of the Straits – Rediscovering Peranakan Indian Communities (through May)

The Chetti Melaka (or Chitty Melaka) are descendants of Tamil traders who settled in Melaka during the reign of the Melaka Sultanate (15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> century) and married local women of Malay and Chinese descent. Predominantly Hindu of the Saivite (followers of Shiva) denomination, the community speaks a unique combination of Malay, Tamil and Chinese, that has been called Chetti Creole by scholars. The Indian Heritage Centre (IHC) presents this exhibition in collaboration with the Association of Peranakan Indians (Chitty Melaka).

## Malay Heritage Centre

85 Sultan Gate, Singapore 198501  
Tel: 6391 0450  
[www.malayheritage.org.sg](http://www.malayheritage.org.sg)



### Opening hours:

Tues to Sun 10:00 am – 6:00 pm (last admission 5:30 pm), closed on Mondays

FOM guided tours: Tues to Fri 11:00 am;

Sat: 2:00 pm (Subject to availability. Please call ahead to confirm the availability of a docent).

The Malay Heritage Centre (MHC) provides wonderful cultural exposure and learning opportunities for visitors of all ages and interests. Situated amidst the Istana Kampong Gelam, Gedung Kuning and the surrounding Kampong Gelam precinct, the centre acts as a vital heritage institution for the Malay community in Singapore. Through its exhibits, programmes and activities, the centre hopes to honour the past while providing a means for present-day expression.

## National Museum of Singapore

93 Stamford Road, Singapore 178897  
Tel: 6332 3659  
[www.nationalmuseum.sg](http://www.nationalmuseum.sg)



### Opening hours:

Daily 10:00 am – 7:00 pm

### FOM guided tours:

Mon to Fri 11:00 am and 2:00 pm (English)

Mon to Fri 10:30 am and every first Saturday 1:30 pm (Japanese)

### The Singapore History Gallery

In celebration of 50 years of independence, this gallery has been refreshed with updated stories and content on Singapore's history, capturing the nation's defining moments, challenges and achievements from its earliest beginnings 700 years ago to the independent, modern city-state it is today.

### In an Instant: Polaroid at the Intersection of Art and Technology (through 31 March)

In an age where apps provide instant services and smartphones allow us to capture just about anything and everything in an instant, the culture of now has never been so prevalent. Its origins can perhaps be traced back to the late 1940s when Edwin Land first introduced the Polaroid camera to the world, marking a technological breakthrough in the history of photography. Polaroid's unique qualities inspired artists and photographers including Andy Warhol, Ansel Adams, Lucas Samaras and Barbara Crane, while capturing the imagination of everyone else. Through a wide range of Polaroid artworks and artefacts, this exhibition offers insight into the story of Polaroid photography, while exploring the impact of instant photography and the social phenomenon of instantaneity on us today.



# Museum Information and Exhibitions

## **Packaging Matters: Singapore's Food Packaging Story from the early 20th century (April – September 2019)**

This exhibition explores the world of food packaging in Singapore, from the early bottling and canning factories in the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, to the light industries of the 1960s–70s when food was manufactured in factories. Drawing from the museum's rich artefact collections, *Packaging Matters* traces the development of packaging technologies and features compelling stories from pioneers.

## **NUS Museum, NUS Centre for the Arts**

University Cultural Centre  
50 Kent Ridge Crescent, Singapore 119279  
Tel: 6516 8817  
[www.museum.nus.edu.sg](http://www.museum.nus.edu.sg)



Free admission

### **Opening hours:**

**Tues to Sat 10:00 am – 6:00 pm, Closed on Sundays and Public Holidays,**

**Monday: Visits by appointment for schools/faculties only.**

## **Yeo Shih Yun: Diaries, Marking Time and Other Preoccupations (through 27 April)**

The exhibition features paintings, video works and installations by Yeo Shih Yun whose practice is associated with Chinese ink, a medium with its own unique history. Yeo's varied experimentation situate the medium in the fold of contemporary practice. In her works of art, the element of chance – markings rendered by brushes tied to tree branches or battery-operated toy robots – is introduced and eventually transferred and recomposed on a final surface through the use of silkscreens or other print techniques

## **NUS Baba House**

157 Neil Road, Singapore 088883  
Tel: 6227 5731  
[www.babahouse.nus.edu.sg](http://www.babahouse.nus.edu.sg)

**English heritage tours: Tues - Fri, 10:00 am; Mandarin Heritage Tour: First Monday of each month, 10am;**

**Self-Guided Visits: Every Sat, 1.30pm/2.15pm/3.15pm/4.00pm**

**To register, please visit [babahouse.nus.edu.sg/visit/plan-your-visit](http://babahouse.nus.edu.sg/visit/plan-your-visit)**

**For enquiries, please email [babahouse@nus.edu.sg](mailto:babahouse@nus.edu.sg)**

Now conceived as a heritage house facilitating research, appreciation and reflection of Straits Chinese history and culture, the NUS Baba House was built around 1895 and was once the ancestral home of a Peranakan Chinese family. During the one-hour tour, guests will be introduced to the history and architectural features of the house, and experience visiting a Straits Chinese family home in a 1920s setting, furnished with heirlooms from its previous owners and other donors.

## **The Peranakan Museum**

39 Armenian Street, Singapore 179941  
Tel: 6332 7591  
[www.peranakanmuseum.sg](http://www.peranakanmuseum.sg)



### **Opening hours:**

**Daily 10:00 am - 7:00 pm**

**Fri 10:00 am - 9:00 pm**

### **FOM guided tours:**

**Mon to Fri 11:00 am and 2:00 pm (English), Tues to Fri 10:30 am (Japanese), every second Wednesday of the month 10:45 am (French).**

This intimate museum possesses one of the finest and most comprehensive collections of Peranakan objects. Galleries on three floors illustrate the cultural traditions and the distinctive visual arts of the Peranakans. The museum will be closed from April 1 2019 to prepare for its next phase of development.

## **Amek Gambar (Through 24 March)**

*Amek Gambar* presents over a century of photographs, tracing the emergence, adoption and evolution of photography in Southeast Asia.

## **Singapore Art Museum**

71 Bras Basah Road, Singapore 189555  
Tel: 6332 3222  
[www.singaporeartmuseum.sg](http://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg)



The Singapore Art Museum focuses on international contemporary art practices, specialising in Singapore and Southeast Asia. The main building of the Singapore Art Museum (located along 71 Bras Basah Road) is currently closed to prepare it for its next phase of development.

## **STPI Creative Workshop and Gallery**

41 Robertson Quay, Singapore 238236  
Tel: 6336 3663  
[www.stpi.com.sg](http://www.stpi.com.sg)

### **Opening hours:**

**Mon to Fri: 10:00 am – 7:00 pm, Sat:**

**9:00 am – 6:00 pm**

**Closed Sundays & Public Holidays**

**FOM guided tours: Thurs 11:30 am, Sat 2:00 pm**

**Please refer to STPI's website at [www.stpi.com.sg](http://www.stpi.com.sg) for STPI's public programmes and Japanese, Mandarin and special evening tours.**



## **Cheong Soo Pieng: Definitive Works from Private Collections (1947-1983)**

**(through 9 March)**

Lauded as one of Southeast Asia's most important artists emerging from the post-war Chinese diaspora and a pioneer of East-West modernism since the 1950s, Cheong Soo Pieng created a new visual language for artists in Asia, rising above the catastrophes of war and the schisms of nationalism. This show gleans from important private collections to provide a definitive selection of some of the artist's most seminal creations.

## **Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall**

12 Tai Gin Road, Singapore 327874  
Tel: 6256 7377  
[www.wanqingyuan.org.sg](http://www.wanqingyuan.org.sg)



### **Opening hours:**

**Tues to Sun 10:00 am - 5:00 pm, Closed on Mondays**

**FOM guided tours: Tues to Fri 2:00 pm (English)**

**FOM Special exhibition guided tours: 10:30am on Fridays in English**

## **Between the Lines – The Chinese Cartoon Revolution (through 7 July)**

This exhibition examines the links between the 1911 revolution in China and the emergence of Chinese cartoons in Singapore.

*Free general admission to all NHB museums for FOM members and one guest.*

# Coordinators Contact List



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KALA TARANG PRESENTS

# WOVEN IN INDIA

*An Event celebrating traditional textile crafts from India*

25th to 27th April | 11am to 5pm

Venue: 31A Scotts Road, Singapore 228243

**EXHIBITION & SALE** of Sarees, Dupattas/Shawls, Stoles, Tops and Blouses curated by Laila Tyabji - Chairperson of Dastkar. Laila will be curating handloom sarees and other clothes from across India, to give us a glimpse of embroideries, weaves and dyes from different regions of India. Also on sale will be clothes and accessories made by the artisans of 2 grassroots NGOs - Sandur Kushala Kendra and Sewa Banaskantha.

25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> April, 11am - 5pm  
Free Admission

## EMBROIDERY WORKSHOPS

On three traditional embroideries conducted by grassroots artisans.

### CHOOSE FROM:

Lambadi Embroidery from Karnataka  
Ahir Embroidery from Gujarat  
Patchwork and Appliqué from Gujarat

The three workshops will be conducted concurrently at the following times:

25<sup>th</sup> (Thu) April: 11am - 2pm  
26<sup>th</sup> (Fri) April: 10.30am - 1.30pm  
27<sup>th</sup> (Sat) April: 1.30pm - 4.30pm  
Registration Fees: SGD80/-

## THE SARI - CULTURAL LEGACY, ENDURING CHIC

Talk by Laila Tyabji - founder member and chairperson of Dastkar, an NGO for Crafts & Craftspeople in India & also a leading sari aficionado, Laila will trace the story of the sari and her personal journey with this wonderful wearing style.

25<sup>th</sup> (Thu) April: 9.30am - 10.30am  
Registration Fees: SGD25/-

For more details on events and registration formalities:

Go to [Facebook.com/KalaTarang](https://www.facebook.com/KalaTarang)

Contact Sangeeta Roy at (+65) 9236 1451 or email [sangeeta.roy@kalatarang.com](mailto:sangeeta.roy@kalatarang.com)



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