PASSAGE

Friends of the Museums Singapore

January / February 2020

art
history
culture
people

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

A very Happy New Year to you! For art lovers January is an exciting month to be in Singapore.

The 2019 Singapore Biennale *Every Step in the Right Direction* will run until 22 March. It includes artwork from about 77 artists and art collectives hailing from Singapore, Southeast Asia and around the world. Organised by the Singapore Art Museum (SAM), these works are spread across various locations since SAM is undergoing renovation. To get the most out of the sixth edition of the Biennale, take a tour with the FOM docents who guide the event's artwork at the National Gallery on Tuesday and Wednesday and at Gillman Barracks on Thursday and Friday.

Get a glimpse into the turbulent art world of 20th century Singapore in the *Living with Ink: The Collection of Dr Tan Tsze Chor* exhibition at the Asian Civilisations Museum. On show are paintings by modern Chinese masters such as Xu Beihong as well as by artists living in Singapore from the 1930s through the 1980s. The exhibition explores the appreciation of Chinese art by the overseas Chinese collectors and philanthropists of the time.

If you are interested in photography, head down to the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall (SYSNMH) for a tour of the *From Brush to Lens: Early Chinese Photography Studios in Singapore* exhibition, where more than 90 artefacts from late 19th to early 20th century Singapore are on display. The exhibition includes photographs taken in European, Chinese and Japanese-owned studios located here. These photographs are a visual record of the diversity of Singapore's population during this period.

S.E.A. FOCUS, an STPI project, returns to Gillman Barracks from 16 to 19 January. Be sure to carry your membership card to the exhibition. FOM members are entitled to free entry for themselves and four guests upon presentation of their membership card.

In November, we organised a Docent Ongoing Training session on *Guiding the Elderly & Persons with Dementia in Public Spaces* with Celine Chung from the Agency for Integrated Care. This workshop follows an earlier pilot workshop, *Guiding Seniors,* led by Amanda Chan, who was part of the National Heritage Board's Silver Hubs programme at that time. With such workshops we hope to equip our docents with the necessary skills to take on FOM Cares tours.

We also launched a new activity group, *FOM Members Care,* in November. This group, led by Darlene Kasten, aims to provide opportunities for all FOM members to give back to the community. I hope you had a chance to participate in the very successful inaugural event, *FairPrice Walk for Rice,* held on 23 November. Do watch out for future events and sign up via our website.

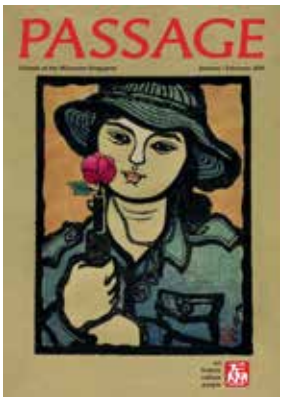
My congratulations to the STPI trainees on completing their docent training. They are the first group to graduate from the 2019/20 docent training program. Docent training for URA/FOM Heritage Trails and for SYSNMH commences in January. I am sure the next few months will fly by for the new trainees as they get engrossed in the training for their respective programmes.

At the AGM in December, you elected the FOM council for 2020 (see photo below). I would like to thank you for your confidence in me and the other council members. I am delighted to have Durga Arivan, Laura Socha, Holly Smith and Gisella Harrold remain on the council to serve for another year. Four new council members, Susan Fong, Yasmin Javeri Krishan, Christine Zeng and Michelle Foo, are joining the team this year. I am looking forward to serving you for another year with our dedicated group of council members. I would like to express my gratitude to outgoing council members Clara Chan, Melissa Yeow, Durriya Dohadwala, Jyoti Ramesh and Dobrina Boneva, for their commitment and contributions to last year's council.

The Year of the Rat, considered a year for new beginnings and renewals, starts on 25 January 2020. I wish a very happy Chinese New Year to all who celebrate.

Best wishes for a great year ahead to all our members.

Garima G Lalwani
FOM President 2020



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Friends of the Museums Singapore

Managing Editor
Andra Leo
andraleo@gmail.com

Commissioning Editor
Patricia Bjaaland Welch

News Editor
Durriya Dohadwala

Photography
Gisella Harrold

Editors/Contributors
Jemima Barton
Carla Forbes-Kelly
Anne H Perng

Advertising Manager
Dobrina Boneva
advertising@fom.sg

Printed and Designed by
Xpress Print Pte Ltd
61 Tai Seng Avenue
Print Media Hub @ Paya Lebar iPark, #03-03
Singapore 534167
sales@xpress.sg

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On the Cover: Vu Lap, *Untitled (Female Guerrilla)*, 1974, woodcut on paper. Courtesy of the Collection of Ambassador Dato' N Parameswaran.

Friends of the Museums Singapore

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 or contact the FOM office.

FOM Office
Friends of the Museums (Singapore)
No.61 Stamford Road,
#02-06 Stamford Court
178892 Singapore: (tel: +65 6337 3685)
Website: www.fom.sg

Administration: Katherine Lim
Office Hours: Monday-Friday
9:30 am – 2:30 pm

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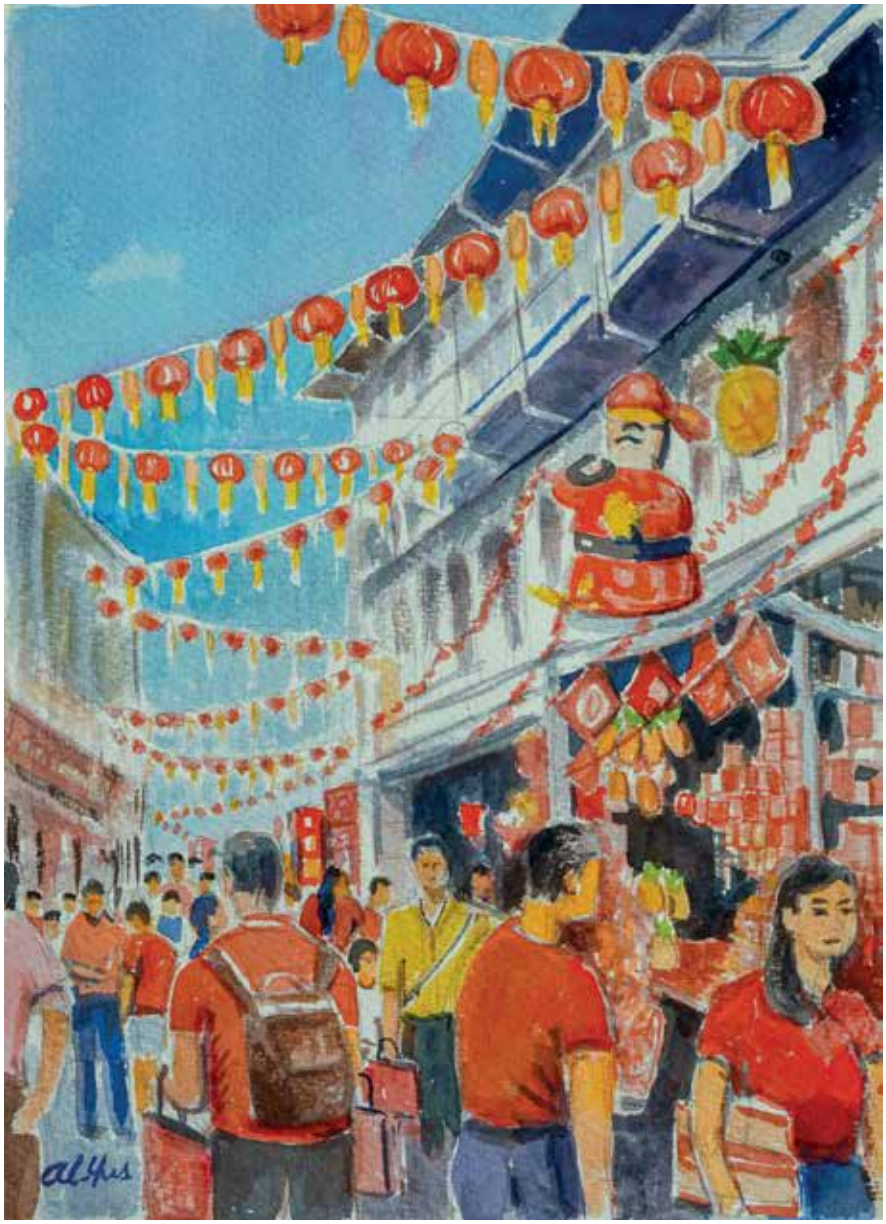
Singapore's Chinese Heritage

By Yusoff Abdul Latiff



Chinese New Year turns Pagoda Street, Sago Street, Temple Street, Smith Street and Trengganu Street, all in the heart of Chinatown, into a riotous sea of various shades of red. More than 400 stalls line the streets, in addition to the array of shops, all bedecked with fluttering lanterns, banners, bunting, animal mascots, pendants, artificial flowers, lion and dragon heads, scrolls, paper ornaments, stickers, *hongbao* packets and wall decorations. Enter the stalls and shops and you will be greeted with myriad goodies, mouth-watering, scrumptious Chinese New Year delicacies, sweets, traditional cookies, waxed duck, preserved fruit, *bak kwa* (barbequed sliced pork), mandarin oranges etc.

Put on whatever red attire you have and jostle with the crowds to savour the Lunar New Year atmosphere. In recent years there has even been a solitary Indian stall selling *muruku* (a savoury snack), *vade* (donut-shaped fritters) and similar goodies, as well as Malay stalls selling *kueh mukmur,* a leaf-shaped cookie with a ground peanut filling, pineapple tarts, *kueh bangkit* (coconut cream cookies) and the like. I prefer to visit between 5:00 and 8:00 pm on the eve of Chinese New Year when the crowd is thin, because that's when most Chinese families are enjoying their reunion dinner.

The Chinese Garden was built in 1975 and is the sister park of the Japanese Garden in the Jurong Lake area. It is a tranquil, 13-hectare park with a design based on China's Song Dynasty era (960-1279 AD). A 13-arch bridge guarded by two stone lions, copies of those in Beijing's Summer Palace, leads to the garden's entrance. The garden comprises three pagodas, a bonsai garden, 12 zodiac sign sculptures, a stone boat and a 100-year-old pomegranate tree, all around the banks of Jurong Lake. Across the road in Yuan Ching Road there used to be a Tang Dynasty City, a theme park built in 1992 at a cost of $70 million and intended to be a permanent movie set. The project failed and the park was demolished in 1999.

The Jurong Lake area is being spruced up to act as a green lung for the planned second CBD in Jurong East. It will certainly gain prominence when the postponed High-Speed Rail Project to Kuala Lumpur is reactivated. To complement the Chinese and Japanese Gardens, it would be good if we had a Malay Garden and an Indian Garden as well.

In 2012, the last Dragon Year, this mighty animal dominated the centre of the main thoroughfare of Singapore's Chinatown. In the Chinese Zodiac the Dragon symbolizes dominance, authority and dignity. As such, the Chinese community in Singapore, still traditionalist, considers it auspicious for their children to be born in the Year of the Dragon.

The Total Fertility Rate (TFR), the average number of children born per woman, reached a record high of 5.72 in 1960, then declined rapidly to about 2.0 as a result of the success of the government's population control policies in the late 1970s and early 1980s. To enable the population to replace itself the TFR must be more than 2.1. Although various policies have been implemented to encourage Singaporeans to have more babies, the TFR declined all the way down to 1.2 in 2016 and in 2018 it was 1.14, far below the replacement level.

However, during Dragon Years, namely in 1976, 1988, 2000 and 2012, there was a spike in births among the Chinese. For example, in 2012 there were 42,665 births compared to about 39,000 in the preceding years. The TFRs of the Malay and Indian communities, who make up 15% and 7.4% of the population, have also declined, but they did not register a spike in births during the Dragon Years. To make up for the shortfall in overall numbers of births over the years, Singapore has to grant citizenship to about 20,000 immigrants every year.

Yusoff Abdul Latiff *is a retired teacher who now indulges in painting watercolours with a focus on intricate Peranakan houses, colourful landscapes and detailed portraits.*

The Monk's Cap Ewer

By Wang Li-Ching

Chinese New Year is so full of movement, sounds, smells and colours! During the bustling festive season, red is the most enchanting colour – red lanterns, red couplets, red packets – giving the special occasion a joyful and auspicious spirit.

However, red wasn't always the colour of choice for Chinese New Year. Marco Polo describes a great White Feast at the beginning of the year when the Mongol Emperor Khubilai Khan (founder of the Yuan dynasty, 1271-1368) and his subjects would dress themselves in white robes and exchange white gifts because they believed the colour would bring them good fortune and happiness throughout the year.

White porcelain monk's cap ewer made in Jingdezhen, early 15th century

With keen admiration for white, it must have been such a great delight for Khubilai Khan to discover the beauty of white ceramics produced in Jingdezhen (Jiangxi Province) to the extent that he established imperial kilns there. This transformed Jingdezhen. Its kilns not only fired refined porcelain for Chinese courts and the elite in the following centuries but also provided millions of pieces of export porcelain (mostly blue and white), which later fuelled the craze for chinoiserie around the world.

To appreciate the exquisiteness of Jingdezhen's early production of white porcelain, we can visit the Ceramics gallery at the Asian Civilisations Museum and view the Monk's Cap Ewer. It has a globular body with a dramatic stepped top. Its name derives from the rim, which resembles a type of headdress worn by Tibetan monks. This unusual shape first appeared in the Yuan dynasty, in part because the Mongol court practised a form of Tibetan Buddhism. The shape suggests its religious function: it was used for pouring liquid for cleansing and purification during Buddhist rituals.

The gentle and subdued glassy reflection of the ewer comes from a glaze called *tianbai* (sweet white) because it looks like melted white sugar. Under its smooth glaze, the object is decorated with various motifs. When it is brought into the light, graceful designs such as lotus scrolls, roundels and *ruyi* (fungus or sceptre, with the auspicious meaning of 'according to your wish') appear. Don't get frustrated if you can't see them because they are meant to be subtle and discreet. This type of decoration is called *anhua* (secret or hidden decorations) by ceramic connoisseurs. Designs are delicately carved into the surface, then covered with a layer of transparent glaze. Both *tianbai* and *anhua* are thought to have developed during the reign of Emperor Yongle (meaning Perpetual Happiness, r 1403-1424, Ming dynasty).

A devout Buddhist, in 1407 Yongle held a grand 49-day Rite for Universal Salvation in honour of his late parents. For this occasion, he invited Halima, a famous Buddhist priest, from Tibet to officiate at the services and commissioned a wide variety of white ceramic vessels such as monk's cap ewers, from Jingdezhen. In China, white is traditionally associated with mourning and filial piety. This requiem ceremony demonstrated Yongle's filial affection towards his father (the late Emperor Hongwu, founder of the Ming dynasty), his adherence to orthodox Confucian values and his reverence for Tibetan Buddhism. Tibet was an independent and powerful kingdom at that time. A cordial relationship with Tibet was crucial for the peace and prosperity of China's southwestern borders. The rite was morally, diplomatically and religiously appropriate.

Yongle advocated Confucian teachings and practised Daoism as well as a mix of Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism. He adopted a policy of religious tolerance. In fact, many Muslims such as Admiral Zheng He, who first set sail in 1405, played influential roles in Yongle's court. Zheng He's legendary 'treasure fleet' travelled through Southeast Asia, South Asia and reached as far as the east coast of Africa. The voyages marked the era 'when China ruled the seas' and greatly stimulated cultural and commercial exchanges between China and Southeast Asia.

Wang Li-Ching *is a docent at the ACM and a member of the Southeast Asian Ceramic Society. She completed The School of Oriental and African Studies' specialty course,* A Century of Collecting Chinese Ceramics *in Britain, in May 2019.*

Image courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum

Hidden Treasures

The Residence Museum in Munich

By Gisella Harrold

Guiding for FOM at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) has forever changed the way I look at museums around the world and this includes the Residence Museum of my hometown, Munich.

The Residence was once the home of the House of Wittelsbach, the royal family that ruled Bavaria from the 9th century. Each duke, elector or king, and their wives, have all left their mark at this place. So today, with its 130 rooms and 23,000 square metre size, it is the largest 'city' palace in Germany. It has been under renovation for many years and many of us were very interested in seeing the changes.

Candleholder, Qing dynasty, Kangxi period (1662-1720), Mounts: Paris, early 18th century

To my amazement, I discovered that during the 17th and 18th centuries the Wittelsbachs had collected one of the most splendid collections of Chinese and Japanese porcelain I have ever seen. You might recall that Europe only discovered the secret of porcelain-making in 1708 in Dresden, so owning a collection like this not only showed the family's wealth, but also the sophistication of the collectors. The pieces were often displayed in specifically built 'Mirror Cabinets' to showcase their 'special' nature and quite often it didn't matter that no one actually understood the meaning of the artefacts. For the Chinese, every motif had a meaning while the Europeans very often just enjoyed the paintings, with their flower, plant or animal depictions. For example, in China the peony is regarded as the queen of the flowers and is a symbol of royalty and virtue; the chrysanthemum is the symbol for autumn and stands for longevity; the depictions of porcelain lions were often thought to be dogs, reflected of the name 'dog lion'; a Guanyin was thought to be a Chinese Madonna, since she was very often shown with a child.

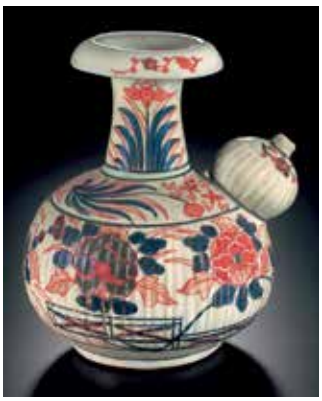
Japanese Imari chamber pot 1680-1720

The Wittelsbacher collection is particularly famous for its 'assembled' objects. These porcelain objects from China were made even more valuable by having them mounted on bronze or silver steeds. You might remember that one of the central objects in the special exhibition *China Mania* was the mounted incense burner. Like many of the collection's artefacts, it was created in Paris.

The big question is always who is copying whom, but I don't think that the Wittelsbachs were particularly concerned about this. The increasing demand for Asian porcelain prompted the Chinese to copy so-called Imari porcelain and this was exported in large quantities to Europe. While the Japanese Imari porcelain was made for both the domestic and export markets, the Chinese Imari, such as the Imari chamber pots, were made purely for export. Why was Imari so popular in Bavaria? Maybe the colours, iron red or cobalt blue, but especially the gold, matched Baroque tastes?

One of the oldest pieces in the collection is from the 16th century. It was a commissioned plate in the classical colours of blue and white, which also happened to be the colours of Bavaria. The Bavarian coat of arms is depicted in the middle of the plate. This was a speciality of the Chinese, the production of porcelain that was custom-made for export and often called armorial porcelain. The ACM houses some fine examples.

Mounted incense burner, porcelain: China, Jiangxi province, Jingdezhen, Kangxi period (1662-1722); European gilt-bronze and Japanese lacquer: second half 18th century



Imari Kendi, Japan, for the Malay export market, late 17th century

China, Ming dynasty, Wanli period (1573-1919) circa 1600. Armorial porcelain plate with Wittelsbach coat of arms

If your travels ever take you to Munich, make certain that you visit this extraordinary hidden treasure.

Gisella Harrold *has been an active member of FOM for many years, guiding at the ACM. She is also involved in activities such as Study Tours and is the coordinator of Curio.*

All photos by the author

The Nuts and Bolts of the Chinese Calendar

By Amanda Jaffe

While the Gregorian calendar regulates our daily activities, religious, ethnic and cultural groups use other calendars to mark dates of deep cultural significance for their communities. Over a billion people in China and millions around the world use the Chinese calendar for this reason.

Under the ancient doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven, China's emperors received their authority from Heaven, and their primary responsibility was to maintain harmony between Heaven and Earth. The emperor's ability to promulgate a calendar that could accurately predict astronomical phenomena and guide critical activities such as farming was essential to maintaining political authority.

Simply stated, a calendar is a system for dividing time into periods such as years, months and days. While the cultural role of the Chinese calendar extends into areas such as astrology, this article focuses on its more basic purpose – translating astronomical observations into a useful tool for activities such as identifying festival days and farming.

Lunar calendars focus on the moon's orbit around the earth. A lunar month is the period between two new moons. A lunar calendar contains 12 lunar months, between 353 and 355 days, and has no regard for the seasons. From the perspective of the widely used Gregorian calendar, lunar calendar events such as the Islamic Haj drift through the seasons over time. Solar calendars, such as the Gregorian, focus on the earth's orbit around the sun. A solar year contains about 365 ¼ days.

Despite popular references to Chinese 'Lunar' New Year, the Chinese calendar is not a lunar calendar. It is a lunisolar calendar in which the months are lunar months, but the year is adjusted as necessary to align with a solar year. One Chinese calendrical year generally contains 12 lunar months. Given the roughly 11-day difference between the lunar and solar years, a 'leap' month is added every two to three years. Thus Chinese New Year drifts from the perspective of the Gregorian calendar, but remains bound between January 21 and February 20.

The solar aspect of the Chinese calendar is known as the Solar Terms, or *jiéqì*. Each Solar Term marks the point at which the earth has moved 15 degrees farther along its orbit around the sun, with the vernal equinox marking 0 degrees. There are 24 Solar Terms (360 degrees/15 = 24), including 12 Principal Terms that alternate with 12 Minor Terms. Each month in the Chinese calendar is numbered based on the Principal Term that falls within it. Principal Term 1, Rain-Water, occurs when the earth reaches 330 degrees in its orbit.

Four Solar Terms mark the vernal equinox, summer solstice, autumnal equinox and winter solstice. Four others mark the beginning of each season. While the Gregorian calendar considers an equinox or solstice to be the *start* of each season, the Solar Terms place each equinox or solstice in the *middle* of a season. Thus Chinese New Year, aka the Spring Festival, falls well before spring on the Gregorian calendar. The remaining Solar Terms reflect weather observations and agricultural activities. Solar Terms became

The Sexagenary Cycle

The Ten Celestial Stems			
1	Jia	**6**	Ji
2	Yi	**7**	Geng
3	Bing	**8**	Xin
4	Ding	**9**	Ren
5	Wu	**10**	Gui
The Twelve Terrestrial Branches			
1	Zi (rat)	**7**	Wu (horse)
2	Chou (ox)	**8**	Wei (sheep)
3	Yin (tiger)	**9**	Shen (monkey)
4	Mao (rabbit)	**10**	You (rooster)
5	Chen (dragon)	**11**	Xu (dog)
6	Si (snake)	**12**	Hai (pig)

Years in the Sexagenary Cycle are named by combining a Celestial Stem and a Terrestrial Branch taken from each list, in order. For example, the first year in a Sexagenary Cycle would be Jia Zi, the second would be Yi Chou, and so on. When the end of a list is reached, that list begins again. For example, the 10th year in the Cycle would be Gui You, and the 11th year would be Jia Xu.

The 24 Solar Terms

Term #	Solar Term	Approximate Date	Term #	Solar Term	Approximate Date
	Beginning of Spring	February 4		Beginning of Autumn	August 7
PT1	**Rain Water**	February 19	**PT7**	**End of Heat**	August 22
	Insects Awakening	March 5		White Dew	September 7
PT2	**Vernal Equinox**	March 20	**PT8**	**Autumnal Equinox**	September 22
	Fresh Green	April 4		Cold Dew	October 8
PT3	**Grain Rain**	April 19	**PT9**	**First Frost**	October 23
	Beginning of Summer	May 5		Beginning of Winter	November 7
PT4	**Lesser Fullness**	May 20	**PT10**	**Light Snow**	November 22
	Grain in Ear	June 5		Heavy Snow	December 7
PT5	**Summer Solstice**	June 21	**PT11**	**Winter Solstice**	December 21
	Lesser Heat	July 6		Lesser Cold	January 5
PT6	**Greater Heat**	July 22	**PT12**	**Greater Cold**	January 20

Solar terms (in bold in the table above) are Principal Terms and the number of the Principal Term is noted with the preface "PT." Each month in the Chinese calendar (other than a leap month) is numbered based on the Principal Term it contains. Leap months take the number of the preceding month. Dates of the Solar Terms are roughly fixed on the solar calendar but may vary within a day or two from year to year, given factors such as leap days.

Chinese calendar featuring twelve zodiacs, published by Joo Hong Medical Hall. Image courtesy of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

the critical structure guiding China's agricultural society and are enrolled in UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The leap month is the nexus between the Chinese calendar's lunar and solar aspects. Several steps determine when a leap month is needed. The 11th month of the year must include the 11th Principal Term (winter solstice). If there are 13 new moons between the 11th month in one year and the 11th month in the next, the upcoming year must be a leap year. In that case, the first lunar month that doesn't contain a Principal Term will be the leap month (taking the same number as the month that immediately precedes it).

Where astronomers make their observations for a calendar directly affects its accuracy. Observations for the Chinese calendar were conducted in Beijing until 1929, when the Republic of China shifted the observatory southeast, near to Nanjing. New moons are observed 14 minutes later in Nanjing than they had been in Beijing – a critical difference if the new moon occurs close to midnight, because each lunar month begins on the day that the new moon occurs. The impact of this disparity became clear 50 years later, in 1978. Many calendars in Hong Kong remained based on the last Chinese calendar calculated in Beijing (which covered the years up to 2108), while mainland China's used Nanjing-based calculations. That year, the new moon that marked the start of the eighth month occurred just before midnight in Beijing and just after midnight in Nanjing. As a result, the two calendars were one day off and the eighth month – including the Mid-Autumn Festival – started one day earlier in Hong Kong than in mainland China. Since then, Hong Kong has used the Nanjing-based calendar.

Astronomical observations determine the contours of the Chinese calendar year, but how years are counted is a purely human construct. Rather than counting years in sequence *ad infinitum*, the Chinese calendar has used two cyclical systems. The first (still used) is the Sexagenary Cycle, a sequence of two-part names that repeats every 60 years. Each year's name derives from a table of 10 Celestial Stems and a table of 12 Terrestrial Branches. The name of a given year is determined by combining a Celestial Stem and a Terrestrial Branch from each list, in order. On reaching the end of one of the lists, that list's sequence restarts from the beginning until all 60 possible combinations have been used.

Historically, during the years of imperial rule, years were also measured using 'reign years', a combination of the name of the sitting emperor and the number of years in his reign. The count of years would begin again with each new emperor. Emperors might change their name mid-reign if an issue arose, restarting the count of years using the new reign name.

The Yellow Emperor, Huangdi, is said to have invented the Chinese calendar and Sexagenary Cycle in either 2697 or 2637 BCE, although it is unclear whether Huangdi existed. Inscriptions on oracle bones from the late Shang dynasty indicate that a form of the Chinese calendar with leap months was used in the 13th century BCE. While the timing of its origin may be unclear, the Chinese calendar (despite some 100 reforms to tweak its accuracy) continued in use as China's civil calendar until 1912, when the fledgling Republic of China initially adopted the Gregorian calendar. In the late 1920s, the republic's Nationalist government took steps to ban the use of the Chinese calendar for civil purposes, yet effectively continued the use of reign years, declaring 1912 to be the first year of the Minguo era. The Communist Party of China ended this practice in 1949, when it both retained use of the Gregorian calendar and did away with the Minguo era, recognising the year as 1949.

Star chart painted on the ceiling of a Liao Tomb (ca 10th century). Photo courtesy of Patricia Bjaaland Welch

With the days of emperors and the Mandate of Heaven long gone, the Chinese calendar no longer plays a central role in maintaining governmental authority (although Taiwan continues to count years in the Minguo era). As a cultural calendar, however, it remains highly relevant, both within China and for millions in the Chinese diaspora.

Amanda Jaffe *arrived in Singapore in December 2018. She brought with her a deep interest in the history and culture of Singapore and neighbouring countries.*

The Masters of Versailles: Louis XIV and Louis XV

Were they porcelain lovers?

By Caroline Carfantan

The Hall of Mirrors of the Palace of Versailles © EPV / Thomas Garnier

When Chinese porcelain reached Europe, it fascinated the rulers and aristocrats because the material itself was unknown and the porcelain pieces extremely hard to procure. The first recorded piece of porcelain to have reached Europe in the 14th century is believed to be the Fonthill Vase. According to Michèle Pirazzoli-T'Serstevens, (*La céramique chinoise en Italie, XIIIe-début du XIVsiècle*, p78) it was presented in 1381 as a gift by the king of Hungary to the king of Naples and was later recorded as part of the collection of the Grand Dauphin, the son of Louis XIV. The Grand Dauphin was an avid collector of porcelain as were many members of the royal family. The inventory of Louis XIV (king of France from 1643 to 1715) was over 3,000 pieces, mostly Chinese. The king would drink his broth from a large Chinese porcelain cup with golden handles. But was Louis XIV a porcelain lover? Not really… when the court moved to Versailles in 1682, the flamboyant, 700-plus room royal residence, most of his porcelain collection ended up in storage. He was a politician and a businessman above all.

In 1664, 60 years after the English and the Dutch, Louis XIV and his finance minister Colbert decided to launch the French trading company, *la Compagnie Cie des Indes Orientales*. The goal was purely mercantile: having a direct supply of luxury goods from Asia and preventing English and the Dutch-imported Asian goods from draining French coffers. The king's role as protector of the arts meant supporting French artists' and craftsmen's creations through royal orders, a role seen as more prestigious than being merely a collector of Asian lacquerware and porcelain. Even though Louis XIV had the largest collection of all his court's members, only a few of his porcelain pieces were displayed in his private apartments.

While no one could compete with the royal porcelain collection of Louis XIV, during his reign many noblemen became avid collectors of Chinese porcelain. This was mostly owing to an increase in the amount of porcelain reaching Europe in the 18th century, which resulted in a major price drop, making it more accessible.

French royal armorial porcelain bidet © Sotheby's / Art Digital

Among the pieces in high demand in France at the time were armorial ones, either in porcelain from China or local, glazed earthenware known as *faïence* from French manufacturers. The 'passion' for armorial plates was directly

linked to Louis XIV, not because he was using them for his dinner parties, but because he wanted to maintain a clear distinction between noble families who were 'gentlemen' versus those who had only lately acquired their titles via purchase (nobility in title only), strengthening his policy of a strict social hierarchy at the court of Versailles. This allowed him to keep the nobility penned up, to prevent them involving themselves in politics.

A view of the Palace of Versailles from the Petit Parc © EPV / Thomas Garnier

In the 1660s, he required all nobles to produce documentation proving lineage going back at least 100 years. His policy towards the nobles was also a means of improving the state's finances since during his reign over 50,000 titles were sold. Another financially driven decision that passed in 1694 was the royal order imposing the registration of coats of arms not only for noble families, but all families of a certain 'rank' known as the 'money nobility'. Many heraldic designs were specifically created for this registration. For many recently ennobled country gentry or members of the bourgeoisie, one of the ways to display social status and rank was armorial dishes and plates. Many ordered them from local *faïence* manufactories because of shorter delivery times and more affordable prices. However, those who could afford it, opted for made-to-order porcelain pieces from China.

This 'fashion' to display one's heraldry explains the abundance of armorial pieces from this period – many of them often fanciful and impossible to identify. Special orders were also made when guests of high rank were expected, as for example the recorded order in 1720 by Mademoiselle de Valois for the expected visit of the Princess of Modena (Queen Consort of England, Scotland and Ireland) to the castle of Nevers. This glazed earthenware set of *faïence* adorned with her coat of arms included, "two dozen plates, four bowls, two octagonal bowls, a large octagonal bowl, two pots with three octagonal plates, 12 chamber pots". The last item, an armorial chamber pot, may sound like the odd one out, but it was not an uncommon request at the time. While the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* was under the governance of Louis XIV and later Louis XV, neither of them had private orders fulfilled by the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, but for one exception – made to order armorial porcelain vessels with the coat of arms of Louis XV, but not in the shape and for the purpose one would expect.

Fontaine à Parfum *Louis XIV, Versailles, Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon © RMN- GP (Château de Versailles) / Daniel Arnaude*

In 1733, Louis XV commissioned 12 royal armorial bidets. This first order was delivered between 1735-1737. The bidets were most likely intended for his royal residences. One can assume that he was pleased by what he had received since in 1738 he ordered a whole armorial porcelain dinner service. There is no record of the list and number of pieces ordered but in general a service would be made up of at least 112 pieces, probably more if it was for the king himself. In 1740 the royal porcelain was shipped from China on two separate ships to prevent the whole royal cargo from being lost in the event of a shipwreck.

Most of the royal porcelain collection consisted either of gifts or made-to-order pieces bought from Parisian decorative arts dealers known as *marchands merciers*. Louis XV is believed to have bought several pieces from renowned dealers such as Hérbert and Duvaux. However, only one piece, today known as the *Fontaine à Parfum* and part of the 2014 exhibition *La Chine à Versailles* can be traced back to his personal collection. It is a crackled *truitée gris* (trout grey) glazed celadon vase with a porcelain lid. The vase is embellished with bronze-gilt work in the *rocaille* style and was made to order in France while the vase was from Jingdezhen, China, dated to the Qianlong period. Two gilt-bronze animals enhance the decorative elements – a swan with wide-open wings, whose beak is the fountain's faucet and a crayfish on top of the lid. Gilt-bronze mounts were very fashionable in France in the 18th century since they harmonised with a room's other pieces of furniture, those with metal elements – clocks, dressers, wall lights, chandeliers and many more. They were also a display of wealth as gilt-bronze mounts on this scale were rather expensive.

While neither Louis XIV nor Louis XV was overly fond of Chinese porcelain and preferred to support the French *faïence* and later the porcelain industry, their policies and tastes nevertheless played a significant role in influencing what was produced by French artisans and manufactories, sometimes having French art imitate Chinese art, or in the adaptation of oriental materials to French tastes.

Caroline Carfantan *is an FOM guide as well as a happy member of the SEA Ceramic Society. She loves French history and the interrelationships among objects from Europe and Asia.*

The Dark Side of the Brilliant Tang

By Patricia Bjaaland Welch

國破山河在
***The Country is Broken, only the Hills and Rivers Remain* - Du Fu**

We remember the Tang Dynasty (618-906 CE) as China's most cosmopolitan era, but that doesn't tell the whole story, for it ended by leaving 30 million dead, the result of corrupt and/or foolish emperors, ambitious individuals and natural disasters. While the Asian Civilisations Museum's Tang shipwreck (the *Belitung)* was plying Asian waters, the dynasty was in a slow death spiral, its collapse and the suffering of its people recorded by some of history's most memorable poets.

A handful of Tang poets led by Du Fu (712-770), Liu Bai or Li Po (701-762) and Wang Wei (701-761), together with the later Bai Juyi (772-846), in poems that were often as sparse as four lines, reveal the travesties and betrayals that led many of their colleagues to either drink or suicide. Du Fu's own infant son starved to death. A naive tale claims a drunken Li Bai drowned when trying to embrace the moon, but the truth is that he most likely succumbed to pneumonia or malaria while returning home after having been banished to China's poisonous, swampy southern territories.[1] Wang Wei, a Buddhist, was wrongly condemned as a traitor, but luckily was pardoned, while Bai Juyi's cause of death is unknown after a life that swung between dangerous extremes as court factions came and went.

The dynasty's glorious early years came to an end when the Emperor Xuanzong, who began his rule (712) as a hard-working and humane emperor who expanded the empire's borders, succumbed to the charms of one of his son's wives, the Lady Yang Guifei, whose name is the best known of all of China's temptresses. By diverting the emperor from his more virtuous duties, she and her relatives also diverted a large share of the empire's resources, including its war horses, which were reduced to ferrying her and her sisters to picnics.

On the third day of the third month in the freshening weather
Many beauties take the air by the Chang'an waterfront…
Fleet horses from the Yellow Gate, stirring no dust,
Bring precious dishes constantly from the imperial kitchen…
From *A Song of Fair Women* – Du Fu

Then in 751, China lost a major battle on its western frontier, one that enabled the Tarim Basin to fall back into Tibetan hands from which it had been won in 738. The 'Battle of Talas' weakened China's military at the same time as it was fighting a rebellion in China's southwest regions and a famine was sweeping the country. Du Fu, having failed the imperial examinations for the second time, was struggling home wracked with grief at the excesses he had seen in the capital and the plight of the peasantry, whose sons were now being conscripted for military service, when he wrote:

Portrait of Bai Juyi

War-wagons rumbling, the horses' cries,
every one armed...
At fifteen we are dispatched north to guard the river;
at forty, we are sent to the western parts to till the fields...
Better to give birth to a girl; girls can be married off, while
boys will be buried forgotten among wild grass."
From *Ballad of the Army Wagons* (ca 750) – Du Fu

From the vermilion gates comes the smell of wine and flesh;
In the roads are the bones of men who froze to death."
From *On Going to Fengxian County from the Capital* (ca 750) – Du Fu

Meanwhile, a soldier of mixed Sogdian and Turkish blood named An Lushan, who had won the court's favour, was given a military governorship that gave him control over 40% of the country's military. In 755, he struck, launching a full-scale rebellion, conquering in quick succession Luoyang and then Chang'an (modern Xi'an), slaughtering and destroying all encountered.

[1] The 'drowning' story may have been an attempt to liken him to his famous predecessor, the famous poet Qu Yuan (332?-296 BCE).

Yang Guifei Mounting a Horse, *by the Song Dynasty/Yuan Dynasty artist Qian Xuan (1235-1305 CE). Courtesy of the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Museum, Washington DC*

The emperor and Yang Guifei, accompanied by some members of the court and the Yang clan, fled south, only to be halted en route to Shu (Sichuan Province) when the troops demanded Yang Guifei's and her powerful second cousin's death. The scene is recorded in Bai Juyi's famous poem, *Everlasting Remorse*:

The six armies of the emperor refused to advance any further,
so the emperor was given no choice.
The writhing fair maiden, whose long and slender eyebrows resembled the
feathery feelers of a moth,
Died in front of the horses.
Her ornate headdress fell to the ground, and nobody picked it up…
His Majesty covered his face, for he could not save her…
From *Everlasting Remorse* (806) – Bai Juyi

As Oxford sinologist Dawson wrote, "The An Lushan rebellion destroyed the greatness of the T'ang but failed to put anything in its place."[2] An Lushan was eventually murdered by his own son, who was in turn assassinated. In the chaos that followed, Du Fu was called to the capital to serve the court, but soon offended the wrong people and was demoted and expelled. He and his family, starving and in rags, fled south to Chengdu.

With the destruction of the fields and its farmers came the demise of the Tang's land registration and taxation systems; tax income fell to only a fifth of what it had been five years earlier. Meanwhile, the popularity of Buddhism removed both men and taxable income from the country's tax rolls as well as creating a metal shortage as coins were removed from circulation to be melted into religious statuary. Rebellions broke out in Hebei and Shandong, and although the Emperor Dezong (779-805) tried to address the problems, he had to deal with a court controlled by eunuchs as well as outspoken *literati* who resented Buddhism's success and wrote treatises against the worship of "bones and teeth". The empire slipped away as Chinese princesses were wedded to Uighur khans, and mounds of silk were traded for Uighur horses.

Bai Juyi, a *literati* who had managed to survive the court's intrigues in Chang'an, had just decided to slip away to Luoyang when an earlier enemy was returned to power in 833. "In a poem written just after his resignation, he congratulates himself on the fact that 'the world' (that is, the regime) seems to have forgotten his existence; were it to remember him, even his known lack of ambition and quiet manner of life would not suffice to protect him."[3]

Happier far the owner of a small garden;
propped on his stick he idles here all day,
Now and again collecting a few friends,
And every night enjoying lute and wine.
Why should he pine for great terraces and lakes,
When a little garden gives him all that he needs
Inscription Written by Me in My Small Garden – Bai Juyi

In 845, a devout Daoist emperor (Wuzong, who later died of a Daoist longevity tonic) launched a massive persecution campaign that disrobed thousands of nuns and monks and tore down their monasteries and establishments save one in each major prefecture and four in each of the two capital cities.

China began to turn xenophobic. The Huang Chao Rebellion of 875, corrupt and child emperors, a severe drought, and an insurgency that captured Canton and, according to some records, murdered 100,000 of its foreign residents (primarily Muslim trading families) followed. The dynasty's fall in 906 CE saw the end of its exoticism and curiosity in 'things foreign'. How easy it is to commiserate with the unambitious but brilliant painter and poet Wang Wei who had almost been executed as a traitor for being in the wrong place at the wrong time (which wasn't difficult during the dynasty's final years). He was saved only by the intervention of his brother. In his final years he said it all:

With each vanished day, old age advances
Yet spring returns each year.
My only joy is in a bowl of wine.
Why mourn the falling blossoms?
- Wang Wei

[2] Raymond Dawson, *The Sui and the T'ang Dynasties*. London: Penguin Books, 1972, p. 115.
[3] Arthur Waley. *The Life and Times of Po Chu*-I 772-846 A.D. NY: The Macmillan Co., 1949, p. 183.

Conservation – A Brief Introduction

By Zhang Jingyi

The Heritage Conservation Centre (HCC)

Tucked away in the west of Singapore, the Heritage Conservation Centre (HCC) of the National Heritage Board is home to Singapore's National Collection of at least 200,000 artefacts and artworks of various mediums.

At the HCC, a dedicated team of collection care professionals is responsible for the care and welfare of the collection. Amongst them, conservators contribute to the preservation of the collection through preventive and interventive conservation practices. Working behind the scenes, they strive to create a safe environment for artefacts by identifying, assessing, mitigating and managing risks.

1. Preventive Conservation

Preventive conservation is the practice of delaying deterioration and reducing damage to cultural heritage through the provision of stable environmental conditions. It is the first line of defence in prolonging the life of an artefact. Everyone who interacts with artefacts contributes in some ways to preventive conservation efforts.

Relative humidity and temperature data loggers monitor the environmental conditions that artefacts are exposed to

The first step is to understand the artefact and find out the factors and conditions that can exacerbate deterioration. External factors that affect deterioration include humidity, temperature, light, pollution, improper handling methods and pests. The extent of the impact caused by each factor depends on the material and nature of the object. High humidity can cause metals to corrode. Exposure to high light levels over time can cause fading and discoloration in textiles and paper artefacts. Warm, dark, dirty and humid conditions are ideal for the growth of pests and mould. Improper handling can cause severe physical damage on all types of materials in a short amount of time. Accumulated grime defaces artefacts and can be a source of food for pests and mould.

Preventive conservation measures include regulating and monitoring environmental conditions, ensuring safe storage and display conditions, regular housekeeping, integrated pest management and the provision of handling guides. All these measures aim to prevent damage before it occurs.

One example of preventive measures is the use of showcases. As much as museums want to provide up-close experiences with artworks, having them on open display increases the risk of mishandling and accidents. The artefacts are exposed to a higher level of dust and pollution, and environmental conditions are harder to regulate in a large gallery compared to a showcase. With this consideration, certain artefacts are chosen to be displayed inside showcases – it is ultimately for their safety.

2. Interventive Conservation

Interventive conservation consists of treatments carried out by trained conservators to stabilise conditions or treat damage to artefacts so that they can be stored, handled or displayed safely. Conservators are essentially doctors for artefacts, diagnosing ailments and rendering treatments required to improve overall well-being. In the course of treatment, conservators work closely with other experts such as curators and conservation scientists, to gather information about the artefact. The interventive conservation process is systematic. It involves examination, practical treatment and documentation.

a. Examination

First, the conservator investigates an artefact's provenance, significance, structure, materials and condition through the study of literature, past conservation documentation and visual and scientific examination of the artefact. Scientific equipment is useful in revealing details that are not visible to the naked eye. For example, stereo microscopes are used to study features under magnification, X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) analysis provides information about a material's elemental composition, and X-radiography can reveal features that are not visible on the surface. The conservator also assesses the condition of the artefacts in their present state, identifying features of deterioration, damage and past repairs. The information gathered in this phase is important for informing decisions made during conservation treatment.

Stereo microscopes are used to magnify features that cannot be seen with the naked eye

b. Conservation Treatment

Based on the condition of the artefact, the conservator then proposes a conservation treatment that considers the needs and sensitivities of the artefact, with the primary goal of stabilising its condition and prolonging its lifespan.

When formulating treatment proposals, conservators follow the principles of minimal intervention (less is more), using conservation materials that are stable in the long term, ensuring that any conservation treatment administered is 're-treatable' or reversible in the future, and that treatment carried out does not affect or change the integrity or significance of the artefact. Treatment decisions are always made in consultation with stakeholders (curators, artists, owners).

A paper conservator surface-cleans an artwork with a soft brush

Common treatments include surface cleaning, stabilising friable surfaces by consolidating with a suitable adhesive, repair and adhesion of broken parts for safe handling or gap-filling areas of loss. The scale of treatment depends on the needs of the artefact and its future purpose. For example, surface cleaning can be very straightforward and quick (as in removing dust and dirt from a small stable artefact with a vacuum and brush), but also complicated and time-consuming (as in removing hard and crusty dirt from a large sculpture). The possibilities are endless, as every artefact is unique in its own way.

c. Documentation

Every step of the conservation process and any information gathered about the artefact must be clearly and thoroughly documented. This is done through written records, drawings, photographs and more. Documentation is extremely important, as it provides a record for tracking the history and condition of an artefact over time, and serves to justify, explain and illustrate any treatment carried out. The information recorded will also be helpful for the future care and treatment of the artefact.

3. Conservation vs Restoration

The terms 'conservation' and 'restoration' tend to be used interchangeably as they appear very similar in nature. However, the objectives of each practice are very different.

A reconstructed Changsha bowl where the added material can be clearly distinguished from original material. The characters on the bowl are not recreated due to lack of information and evidence. Artefact featured is from the Asian Civilisations Museum's Tang Cargo Shipwreck Collection. Image courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum, National Heritage Board

The aim of restoration is to make an artefact look as good as new. The practice is motivated by aesthetic perfection. Flaws and damage are disguised to give the impression that the artefact is in pristine condition. Restorations may be done at the expense of original material, including modification and/or the replacement of existing material. In addition, it can be difficult to distinguish between what is original to the object and what is added.

On the other hand, the goal of conservation is the long-term preservation of the artefact's integrity and its history. The aesthetic appearance is one important aspect of the artefact's value. For example, a broken ceramic is better appreciated in its reconstructed form. However, signs of the artwork's history, its materiality, its use and its significance for future generations are considered too. As much as possible, a conservation treatment has to be distinguishable from original material and it is inappropriate to reconstruct designs or features without any evidence.

4. Conclusion

Conservation is a multi-faceted discipline that requires practitioners to be well-versed in the arts and sciences. It is an integral part of museums and serves to support cultural institutions in their efforts to exhibit and interpret cultural heritage. Most importantly, conservation aims to preserve cultural heritage for future generations.

While both preventive and interventive conservation are important, more emphasis has to be placed on the former. Conservation treatment is necessary but also costly and time-consuming. With a huge collection and limited resources, in the long term we can contribute more to the collection's preservation by having proper guidelines and appropriate environmental conditions.

Zhang Jingyi *is an Assistant Objects Conservator at the Heritage Conservation Centre.*

Unless otherwise noted, all images courtesy of the Heritage Conservation Centre

The Stories Ceramic Shards Can Tell

By Kyle David Latinis

We think of ceramics as being functional – pots, plates, bowls; or as decorative, cultural, religious or prestige items – such as incense burners, vases, urns, burial jars, mosaics, statues, imperial ware, etc. Ceramics are also pieces of art, expressing many things from myths and stories to political statements. We also assign values to well-made and ancient pottery, like any other form of art or antique. Value is mostly based on rareness, age, ownership, authorship (creator), cultural affiliation, craftsmanship and other aesthetic properties. But are these the most salient characteristics? Are they the most important considerations for archaeologists and archaeological questions?

A kraak shard

We also have to consider that many ceramics are functional items: particularly bricks, tiles, pipes, toilets and so forth. These are often neglected in the narratives many museums display. Many are not just functional, but also representative of cultural preference and prestige.

Ceramic shards (broken bits of pottery), like other objects, have narratives that are often far more important than monetary wealth, but we have to create their narratives through research. Different narratives can be created from different analytical techniques. Broken pot shards and the narratives they reveal, even if monetarily worthless, are priceless when it comes to the information they can provide.

Because ceramics can be crafted and decorated in thousands of ways, they can be used to identify cultural, technological and temporal trends – much like clothing and fashion. We can infer shape, design, production technology, function, origin, use, cultural affiliation, temporal periods, etc from even the smallest pieces.

And shards can tell us much more if we ask the right questions and find the right methods of analysis. Asking questions about shards helps us exercise our creativity and critical thinking skills.

Of critical importance, if you really want shards to 'talk' to you and tell you their story, is asking relevant, answerable questions. "What were *you* used for?"

Shard of a made-in-Thailand tile found in Java

Physically handling shards is a must. Virtual imaging and drawings help a lot. Viewing pots in glass cases is nice. However, there is no comparison to physically handling shards. Tactile, visual and compositional assessments are crucial. Most compositional analyses are done in labs to determine 'recipes' and 'technologies'. However, you have to select the right samples and this takes a lot of handling in order to select the right ones. Also, we cannot forget that contents are vitally important, ranging from food items to human bones – even precious metals and jewels. Ceramics are a commodity and also a container for commodities.

Potting clays have certain geologically distinct recipes as well as culturally and temporally defined *chaînes opératoires* (methods of procurement, manufacture, technology and trade) that vary culturally and change over time and space. Pots are like cakes. They have a basic set of ingredients but can vary considerably. Do you need to eat a whole cake to identify it or will a bite do? Pots are the same – a piece will often suffice.

So how does one analyse shards? At first, most people try to imagine the shard in its complete form like a puzzle piece. With enough experience, handling and good reference collections, this is easy to

Basket of shards from the Dehua kilns of China, photo courtesy of Patricia Bjaaland Welch

accomplish. We can identify an object from a diagnostic element or trait. For example, we don't need a whole shoe to identify a Nike; all we need is a piece with a recognisable fragment – perhaps the Nike swoosh emblem. It's the same with pot shards.

Moreover, it's not just a single shard that is important for archaeologists and historians. It's often the assemblage. An assemblage consists of hundreds, thousands and even millions of fragments. The volume, variation and spatial contexts matter. They can tell you the extent of the site, the intensity of activities, the type of activities, the ethnic and social class variance in an urban site, and where the industrial areas were located. For example, the Kedah Tua site in north Malaysia has an estimated 100,000 to 1,000,000 *tuyère* (ceramic air pipes for iron smelting). What does that tell us about the type and intensity of iron production almost 1,500-2,000 years ago?

The author (left) leading a shard workshop, organised by the Southeast Asian Ceramic Society (SEACS). Photo courtesy SEACS

Why would a 14th century site in Singapore have 30-40% Chinese celadon shards, while a contemporaneous site 2,000 km away in the spice islands of East Indonesia has only 1%? Why would 0.01% 15th-16th century Thai and Vietnamese shards exist in Singaporean sites, while 5% exist in Maluku, 10% in Cambodia, or 80% in a shipwreck?

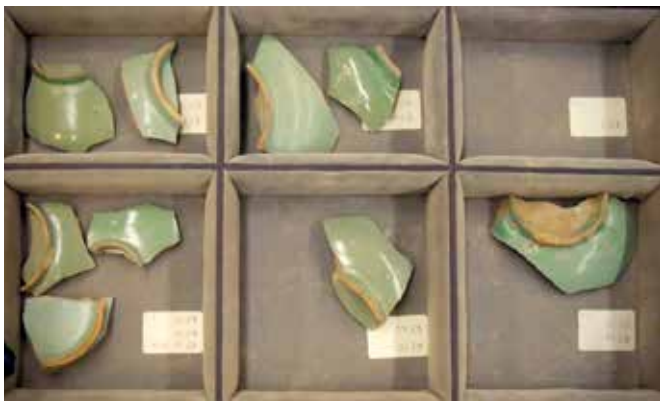
It is not just functionality and local representation we consider, but also socio-economic connections and value chains. Trade wares (particularly Chinese, Indian, Thai, Vietnamese, Cham, Japanese, Burmese, etc) tell us a lot about the business and cultural relations of the past. Also, what do the locally produced, relatively utilitarian earthenware shards imply? They often represent various nested socio-economic value chains and identities – something possibly more valuable than long-distance value chains. We see this with certain morphologies and design patterns quite clearly.

We also have to consider the cultural value of certain ceramics. For example, a 13th century Chinese cheap celadon food bowl can become a valuable marital exchange dowry item or conflict resolution offering 2,000 kilometres east in Maluku – still in use and circulated today for the same purposes.

We also need to think of the other things recovered with shards. At Koh Ker (a 10th century rogue-like Angkorian capital in Cambodia) in a site adjacent to the royal palace, for example, we find a lot of cooking pots. Cooking pots are not unusual in a household site. However, the volume in this case is unusual. Why so many? There are other large cooking features – ash layers and ovens. The faunal remains consisting of processed and cooked animal bones and shells represent over 20 species – mostly exotic and high value items. The size, distributions, density and type of faunal remains are hardly consistent with a typical household kitchen. Could this site have been a royal kitchen?

Why are Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, Cham, Burmese, Japanese and other stoneware glazed vessels found in Southeast Asian shipwrecks ranging from the 9th to the 17th century found in abundance, but no Khmer/Cambodian wares? Khmer technologies were certainly as sophisticated, advanced and as highly appreciated (at least locally) with massive production capacity, but they were seemingly never pushed out (that is, exported). The same distribution parallels terrestrial sites from Myanmar to New Guinea. Why? Why are the Thai and Vietnamese wares so highly abundant in the 15th and 16th centuries? Does this tell us something about policy, business and entrepreneurial cultures at that time? Certainly. The 'Ming Gap(s)' tell us something about policy and distribution – the Thai and Vietnamese in particular took advantage of regional demand while the Chinese curtailed export. Were the Khmer uninterested in regional entrepreneurship at the time? Was this part of the Angkorian decline and do pot shards help us understand this? What can this tell us about the need for regional entrepreneurship in changing economies in the 21st century?

Thus, I leave you with many questions. The challenge – what other questions can you consider and how will pot shards help? I've been doing archaeology and pottery analysis for 30 years, but I find non-archaeologists also have a lot to offer archaeologists through their questions. No question is dumb. Just ask. Also, ask your friends and have them ask you, the next time you visit a museum.



Shards of one of China's most famous ceramics - ruware. *Photo courtesy of Patricia Bjaaland Welch*

Kyle David Latinis *grew up in Kansas City and, inspired by Asian history and culture, now has two advanced degrees, a PhD in anthropology and another in Southeast Asian Studies. His other interest is in archaeology. He is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.*

Unless otherwise noted, photos courtesy of the author

The Art of War

By Durriya Dohadwala

Wartime Artists of Vietnam: Drawings and Posters from the Ambassador Dato' N Parameswaran Collection is the National University Singapore (NUS) Museum's newest exhibition. It has been curated from more than 1,200 works (posters, woodcuts, photographs and paintings) collected by the ambassador during his tenure (1990-1993) as Malaysia's Ambassador to Vietnam. The collection is considered one of the largest known private collections of its kind outside Vietnam and arose as a result of the ambassador's focus on collecting artworks that demonstrate the spirit of Vietnam, a nation tested by wars and legacies.

Pham Luc, Untitled (Hoan Kiem Lakeside, Hanoi) *1992. Ink and Wash on Chinese Rice Paper*

The exhibition offers a look at the agency of wartime Vietnamese artists and their dual identity as artists and soldiers through the works of eight major artists: Huyuh Phuong Dong (1925-2015), Pham Luc (1943-), Nguyen Thanh Chau (1933-2012), Le Huy Toan (1930-2007), Pham Thanh Tam (1932-), Huynh Van Thuan (1921-2017), Le Tri Dung (1949-) and Van Da (1928-2008). Most of these artists were associated with North Vietnam and served as guerrilla artists during the country's resistance wars. Despite being commissioned to portray a common struggle, the artists managed to assert their individuality and creativity and provide unique insights into Vietnam's long period of political and social struggle. Created between 1953 and 1992, the works are visual records of encounters with French, Chinese and Soviet artistic and political ideas, providing unique insights into the artists' responses to the complicated relationships between art and propaganda.

Pham Luc, Untitled (A Female Guerrilla) *1970. Watercolour and Pencil on Paper*

The exhibition has been guest-curated by Sung Yunwen who explains that, "By uncovering the stories and ambiguities behind each piece, this exhibition considers the agency of the wartime artist in the production of their artworks, tracing the trajectory of their responses to war and to their dual identity as artists and soldiers. The pieces presented represent these men at various points in their experience of conflict and development as artists, highlighting the tensions between artistic work and the eventualities of war".

Normally the term 'wartime art' brings with it the expectation of images of conflict. This exhibition, however, focuses on the artists and redirects our attention to each artist as an independent actor, tracing their practices, which often began with formal training in art schools around Hanoi and Saigon.

Pham Luc, trained at the Hanoi College of Fine Arts and upon finishing his studies, joined the People's Army as a frontline painter in 1965. He worked for the military art department for 35 years, training young artists before retiring in 2000. Over the years he worked in a variety of mediums and styles; the collection features artworks in watercolour (*Untitled (A Female Guerrilla)*, 1970), Chinese ink (*Untitled (Hoan Kiem Lakeside, Hanoi*), 1992) as well as lacquer. His work is marked by strong emotions depicted through the use of bold brushstrokes and vibrant colours. Luc often painted women and children in the war because he felt that they were the most affected by the conflict.

Nguyen Thanh Chau, Before the Hour of Fighting, Dong Thap, *1971. Watercolour on Paper*

Hyunh Phuong Dong, Forest Damaged by the American Chemicals, Tien Giang, *1964. Mixed Media on Paper*

Nguyen Thanh Chau's, *Before the Hour of Fighting*, *Dong Thap* , 1971 is a watercolour that shows two soldiers relaxing but still on guard. Possibly painted during a quieter moment during the conflict, the artwork focuses on the human side of war…the vulnerability and fatigue as well as the hope and camaraderie that the participants experience. The painting reminded me of another resistance artwork at the National Gallery Singapore. Indonesian artist Hendra Gunawan's *War and Peace* (ca 1950s) is almost identical in composition and was also painted by the artist when he was engaged in Indonesia's resistance struggle as a frontline painter. Like Luc, Chau also trained at the Hanoi College of Fine Arts, but then spent four years at the All-Ukrainian Art Institute in Kiev where he studied watercolour. He enlisted in the People's Army of Vietnam in 1966 and most of his work reflects the training he received in Ukraine.

Huynh Phoung Dong studied art formally both in Saigon and Hanoi. In 1963 he was asked by the army to run art programmes at the bases in the south. He spent 10 years on the bases separated from his family and during this time painted countless scenes of the conflict. These paintings and drawings, often sketched at great speed during an event or a moment in time, functioned as 'reportage images' sent back to Hanoi to be featured in newspapers and journals. His 1964 work *Forest Damaged by the American Chemicals,* shows the devastating effect of Agent Orange, which was used by the Americans to defoliate the thick jungle vegetation in the Mekong Delta.

Hyunh Phuong Dong, American Deserter McKinley Nolon (McKinley Nolan), *Tay Ninh (1968. Pencil on Paper*

Unlike the scenes depicting people or landscapes, propaganda posters had to be direct in their messaging. It was not left to the viewer to decipher the meaning of the image – the message of patriotism had to be communicated explicitly. Huynh Van Thuan, who joined the Vietnamese resistance war against the French in 1944 was best known for revolutionary posters that combined image and text. Many of his posters (*Proud*, 1973) were in the Sino-Soviet style of propaganda art. Artists had access to these styles since propaganda material from other communist countries was shared by governments for artists to copy or learn from. Thuan also created the first portraits of Ho Chi Minh for North Vietnam's new banknotes, which he remembers had to be detailed and sophisticated to prevent counterfeiting.

Complementing these artworks are excerpts from poems and memoirs written during or after the wars. The inclusion of text juxtaposed with image, shows the concerns of the artists and writers of the time. This quote from another resistance artist captures the conflict faced by many artists and writers who were conscripted into the war: "Here lies the principal point, the torment of my soul: how to make the self that serves the nation and the masses, and the self that serves art – the artists of course cannot forget this responsibility – not to come into conflict or, even worse, betray one another".

Huynh Van Thuan, Proud, *1973. Mixed Media Hand-Painted Poster on Paper*

Wartime Artists of Vietnam is the fourth in a series of shows curated from this collection, which has been on long-term loan to the NUS Museum since 2015 to exhibit, research and facilitate teaching. The exhibition runs through June 2020.

Durriya Dohadwala *is an arts writer on South and Southeast Asia. She is also a docent at the Singapore Art Museum and STPI Creative Workshop and Gallery.*

All images courtesy of the Collection of Ambassador Dato' N Parameswaran

A Dip of Blue: The Chinese Art of Kingfisher Feather Inlay

By Uta Weigelt

For over a thousand years the blue feathers of kingfisher birds have been used in China to adorn jewellery and daily accessories using an inlay technique known as *diancui* (dotting with kingfisher).

There are more than 90 species of kingfisher birds to be found around the world. Known for their spectacular hunting style and often bright and colourful plumage, they vary in size from the four-inch-long African dwarf kingfisher (*Ceyx lecontei*) to the 18-inch-long Australian laughing kookabura (*Dacelo novaeguineae*). Chinese craftsmen used the blue feathers of the common kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), the white throated kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*) and the oriental dwarf kingfisher (*Ceyx erithaca*). Historical documents report that kingfisher birds and feathers were brought to China as import goods and tributes from what are today South China, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Sri Lanka. The Chinese preferred the feathers that came from Cambodia since they were of the highest quality and featured the most striking blue hues, from ultramarine to turquoise. The high value of kingfisher feathers derives from the very fact that they were hard to obtain since the tiny birds could not be bred and were hard to catch. The trade in highly prized kingfisher feathers was therefore a major contributor to the wealth of the Khmer empire and played a significant role in the construction of many temples near Siem Reap.

Drawing of a kingfisher, William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings, early 18th century, courtesy of the National Museum of Singapore

Headdress with dragons, phoenixes, female figures and auspicious characters such as shou *(long life), and also kingfisher feathers, augmented with gems and pearls, 18th century, courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum*

The use of kingfisher feathers as adornment is first mentioned in the *Zuo Zhuan*, an ancient Chinese narrative history that was compiled by an unknown author during the Warring States period (481–221 BCE). Here the Thane of Chu is described wearing a "halcyon cloak and leopard slippers" on a cold winter's day. In the following centuries, items decorated with kingfisher feathers were frequently referred to in famous Chinese novels and poems and were depicted in Chinese paintings. In the Song dynasty (960–1279), extravagant objects and jewellery embellished with kingfisher feathers were so much sought after that many an emperor banned the import of feathers and prohibited the hunting of the birds. Some even gave the order to destroy all items adorned with kingfisher feathers. In the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368–1911), objects made in the *diancui* technique were highly valued and played an important role in the fashion of the times. Elaborate headdresses, ear adornments and hairpins that were often augmented with gems, while pearls denoted feminine beauty, status and wealth. Until the 19th century only the empresses, concubines and wives of high-ranking officials were granted the privilege of wearing kingfisher jewellery. During the Qing dynasty, kingfisher inlay jewellery became popular also among the wealthy Han and Manchu populations. Actors playing female roles in Chinese opera favoured elaborate headdresses inlaid with kingfisher feathers. The art of kingfisher inlay died in the 1940s and was revived only in recent decades. Today only a few craftsmen can master this art. In order to protect the kingfisher population, once so reduced in numbers that it

was close to extinction, craftsmen now use coloured goose feathers or ribbons instead of kingfisher feathers.

The making of *diancui* requires a lot of patience and time, a good eye and steady hands. First, a base of gilt metal, paper mâché or wood is made. Partitions in the form of a thin lip or gallery define the shape of the ornament, which could be a phoenix, butterfly, bat, flower or the Chinese characters for long life (*shou*) or happiness (*fu*). The cleaned and trimmed kingfisher feathers are then carefully applied or dotted onto the base with a thin layer of fish or bone glue. Finally, these ornaments are assembled to form an often three-dimensional piece of jewellery.

The blue colours of the kingfisher feathers do not come from pigments in the feather itself, but from the inner honeycomb structure of the barbs that bend and reflect the visible light. Thus the feathers' colours do not fade, as the beautiful headdress dating to the 18th century in the ACM collection shows.

Top image, a pottery mannequin of a Chinese lady, courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum. Bottom image, a close-up of her head showing the kingfisher feather earring, collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum, photo by the author

An example of a Qing Dynasty period brooch made of gilt, pearls and kingfisher feathers. From the Forbidden City collection of concubines' jewellery. Photo courtesy of Patricia Bjaaland Welch

Only a few early examples of kingfisher inlay have survived because the feathers are favoured by mites and other insects. One of the most stunning archaeological finds with kingfisher embellishments was unearthed in 1956 in the Dingling mausoleum near Beijing, the last resting place of the Wanli emperor (reigned 1573–1620) and his two empresses. Among over 3,000 burial goods, there were four phoenix crowns (*fengguan*) found in the tomb. Known since the Tang dynasty (618–907), phoenix crowns were worn by Ming noblewomen on special occasions. The most spectacular one of the four Dingling crowns belonged to Empress Xiaoduan (1572-1620). Featuring golden dragons roaming above clouds and phoenixes flying among flowers and leaves, it is beautifully adorned with kingfisher inlay, 57 rubies, 58 sapphires and 5,449 pearls.

The Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) possesses its very own two phoenix crowns with kingfisher feather inlay. They are not as stunning as Empress Xiaoduan's famous headdress and were not worn by an actual royal, but by an 'empress for a day', a Peranakan bride. One of them, a wedding crown from Penang dating to the late 19th/early 20th century was exhibited in the Peranakan Museum until its temporary closure and is featured on page 7 in the July/August 2014 issue of *PASSAGE* magazine.

Not only jewellery was adorned with kingfisher feathers but also clothes, fans, screen panels, lanterns and other daily utensils. Rare examples are a beautifully crafted silver snuff bottle of the late Qing, which is held in the British Museum, and two golden wine cups inlaid with kingfisher feathers, from the Wallace Collection. The cups were made for the Qianlong emperor (reigned 1736–1795).

Currently, only the two female Chinese nodding head dolls in the Trade Gallery of ACM wear jewellery with kingfisher inlay. You might mistake the adornments as enamel, but when you look closely you will see the beauty of the kingfisher. You might then want to remember the lines in the *Ballad of the Beautiful Ladies* written by the famous poet Du Fu (712–770), "On their heads, what do they wear? Kingfisher glinting from hairpins that dangle by side lock borders."

Uta Weigelt *is a docent at the ACM and TPM, her interests lie in Chinese and Myanmar arts and crafts.*

A Genealogy Discovered and Reclaimed

By Lam Chih Tsung

In April 2013 while on a trip to China, I found a bunch of books. In them I learned that my great-great-grandfather, Lam Chiew San, had knelt in front of his mother for three days before she allowed him to sail to Nanyang. I also learned that it was my great-great-great-great-great-great-great grandfather, Lam Yuan Zhang, who in the 1600s, was the first to venture from the village of Xiali into the wilderness, thus founding my ancestral village of Gaodao, Dabu.

The 10 volumes I found, the *Dabu Lam Clan Genealogical Tables* (DLG), told the story of 800-900 years of Lams who lived in the heart of Hakka country in Dabu County, Guangdong Province. (The most well-known Singaporeans with Dabu lineage are Lee Kuan Yew and Lee Hsien Loong.)

The ninth edition of the DLG compiled in 1932

I was glad I had included the Dabu Lam clan temple in my trip itinerary. It actually had copies of the DLG for sale. But how, among the 10,000 descendants listed, was I to find my specific ancestral line? I asked the temple custodian.

"Well, which generation do you belong to?" he asked and then explained that every Lam listed here was descended from a single man, the first Lam to enter the county. One's individual generation is therefore the number of generations you are removed from the first one, Lam Da Xing. When I later asked my father, all he knew was that it was either generation 24 or 25. This was the only clue I had. How was I to begin my search? Must I wade through 10 volumes, starting with the first? Fortunately, there was a good introduction. What I was reading was the 10th edition, updated in 1998. The first edition was from 1542, during the Ming Dynasty.

After the first six generations, during which there had been only one son in each generation, there were two sons in the seventh generation. Their seven sons are described as originating 'Branches', One to Seven. In terms of the 'architecture' of the DLG, these branches then forked into sub-branches and sub, sub-branches.

In the table of contents, I noted that one sub-branch had a list of 37 generations. The two sub, sub-branches with the fewest generations had 28 and 29 generations. Elementary, my dear Watson. If my father's generation was either 24 or 25, that meant I must be from generation 25 or 26. Therefore, it seemed likely that I would belong to one of the shortest sub, sub-branches. With this insight, my search paid off

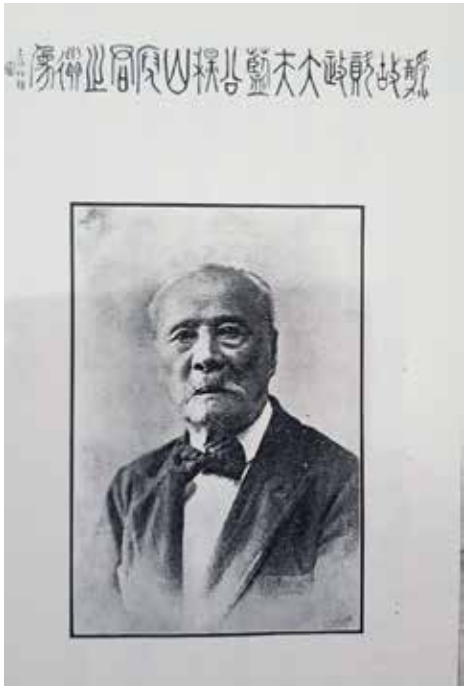
Generation Number	Name	Year of Birth till Year of death	Chinese dynasty during his lifetime
1st	Da Xing		Song?
2nd	Mian Qi		Song?
3rd	Gong		Song?
4th	San Wu		Yuan?
5th	Si Shi		Yuan
6th	Wu Shi		Yuan
7th	Xiu Shan	1326-1392	Yuan-Ming
8th	Jun Yi		Ming
9th	De Bao		Ming
10th	Qing You		Ming
11th	Yan Fu	1433-1500	Ming
12th	Ming Jian	1466-1545	Ming
13th	Ting Lian	1491-1559	Ming
14th	Qiao	1553-1634	Ming
15th	Wen Pei	1593-1649	Ming-Qing
16th	Peng	1622-1669	Ming-Qing
17th	Yuan Zhang	1667-1748	Qing
18th	Ying Jin	1714-1790	Qing
19th	Deng Ying	1746-1824	Qing
20th	Yun Cang	1780-1851	Qing
21st	Xin Zhao	1800-1861	Qing
22nd	Chiew San	1843-1930	Qing-ROC (S'pore)
23rd	Sen Tong	1872-1950	Qing-PRC (S'pore)
24th	Joon Chong	1918-1997	ROC-PRC (S'pore)
25th	Pin Foo	1937-	ROC- (S'pore)
26th	Chih Tsung	1963-	(S'pore)

The family temple of the Xi An Gong (Gen 13) a sub-branch of the Fifth Branch

The House that Lam Built. *Lam Sen Tong's 100-room mansion in Dabu County.*

when I zeroed in on the Bi Ya Gong sub-branch of the Xi An Gong sub-branch of the Fifth Branch. My grandfather's name (允藏), Joon Chong in Hakka, appeared in generation 24. My father had remembered correctly. He was from generation 25.

As a consequence of the wedding of Mr and Mrs Lam Joon Chong in 1936, I could now link my heritage to 25 direct lineal ancestors, back to Lam Da Xing, in the Song Dynasty (960-1279). And then, a thought struck me. Unlikely as it seemed, could my father's name also be in the DLG? It seemed unlikely because five generations of my family had lived in Singapore since 1865. Nevertheless, I pored through generation 25 and found my father's name – Pin Foo. To my great astonishment, I also found my own name, Chih Tsung.



Lam Chiew San, founder of the Dabu Lam Clan in Singapore

The DLG had now provided me with knowledge of every single ancestor, as can be seen in the table on page 20.

And what a tale the DLG tells. The proliferation of the Dabu Lams began with generation seven, at the dawn of the Ming dynasty. Many of the ancestors have graves identifiable to this day.

From the 1500s onwards, most ancestors also had biographical sketches. Thus, Lam Peng (1622-1669) had had considerable martial talents and performed military duties equivalent to those of a colonel. He had had ten wives and concubines, 13 sons and eight daughters. When he died at age 48, his son Yuan Zhang (1667-1748) was only three years old. Given Yuan Zhang's age, he was in no position to negotiate with his siblings for his property rights. When he grew up landless, he decided to set out from the long-settled village of Xia Li, later founding Gao Dao, my ancestral village. Gao Dao is stunningly beautiful. It also has unproductive, thin mountain soil. Thus, Yuan Zhang's decision to leave Xia Li ultimately set in train the decision of his great-great-great grandson, Chiew San, to leave the backbreaking life of a farmer and seek his fortune in Nanyang.

Ming dynasty tomb of Ming Jian Gong (1466-1545)

I began this article with the story of Chiew San (1843-1930) kneeling before his mother for three days. The DLG records that this was the age of sail and the majority of passengers died en route. But Chiew San was a risk taker. The Qing court's ban on ocean travel had also been lifted. Once in Singapore, he worked his way up from common labourer to founding Singapore's first pawnshop in 1872. He became the Chief Executive of the Char Yong Association, the Dabu Clan Association. His son Sen Tong (1872-1950) built on Chiew San's early achievements and owned Singapore's largest chain of pawnshops.

One's ancestral genealogy is a fascinating locus for understanding one's own culture. It's a conduit also for understanding how the people who passed their genes on to you faced up to the trials they encountered. Ultimately, "Who am I?" is tied to "Where do I come from?" Having found these books, I feel that I am one of the fortunate ones. Where once there was darkness, now there is light. Turning around, the path forward is clearer. History is not just about glamorous monarchs; it is most potent when it is a past you can call your own.

Lam Chih Tsung *is the founder of Axiom Asia Private Capital, a private equity fund of funds. This article is condensed from a blog post on Lampinfoo.com.*

All photos courtesy of the author

Eye-catching Public Art for the Bicentennial

By Yvonne Sim

Crossing Shores, *photo courtesy of the National Arts Council*

To mark the 200 years of modern Singapore's history since 1819, the National Arts Council has commissioned two bold and imaginative artworks under aegis of the Public Arts Trust (PAT), to provide a platform for both artists and audiences to participate in commemorating this milestone. *Crossing Shores* by Farizwan Fajari (better known by his moniker Speak Cryptic) and *The Time Tree* by Robert Zhao Renhui, were selected from 48 entries submitted by 41 applicants. The aim was to tell the Singapore story in a way that connects meaningfully with the country's people and how they remember the past. The two large-scale installations were officially launched on 28 August 2019 with the aim of bringing art closer to spaces where people live, work and play, they will remain on view over the next six months.

Planting Roots by Crossing Shores

This is a four-metre-tall, 3-D, interactive fibreglass sculpture that pays tribute to the diverse origins of the early immigrants who settled in Singapore in search of a better life. On a single body, there is a sea of faces with eyes closed, as if in placid contemplation. The expressions, though varied, evoke a sense of contentment and ease. They sit comfortably on a body clad in the fashion of the indigenous people of the Malay Archipelago. Their unusual 'vessel' appears to sail effortlessly across the waves.

Speak Cryptic, who is 39 years old, likes to work in black and white because he is slightly colour-blind. He has developed a distinctive style which is easily recognisable. He is a Malay of Baweanese descent born in Singapore after his forefathers migrated here, so this artwork speaks on a personal level about his reflections on identity as well as on a broader level about the shared memories of those who came from all over and who were here before us. "My goal has always been to make work that is accessible to the public," he says. He feels that public art may well be someone's first encounter with the arts. "That's why it's crucial for my art to be inclusive. I think it can have the power to inspire a lot more people to visit museums and art galleries." It is the first time this visual artist, who was inspired by comics and underground music, created a work in 3D, let alone on this scale. To visualise the sculpture, he moulded it from plasticine and then it started to take shape.

Photo courtesy of Magdalene Ho

Crossing Shores invites the viewer to come into the work and be a part of it. Here, you can see Speak Cryptic connecting with his artwork for an Instagram moment, and

The Time Tree *by day, photo courtesy of the National Arts Council*

he expects others to do the same. When Speak Cryptic was posed this question, "If *Crossing Shores* could talk, what would it say?" His reply was, "I hope when you see me, you see me more like a mirror. I am a reflection of you and you are a reflection of me."

Set against the backdrop of the ocean in East Coast Park, *Crossing Shores* will be located be the Siglap Canal, East Coast Park (about five minutes walk from Carpark D1) until February 2020.

At night, The Time Tree *lights up from within, highlighting its cracks and gaps, creating an aura of mystery and a sense of the unknown. Photo courtesy of the National Arts Council*

Being Rooted in The Time Tree

Multi-disciplinary artist Robert Zhao Renhui has a deep affinity with trees. Long before creating this installation, the 36-year old was already working on projects involving very old and large trees in association with the National Museum, Gillman Barracks and the National Library.

The Time Tree was inspired by a huge tree in Changi, reported to be more than 76 metres tall and 3.5 metres wide. It could have been more than 200 years old and once served as a landmark where it stood, until it was felled by British forces during World War II to prevent it from being used as a ranging point for enemy artillery. It is an imaginative re-creation of a tree that once existed.

There are two parts to *The Time Tree* – the stump and the ring. According to Robert, "The tree stump shows memories that have been lost but these memories can be revisited. The cross-section of the tree is for you to enter history through its rings". It was important for him to get the size right with the aid of 3D printing and technology so when people see the work, they "immediately have the feeling of something gigantic".

Robert Zhao Renhui and Speak Cryptic putting their best foot forward. Photo by the author

Robert and his production team also decided to use fibreglass to capture the intricate textures of the exterior. They tracked down a craftsman who has been making furniture inspired by tree stumps and worked with him to create the biggest tree he had ever made. "Some of these trees have been here longer than we have. So, when we want to talk about history, especially a history that is a few hundred years old, it's always at the back of my head, it's this giant tree; it can bring someone back through a long period of time simply by looking at it. That's what I want to remind people of in my work". The artist left us with this poignant thought, "In the fast-changing landscape of Singapore, large trees are the only fortunate few that remain rooted when everyone else has seemingly lost their roots."

Following its unveiling at Fort Canning Park in August, it travelled to Jurong Lake Gardens in November where it remained till the end of the year, before making a final stop in Raffles Place Park from January to February 2020.

The two Bicentennial commissions will also be accompanied by a series of public programmes aimed at deepening understanding of the creative processes behind each work. Visit www.publicarttrust.sg/SG_Bicentennial for more details.

For more updates, follow PAT on Instagram and Facebook @publicarttrustsg.

Yvonne Sim *is a docent at Gillman Barracks, the Singapore Art Museum and the Asian Civilisations Museum. She enjoys looking at art wherever she goes.*

Singapore Heritage Tiles: A Cross-Cultural Mosaic

By Jennifer Lim

Rare twin-tiled bench tomb

Farmyard scene and portrait tile panels

Admired for their charming floral motifs and cheerful colours, vintage tiles in Singapore are more than the beautiful imports of the industrial era. Dragons and dainty fairies forever captured in time are a mosaic of traditional Chinese culture, foreign influences and local trends. The rich diversity of motifs found here tells a fascinating story of Singapore's complex cultural DNA and the nation's ability to reinterpret overseas elements to suit home-grown customs.

Affluent members of the Straits Chinese community are said to have been particularly fond of these decorative tiles, imported from countries including England, Belgium and Japan up until the late 1930s. By decorating their private and religious spaces with a blend of European and Chinese motifs, they were able to assert their unique hybrid sense of design.

Rare transfer tiles of flower basket

Initially attracted to elegant tiles seen on some heritage shophouses, I began taking a more serious interest when I discovered similar tiles at sites connected to my ancestors. The unexpected exhumation of family graves in 2012 provided a chance introduction to tiled tombs at Bukit Brown Cemetery, located near MacRitchie Reservoir. Heritage enthusiasts later helped me locate the graves of my other relatives and the tiled tomb of my Peranakan great-grandparents.

I began regularly visiting Bukit Brown Cemetery on volunteer-run tours and found it amazing to see tiles dating back to at least 1924. Inspired by their exquisite patterns and variety of subjects, I started incorporating certain elements into my own artwork and creative workshops. Late last year, clients urged me to write a book about my interest in tiles. I was wary about the commitment, but not long after, I happened to see signs of development at the cemetery's edge. I suddenly felt a sense of urgency to help raise awareness of the beautiful tiles that I'd seen over the years.

In April 2019 I launched the Singapore Heritage Tile Project with the aim of recording and documenting particularly unusual tiles that I'd found at the cemetery. It quickly became obvious that it was impossible for me to single-handedly clean the 200 different designs of tiles I was targeting. I called out to the community to help me spruce up these 'grand old dames' before they were photographed for my upcoming book.

Japanese mountain landscape tile panel

Some 100 volunteers ended up cleaning nearly 2,000 individual tiles over a five-month period. The most memorable cleaning session was of a rare twin-tiled bench tomb in the hills of nearby Lao Sua Cemetery. A simple cleaning session stretched out over seven sessions to reinstate over 100 floor tiles using 330 kilogrammes of gravel, sand and mortar carried up a 20-minute trek through forested terrain. Despite the humidity, heat and insects, many repeat participants expressed their enjoyment in learning about Chinese tomb culture and helping to get the project off the ground.

As I move into the next stage of writing, it's my ultimate hope that the 'treasures' I've uncovered at the cemetery are seen as a valuable cultural and design resource worthy of love from the community and most importantly, from the next generation.

Australian artist **Jennifer Lim** *is the author of ther upcoming book* Singapore Heritage Tiles: A Decorative Legacy of Love.
www.jenniferlimart.com

All photos by Finbarr Fallon

FOM's November Coffee Morning

By Amanda Jaffe

On 6 November 2019, Friends of the Museums returned to their original home, the National Museum of Singapore, for a New Members' Welcome Coffee. Jyoti Ramesh, FOM Council Member for Membership and Volunteer Appreciation, welcomed 38 attendees eager to learn about the many benefits of FOM membership.

The Welcome Coffee took on a new format, highlighting FOM's website and all it has to offer. As FOM coordinators introduced their activities to the audience, they walked participants through their activity's page on the FOM website, demonstrating where members could find information as well as the nuts and bolts of how to register for events. Following an overview of the museums FOM supports, presenters introduced a wide range of FOM activities, including docent training, book groups, study groups and tours, Curio, textile enthusiasts, Explore Singapore and the Asian Film Study Group. In particular, the morning introduced new members to FOM Cares, FOM's new initiative to help Singapore become a more caring and inclusive home for all who live here. Following the presentations, participants were treated to short 'taster' tours of the NMS collection.

The morning resonated strongly with attendees, who appreciated the opportunity to dive into all the benefits of FOM membership. While they had all attended with the goal of learning more about FOM, many came away surprised by how much more FOM has to offer than they had anticipated. At least as important, many of the morning's participants were excited not only by opportunities for docent training (of course), but also by the numerous additional opportunities to volunteer throughout the organisation. In the end, it was an enjoyable and informative morning for FOM and their newest members. The next New Members' Welcome Coffee is scheduled for 27 February.

Monday Morning Lectures

The lectures are held either in the Ngee Ann auditorium (in the basement) or in the River Room (level 2) at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM), 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. The last lecture of Feb 2020 will be held in the Function Hall, level 5 the URA (Urban Redevelopment Authority), 45 Maxwell Road, The URA Centre, 069118. Refreshments will not be provided at the URA.

13 January • Demystifying Portraits: the Emperors of China

Speaker: Pauline Ong
Venue: Ngee Ann auditorium, the ACM

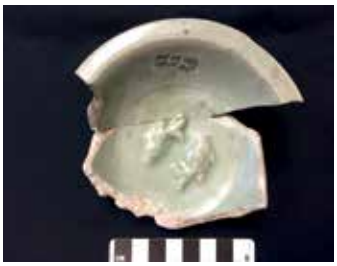
Pauline Ong traces the history of the portraits of the emperors of China, the details, artistic styles and those by unknown painters. She will also discuss ancestral portraits. When compared with the styles of portrait paintings of the European royal families, those of Chinese emperors seem rather flat and expressionless. Why was this so? However, when looking at portraits dating from the mid 18th century, changes can be seen. Who influenced these changes, why and how?

20 January • How to Attract Good Luck: Do's and Don'ts of a Chinese New Year

Speaker: Patricia Bjaaland Welch
Venue: Ngee Ann auditorium, ACM

Clean your house: good! Cut your hair: bad! Come learn the various rules and traditions that will bring you good or bad luck (according to Chinese tradition) in the Chinese Lunar New Year arriving on 25 January 2020.

There will be no MML on 27 January because of the Chinese New Year holiday (恭喜发财) Our best wishes to all who celebrate!



3 February • Discovering Singapore Ceramics

Speaker: Tai Yew Seng
Venue: Ngee Ann auditorium, ACM

When analysing ceramic shards from Singapore's archaeological sites, we find evidence to prove that ancient Singapore had trading networks much earlier than once believed. Furthermore, the ceramics came from all over the world, such as the mineral water bottles from as far away as Germany, which arrived during the colonial period, although local pottery and Chinese trade wares made up the major share. In this lecture, the speaker will show the audience some slides of recently found ceramic shards, which may provide a glimpse into the life of ancient Singapore.

10 February • An Attack of Ill-humour: Headhunting Practices in Borneo

Speaker: Julian Davison
Venue: Ngee Ann Auditorium, ACM

Until the middle of the last century, headhunting was widely practised by tribal societies across Southeast Asia, from Taiwan in the north to Papua in the south. Early Western observers saw this as evidence of the bloodthirsty nature of 'primitives' when they were encountered in the savage state. Closer engagement revealed the ritual nature of headhunting, which was ultimately carried out in order to procure the fecundity of women and the fertility of the crops they cultivated – headhunting, babies and bountiful crops went hand in hand. The talk examines the underlying logic of traditional headhunting practices in Southeast Asia *vis à vis* Western notions of cause and effect, with special reference to the Iban people of Sarawak.

17 February • Pomp, Presents and Power: The Perry Expedition

Speaker: Vidya Schalk
Venue: Ngee Ann Auditorium, ACM

On their way to a historical encounter with Japan, Commodore Perry and his squadron made a brief stop in Singapore in 1853. For over two centuries, Japan, then known as a 'hermit kingdom' for its stubborn resistance to outsiders, had repelled visits from 18 prior expeditions, including four from America. All of them failed to crack the Japanese wall of isolation until Commodore Perry took on the task. What followed was a collision of contrasting worlds, with confusion, power play and the consequences. The Americans imagined themselves heroic explorers, but to the Japanese they were potential conquerors. In addition to opening contact with Japan, this expedition was also one of exploration and surveying. This talk will follow the black ships on this remarkable scientific and military expedition. One that had enormous consequences.

24 February • Behind the Scenes – A Plan to Save Balestier Road

Speaker: Kelvin Ang
Venue: Function Hall, level 5, URA Building

Balestier Road today remains a well-known historical road. With its unique social and urban character, it provides a suitable setting for the various heritage landmarks along its length. Recently, the heritage trail for the road was refreshed, with more information about its storied past entering the public domain. How is it that this historical neighbourhood is still with us today? The talk will provide an insight into the behind-the-scenes work of drawing up an initial proposal to protect just the road, and later the area's improvement plans.

Explore Singapore!

Chinese New Year Walk in Chinatown

Thursday 16 January
10:00 am – 12:30 pm
Fee: $30

Of all festivals, Chinese New Year is the most important to Chinese people all over the world. In Singapore it is the most widely celebrated festival and signs of its approach are everywhere. Immersion in Singapore's multi-racial culture is not complete without an experience of Chinatown during this period. You will learn about the symbolic meanings of the special foods and culinary delicacies and have an opportunity to taste some.

Sculptures in the City

Thursday 6 February
10:00 am – 12:00 noon
Fee: $30

Embark on a walking tour of Singapore's civic district and see the impressive collection of public sculptures, striking and often whimsical works – from frolicking children to merchants and traders from the past, to sculptures celebrating Singapore's progress. The tour will feature works by prominent Singapore artists as well as world-renowned ones. These sculptures are both a part of Singapore's distinctive character and a major source of civic pride.

Lion Dance Costume Maker

Thursday 13 February
10:00 am – 12:00 noon
Fee: $30

Lion dancing is a traditional Chinese performance art. With its loud music, this is a common sight during the Chinese New Year season and at ceremonies to bring good fortune. Many people enjoy watching the 'lions', but few have given thought to how the lion heads and costumes are made. Join us for a behind-the-scenes look at an endangered craft and learn about the making of 'lions'.

Eurasians say 'Teng Bong' ('hello')

Thursday 20 February
10:00 am – 1:00 pm
Fee: $40 (including lunch)

Eurasians are the descendants of inter-racial marriages that began in the 16th century, when European (mainly Portuguese) men married local women. The Portuguese ruled Malacca for 130 years and left a legacy from these mixed marriages. Join us on a guided tour of the Eurasian Heritage Gallery and find out more about the history and culture of the Eurasians. Lunch will be a sampling of traditional dishes such as Devil Chicken Curry.

Japanese Docents

Warm greetings from the Japanese Docents (JDs), batch of October 2019!

Fourteen of us are in training. We are excited to join the FOM community. The JDs started Japanese-language free tours at NMS in September 1982, four years after the founding of FOM, with only two Japanese FOM members. Today, we have Volunteer Recruitments twice a year, and the JD group has grown to 77 members, covering free guided tours at four museums – NMS, SAM, ACM and TPM.

Our training materials are meticulously updated and passed on from the seniors. The extensive manuals cover world history, the in-depth history of Singapore, Southeast Asia, China, and specific studies of art and religions. We have more than 25 hours of lectures and more than 10 hours of on-site training. Each of us then writes our own scripts, putting in the knowledge we gained as we went through the entire course.

You might notice we need a certain commitment to serve wholeheartedly, the Japanese way – full of gratitude to our senior JDs for their generosity and for looking after us all the way. We are equipped to serve as guides after the course ends. All of us will be guides at NMS with an option as well for SAM, the ACM and/or TPM's permanent galleries.

Some seniors also serve as guides for special exhibitions, while we all do related translation and research work. We are all from different backgrounds, yet connected by a passion for sharing our love and respect for Singapore and Asian cultures and art.

So delighted to join the FOM community. Thank you!

Yuri Onishi, Japanese Docent, Batch of October 2019

Origin of the Lion Dance

By Darly Furlong

Photo courtesy of Denise Ee

We have all seen lion dances being performed in Singapore on auspicious occasions, especially during the Chinese New Year (CNY) period. Have you ever wondered how this traditional art form came to be?

It all started in China. On the eve of the new year, some villagers found that their crops and animals were being destroyed by an unknown creature. The harassed villagers named this creature *Nian* meaning 'year' in the local dialect. So they built a lion-shaped bamboo frame and dressed it to look like a lion because *Nian* was afraid of lions, then beat pots and pans to frighten the creature away. This dance became an annual tradition performed on the eve of CNY, to repel evil spirits and welcome good luck.

Photo courtesy of Paula Stacey

Darly Furlong *is a passionate volunteer of museum-based learning for children and leads other causes in Singapore that facilitate social justice. She is also interested in the myths and legends of ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman civilisations.*

Coordinators Contact List

ACM – Michelle Hertz & Susann Geerdink
acmcoordinators@gmail.com

GB – Magdalene Ho & Alka Kapoor
gb.outreach@gmail.com

IHC – Priya Sheshadri
coordinator.ihc@gmail.com

MHC – Sadiah Shahal
fom.mhc.coordinator@gmail.com

NMS – Alison Kennedy-Cooke
nmscoordinator@gmail.com

TPM – Angela Kek
angelakek@yahoo.com.sg

SAM – Maisy Koh
sam.coordinator2021@gmail.com

STPI – Ikumi Fushimi & Virginie Labbe
stpicoordinators@yahoo.com

SYSNMH – Karen Ng
sysnmhcoordinator@yahoo.com

URA/FOM Heritage Trails – Lisa O'Beirne & Maria Conde
URAcoordinators@gmail.com

MHF/FOM Heritage Trails – Susan Chong & Heather Muirhead
Kgcoordinators@gmail.com

JDs
jdcoordinator1@yahoo.co.jp and jdcoordinator2@yahoo.co.jp

Study Tours

Please consider registering online for the following trips - it's not too late!

Classic South India: Tamil Nadu's Coromandel Coast, with Abha Kaul
This classic study tour takes us on a historical journey down the eastern seaboard into India's deep south – along the fabled Coromandel Coast, with its renowned UNESCO World Heritage sites. Come, learn and be amazed by a variety of celebrated centres of awe-inspiring architecture and sculpture, traditional arts and crafts, and colonial history and trade, including with Southeast Asia. *(This tour is full, but you can still sign up for the waitlist for travel during 5-16 February 2020)*

Road Trip - Cultural Johor Bahru, with Susan Chong
You will find JB to be a quaint city with an abundance of breath-taking sights and rich heritage, a blend of customs, traditions, food and lifestyle. Johoreans live with a mix of old and new with historical buildings standing side by side with ultra-modern shopping centres. Visits will include the Chingay Festival, the Sultan Abu Bakar Mosque, KTMB Museum Johor Bahru, the Figure Museum, the Grand Palace JB, and much more. *(Register now for travel during 14-17 February, 2020)*

Southwest China: Guizhou Minority Tour, with Rosalie Kwok
This is truly a rare opportunity to travel to an unusual part of China, and to witness the Miao's mysterious ethnic traditions, rich culture and unique embroidery set in the breath-taking natural scenery of their valleys. We will visit the Black Dragon Cave Temple Complex in the ancient water town of Zhenyuan surrounded by gorgeous mountains and rivers. We will experience the culture of the Gejia people, known for their batik with indigo and honey wax, and we will hike to the ethnic Dong villages of Tang'an at 1,000 metres. *(Register now for travel during 2-11 April, 2020).*

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 FOM Study Group provides a wonderful opportunity to meet and enjoy the diverse nationalities of FOM members. We usually have the meetings in our homes, taking turns to host. On occasion, we also enjoy a potluck lunch after the presentations.

Do not worry if your first language is not English; we are patient and appreciate the viewpoints of members from all over the world. We can also support you if you are new to making presentations and need some help with PowerPoint or Google slides.

The next study group starts with an introductory meeting on 8 January 2020 and will meet on Wednesday mornings until 11 March with a break for CNY. We will be studying **Food** – cuisines, ingredients, sustainability and safety. Join us as we look into all the interesting cuisines and ingredients in Asia. Suggested topics include:
Pickles across Cultures,
Food as Medicine – Ayurveda and TCM
The Soybean
The History of the noodle.

Our potluck lunches may be especially entertaining and tasty in future.

Textile Enthusiasts Group

Programme: The Influence of Foreign Fashion Trends on Malay Dress
Speaker: John Ang
Date: Thursday 9 January
Time: 10:00 am for a 10:30 am start
Venue: Activity Room at the Indian Heritage Centre
Registration: Please sign up on the FOM website

This talk will look at the influence of foreign trends on Malay dress – looking at the different origins and the interesting hybrid nature of Malay clothing. It will also illustrate how, as with other fashion styles in clothing, Malay dress is not static but always changing. Rather than seeing particular forms of clothing as Malay dress the talk will demonstrate that what really constitutes Malay dress is the manner in which it amalgamated and adapted different fashion styles.

Museum Information and Exhibitions

Asian Civilisations Museum

1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555
Tel: 6332 7798
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, 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.

Living with Ink: The Collection of Dr Tan Tsze Chor
(through 22 March)
Living with Ink: The Collection of Dr Tan Tsze Chor at the Asian Civilisations Museum presents highlights from the collection of Singapore's renowned art collector Dr Tan Tsze Chor. Since 2000, the Tan family has donated over 300 treasured Chinese paintings, porcelain and scholars' objects from this collection to the museum. The exhibition includes paintings by modern Chinese masters Ren Bonian, Xu Beihong, and Qi Bashi and explores how Chinese art was appreciated by networks of overseas Chinese collectors and philanthropists, giving you a glimpse into the Singapore art world in the turbulent 20th century.

Gillman Barracks

9 Lock Road, Singapore 108937
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

NTU CCA

The Posthuman City. Climates. Habitats. Environments.
(through 23 February)
The exhibition examines the urban fabric as a habitat for a diversity of species and engages these topics through imaginative options offered by artists and architects. The featured projects, at the intersection of art, design, and architecture, range from installations to time-based media, address questions of sustainability, quality and quantity of air, water, and food, nature as a form of culture, and implementation of lived indigenous knowledge.

Indian Heritage Centre

5 Campbell Lane, Singapore 209924
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
12:00 pm for the permanent galleries
11:00 am on Wed and Fri for the special exhibitions
Tamil tours (FOM) 11:30am on the first Friday of each month for the special exhibition

From the Coromandel Coast to the Straits - Revisiting Our Tamil Heritage
(through 30 April)
The exhibition presents a compendium of narratives that recount the experiences of Tamil diasporas in Southeast Asia and Singapore from pre-modern to contemporary times. It is presented in two parts: part one enumerates the odyssey of pre-modern Tamil diasporas in Southeast Asia while part two offers glimpses of lesser known 19th century pioneers and some of the oldest Tamil families in Singapore. It also includes digital showcases featuring holograms of artefacts in the collections of other museums and institutions

Malay Heritage Centre

85 Sultan Gate, Singapore 198501
Tel: 6391 0450
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

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.

An Old New World: From the East Indies to the Founding of Singapore,1600-1819
(through 29 March)
Explore the 200 years leading up to the establishment of an entrepôt in Singapore in 1819, beginning with the bustling world of trade in the East Indies that attracted the Dutch and British East India Companies from the early 17th century. The European entry into the region, for better or worse, was only part of its longer history. This exhibition is a telling of that story, and a reflection of the broader forces at play that culminated in the events of 1819.

NUS Museum, NUS Centre for the Arts

University Cultural Centre
50 Kent Ridge Crescent, Singapore 119279
Tel: 6516 8817
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.

Wartime Artists of Vietnam: Drawings and Posters from the Ambassador Dato' N Parameswaran Collection
(through 27 June)
Wartime Artists of Vietnam is the fourth in a series of shows drawing from the ambassador's remarkable collection, which consists of 1,208 wartime artworks and is one of the largest known private collections of its kind outside Vietnam. The exhibition takes as its preamble a line from the poem *A Soldier Speaks of His Generation* (1973): "… our generation has never slept". Expressing the profundity of war experience and its enduring effects on the human psyche, the phrase is an entry point from which the presentation can be read and accessed. Included alongside these artworks are supporting texts and excerpts of poems and memoirs.

Museum Information and Exhibitions

NUS Baba House

157 Neil Road, Singapore 088883
Tel: 6227 5731
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
For enquiries, please email 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

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 is currently closed to prepare for its next phase of development.

Singapore Art Museum

71 Bras Basah Road, Singapore 189555
Tel: 6332 3222
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.

Singapore Biennale 2019 - Every Step in the Right Direction (through 22 March)
https://www.singaporebiennale.org

FOM guided English tours:
National Gallery Singapore: Mon -Wed 2:00 pm
Gillman Barracks: Thurs - Fri 2:00 pm

This international contemporary art exhibition focuses on the imperative of making choices and taking the steps to consider current conditions and the human endeavour for change and betterment. Singapore Biennale 2019 is showing at various historical and public spaces in Singapore, including museums and galleries. With over 70 artists and art collectives from around the world and a strong focus on Southeast Asia, the sixth edition welcomes over 150 works across a breadth of diverse mediums including film, installation, sound, art and performance

STPI Creative Workshop and Gallery

41 Robertson Quay, Singapore 238236
Tel: 6336 3663
www.stpi.com.sg

Opening hours:
Mon to Fri: 10:00 am – 7:00 pm, Sat: 9:00 am – 6:00 pm, Sun: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm
Closed Public Holidays
FOM guided tours: Thurs 11:30 am, Sat & Sun 2:00 pm
Please refer to STPI's website at www.stpi.com.sg for STPI's public programmes and Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, French and special evening tours.

Melati Suryodarmo: Memento Mori (through January 24)
STPI is pleased to present a solo presentation of a new body of print and paper works by seminal Indonesian artist, Melati Suryodarmo. A bold leap from her distinctively performance-based oeuvre, Suryodarmo's new explorations in print and paper during her residency at STPI have resulted in a range of two- and three-dimensional works that retain traces of her performative marks. In particular, the artist examines the volatile relationship between matter and memory, and personal expressions of displacement.

Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall

12 Tai Gin Road, Singapore 327874
Tel: 6256 7377
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

Built in 1902, this double-storey villa was the nerve centre of Dr Sun Yat Sen's revolutionary movement in Southeast Asia. It re-opened to the public on 9 October 2011 and the revamped Memorial Hall pays tribute to the vital role played by Singapore and Nanyang in the 1911 Revolution. Focusing on the contributions of Dr Sun's key supporters in Singapore, the refurbished museum sheds light on the lesser-known details of Singapore and Nanyang's involvement in the 1911 Revolution.

From Brush to Lens: Early Chinese Photography Studios in Singapore (through 3 May)
This exhibition showcases over 90 artefacts from the late 19th to early 20th century, including *carte de visites* and photographs by European, Chinese and Japanese studios. These photographs provide an important visual record of the diverse groups of inhabitants in colonial Singapore.

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

IHC

From the Coromandel Coast to the Straits - Revisiting our Tamil Heritage
23 November 2019 – 30 June 2020, at the Indian Heritage Centre (IHC)

The IHC's fourth special exhibition, *From the Coromandel Coast to the Straits* marks Singapore's bicentennial year by revisiting Singapore's Tamil heritage. The first part of the exhibition situates the presence and activities of the pre-modern Tamil diasporas in Southeast Asia, ending with the Chola presence in 14th century Singapura. The second part of the exhibition offers fresh perspectives on 19th century Tamils in Singapore, showcasing their diversity and heritage in different walks of life.

The exhibition features loans from various museums and digital showcases featuring holographs of artefacts will be presented for the first time. In addition, three contemporary art installations are displayed as a coordinated project for the Singapore Biennale.

Join our free guided tours starting 11 December, on Wednesdays and Fridays at 11:00 am.

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Annual Membership Form

Mail to: FOM – Membership Secretary
61 Stamford Road, # 02-06 Stamford Court, Singapore 178892

Family Name:

Given Name:

Date of Birth: / / Nationality:

Address:

Postal Code: Tel:

Handphone: (RENEWALS ONLY) FOM Membership #:

Email:

- ☐ INDIVIDUAL $70
- ☐ JOINT MEMBERSHIP $100
  Include Spouse/Partner details on a separate sheet.
- ☐ FAMILY MEMBERSHIP
  2 Adults + 5 Children $120
  Include Family details on a separate sheet.
- ☐ YOUNG FRIENDS MEMBERSHIP $30
  Applicants under 21. Include proof of age.
- ☐ SENIOR CITIZEN MEMBERSHIP $30
  Applicant must be 60+. Include proof of age.
- ☐ JOINT SENIORS MEMBERSHIP $50
  Both Applicants must be 60+. Include proof of age.
  Include Spouse/Partner details on a separate sheet.
- ☐ DONATION (optional)

☐ Cash Payment: Membership Fee: $ _____ Donation: $ _____

☐ Credit Card Payment: ☐ Visa ☐ MC: Card #: _____ Exp Date: _____

☐ Cheque Payment: Bank Name: _____ Cheque #: _____ Amount $: _____

Cheque should be made out to FOM.

Please Sign. "In consideration of my/our acceptance as a member(s) of FOM and permitting me/us/my spouse/partner/child(ren) to partake in any of the FOM activities in which I/we may enroll for myself/ourselves/my spouse/partner/child(ren), I/we, for myself/ourselves, my/our heirs, executors or administrators, remise, release and forever discharge the FOM, its officers, servants and agents or other persons authorized by FOM, from all claims, demands, actions or causes of actions, on account of my/our death or on account of any injury (including injury resulting in death) however caused or sustained by me/us or loss of or damage (however caused) to my/our personal belongings suffered at any time during my/our attending the said activities. I/we also agree, at all times, to abide by the Constitution of FOM and its By-laws (as may be amended from time to time)."

Friends of the Museums Singapore

signature & date

signature spouse/ partner/ joint family & date

To find out more contact us at 6337.3685, info@fom.sg or at: www.fom.sg