

PASSAGE

Friends of the Museums Singapore

January / February 2019



art
history
culture
people



President's Letter

Dear Friends,

A very happy new year to you! It gives me great pleasure to write my first letter as president of an organisation that is close to my heart. I have been with FOM for 11 years and a docent for ten. I have served as the co-chair for SAM docent training, helped with the foundation course and co-chaired the Overall Head of Docent Training position. Over the years, I have met many dedicated members who have contributed to FOM. Today we have approximately 1,500 members and guide at nine museums, art and heritage institutions. I intend to do my best to keep us on this forward-looking path and maintain good relations with all our affiliated museums, institutions and organisations, including the National Heritage Board, National Arts Council, Urban Redevelopment Authority and Malay Heritage Foundation.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my predecessor, Clara Chan, for her contribution to FOM. For the last three years she has worked ceaselessly to promote FOM. She oversaw the society's growth and hosted a very successful 40th anniversary celebration. I would also like to thank outgoing council members Sophia Kan, Susan Fong, Sarah Lev, Heather Muirhead, Sadiyah Shahal and Ilknur Yildiz for their service to FOM.

Supporting me in my new role are members of the old council as well as new council members, Melissa Yeow (Vice President), Durriya Dohadwala (Honorary Treasurer), Durga Arivan (Honorary Secretary), Laura Socha (Council Representative, Museums), Gisella Harrold (Council Representative, Activities), Jyoti Ramesh (Council Representative, Membership and Volunteer Appreciation), Holly Smith (Council Representative, Communications), Coopted members Millie Phuah (Docent Training) and Diana Loo (Volunteers Data Management). Clara Chan has agreed to stay on the council in an advisory role. I want to thank these council members for stepping up to serve. A special word of thanks to Andra Leo for her continuing contribution as the managing editor of *PASSAGE* magazine, which is now in its 11th year of publication.

The year 2019 marks 200 years since the arrival of Sir Stamford Raffles in Singapore. Special exhibitions at the Asian Civilisations Museum, National Museum of Singapore and at the Fort Canning Centre are being planned for the bicentennial of Raffle's arrival. Volunteer docents from all our museums have been working hard to get ready to guide the first of these exhibitions, which are a collaboration between the British Museum and the Asian Civilisations Museum. Be sure to take a docent-led tour of this special exhibition, *Raffles In Southeast Asia: Revisiting the Scholar and Statesman*, which includes artefacts from the private collection of Sir Stamford Raffles.

The new year is the time to make new resolutions. One of my resolves this year is to explore Singapore's various neighbourhoods. Did you know that FOM docents lead heritage trail walks in Kampong Gelam and in the Chinatown area? These guided walks are a great way to learn more about Singapore. Check the FOM website and the newsletters for the latest information on tours, talks and activities being offered. To ensure that the organisation runs smoothly, there is a host of dedicated volunteers working tirelessly behind the scenes. If you have time to give, please consider volunteering with FOM. Everything that is worth experiencing is just outside our comfort zone. Let's step outside our comfort zone and acquire new experiences with FOM this year.

With the arrival of Chinese New Year in February 2019, we enter the Chinese Zodiac Year of the Pig, an animal known to bring success in all spheres of one's life. I wish you a year filled with joy, friendship and success in all your endeavours, in the Year of the Pig.



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

Garima Lalwani
FOM President 2019



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Welcome PASSAGE

President's Letter

i

Features

The Chinese Year of the Pig 2019 <i>by Lim Chey Cheng</i>	2
Chinese Lacquer Art <i>by Uta Weigelt</i>	3
Habitat – Pineapples – The Tropical Taste of Singapore <i>by Durga Arivan</i>	4
ArteFact – The Wuliangshouzunfo Thangka <i>by Patricia Bjaaland Welch</i>	5
Museum Watch – The Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, Japan <i>by Margaret White</i>	6
The He Hua Temple, Amsterdam <i>by Anne Pinto-Rodrigues</i>	7
Chinese Ceramics: The Han <i>by Patricia Bjaaland Welch</i>	8
More Insights into Early Southeast Asian Trade <i>by Tara Manser</i>	10
ACM'S Beneficent Benefactors <i>by Patricia Bjaaland Welch</i>	12
Finding a Voice: The Southern Chinese in Northern Australia <i>by Margaret White</i>	14
No Delft Without China <i>by Dorien Knaap</i>	16
Object-ification: Found Objects in Philippine Contemporary Art <i>by Lourdes Arbela Samson</i>	18
BP De Silva <i>by Nilofar Iyer</i>	20
Island Notes - Dia de Muertos <i>by Darly Furlong</i>	28

FOM Reports

S.E.A. Focus 2019 <i>by the Gillman Barracks Outreach Team</i>	22
Leadership Appreciation Dinner 2018	23
Curio – Foodies Excursions in 2018 <i>by Gisella Harrold</i>	24

FOM Member Activities

Explore Singapore!	26
Monday Morning Lectures	27
Study Group	28
Textile Enthusiasts Group	29
Japanese Docents	30
Coordinators Contact List	31

Museum Information and Exhibitions

Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM)	32
Gillman Barracks	32
Indian Heritage Centre (IHC)	32
Malay Heritage Centre (MHC)	32
National Museum of Singapore (NMS)	32
NUS Museum, NUS Centre for the Arts	33
Peranakan Museum (TPM)	33
Singapore Art Museum (SAM)	33
STPI	33

On the Cover: A Delft tulip vase, collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum, National Heritage Board

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.

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The Chinese Year of the Pig 2019

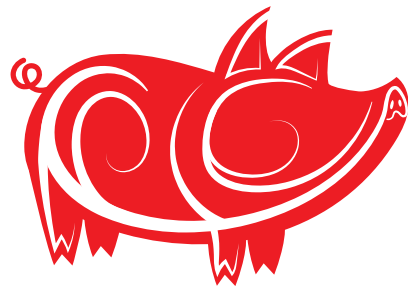
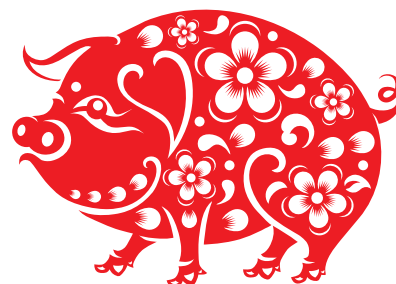
By Lim Chey Cheng

Chinese people worldwide will celebrate the start of a new lunar year on Tuesday 5 February 2019. The Earth Pig *Ji Hai* (己亥) year will last from 5 February 2019 to 24 January 2020.

The pig, *zhū* (猪) is the 12th and last animal in the Chinese zodiac cycle. One legend says that when the Jade Emperor of Heaven called for a meeting of the animals, all raced to be the first. The pig became hungry during the race, stopped to eat, then fell asleep. After his nap, the pig continued the race and arrived last. Another legend attributes its place to its fat and heavy body, which slowed it down.

According to Chinese astrology, people born in the pig year are optimists, kind-hearted, honest and upright. They have good luck with money, but owing to their trusting nature, are gullible and easily deceived; they are generous with their friends. Women born in this year are ideal domestic partners and very good at managing their households. 'Pig' people are most compatible with rabbits and goats.

The pig is the most important domestic animal for the Chinese and pork is their main meat for all commemorative and festive events. Even after death, people had a need for pigs, as evidenced by archaeological finds of miniature clay pigs in graves dating as far back as the Han Dynasty (206BCE – 220CE).



The Chinese character for home *jia* (家) is made up of the components for roof (宀) and pig (豕), indicating that in ancient times, a house was not considered a home without a pig in it. The folk saying, "A fat pig at the door" (金猪拱门) equates the pig with the arrival of good luck and happiness. The fact that a pig gets slaughtered as soon as it is fattened up, gave rise to the saying, "People fear getting famous, pigs fear getting fat"

(人怕出名猪怕壮), which is the literal meaning. The understood meaning is that great honours are great burdens; fat pigs get slaughtered first.

The pig is a much-maligned animal. The perception of it being stupid and lazy, doing nothing but eating and sleeping, cannot be further from the truth. One scientific report notes that "pigs are cognitively complex and share many traits with animals whom we consider intelligent. They are mentally, emotionally and socially sophisticated, similar to dogs and chimpanzees" and also have good memories. Contrary to what most people think, pigs are very clean. They roll around in mud and water to keep cool because they do not have sweat glands. Muddy water evaporates more slowly than clean and rubbing off a layer of caked mud helps remove ticks and other parasites. So calling someone "a dirty pig" or saying that she/he is "sweating like a pig" is technically not true.

So this year as you celebrate the Year of the Pig and feast on the many pork dishes, you might like to re-think how you perceive the pig.



Lim Chey Cheng is a docent at several museums. She enjoys sharing Chinese culture, customs and aspects about living in Singapore. Much of this is done through organising *Explore Singapore!* tours in her role as coordinator.

Chinese Lacquer Art

Glue that Sweats Out of Trees

By Uta Weigelt

"It looks like plastic", a young boy exclaimed when I showed visitors to the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) a beautiful little carved lacquer box with a lychee design, dated to 1522. And indeed, the boy was right. Chinese lacquer is a natural plastic coming from the Lacquer Tree (*Rhus verniciflua*) of the cashew family (*Anacardiaceae*), a native of regions in southern China. It is harvested in a similar way to rubber by cutting notches into the bark of the tree, from which a milky-white, highly toxic sap emerges. After being refined, this sap or lacquer can be applied to many a primed substrate such as wood, bamboo, cloth, leather, ivory, paper, stone or metal. Only few colouring agents can be used to tint lacquer: vermillion (red), carbon (black), malachite (green) and auripigment (yellow). The lacquer has to be applied in thin layers and cures only in a warm and humid environment.

In its hardened polymerised form, lacquer is resistant to water, acids and to some extent also to heat. Because of these properties, the Chinese were using lacquer to protect and decorate objects 4,000 years ago. The earliest lacquer work known so far is a wooden bowl that dates to the third millennium BCE. Over time, Chinese craftsmen developed various techniques and decorative styles. From the sixth century BCE to the third century CE, the design was painted in red or black lacquer on a black or red surface on objects of different sizes, ranging from small cups and bowls, cosmetic boxes, furniture and screens, to musical instruments and coffins. Then lacquer production declined and was only revived after the 10th century when new decorative techniques emerged. In incised and engraved lacquerware



Sap being harvested, photo by the author



Carved lacquer box with lychee design, 1522



Box with intricate mother-of-pearl inlay, 18th or 19th century

techniques, the resulting lines are filled with gold leaf or silver. For inlaid lacquers, iridescent chips of mother-of-pearl (the inside of molluscs such as the nautilus, sea-ear and green snail) are cut into shape and embedded into a black lacquer base to create intricate and vivid scenes of humans, animals and landscapes with detailed flora and fauna.

From the 13th to 15th centuries the production of carved lacquers – a technique unique to China and the most laborious and time-consuming of all lacquering techniques – was at its peak. Up to 200 layers of lacquer were built up into a three to four-millimetre-thick pile in which a three-dimensional design was carved. The craftsmanship of carved lacquer is extraordinary. A beautiful example in the ACM collection is the table screen dating from the 18th century and described in detail by Carolyn Pottinger in *PASSAGE* Sept/Oct 2017, page 7. A special form of carved lacquer is *Guri* lacquer. Here the bevelled decor of pommel scrolls (Jap. *guri*) is carved into alternate layers of red and black lacquer.

The Jesuit missionary Martinus Martini (1614–1661) was one of the first Westerners to understand where Chinese lacquer came from. In his *Novus Atlas Sinensis*, published in Amsterdam in 1655, he describes lacquer as "glue that sweats out of trees". Soon enough the West began to crave lacquer objects. So-called Coromandel lacquer became a very popular export item, shipped in large numbers from the Coromandel Coast of southwest India to Europe, thus the somewhat misleading name. Mostly applied on large screens, panels and chests, the design is cut through three or four layers of lacquer into the wooden base, which is then painted with polychrome lacquered pigments. Besides furniture, boxes with gold decorations on dark lacquer surfaces also came into vogue. Western customers found these dark lacquer/gold artefacts with their intricate designs attractive, inspiring European artists to create their own versions of Chinese lacquer art.

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

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

Pineapples – The Tropical Taste of Singapore

By Durga Arivan

As early as 1593, pineapples were brought into Malaya from South America and were the cash crop for many plantation owners in colonial Singapore. In fact Yishun, in the northern part of the island, used to be a huge rubber and pineapple plantation owned by Lim Nee Soon, well-known as the 'Pineapple King'. The surplus pineapples were canned and exported all over the world, making Singapore an important centre of the global pineapple-canning industry.

The tropical slice also became an integral part of urban architecture, such as in the decorative motifs of the National Museum of Singapore building and as inspiration for old playground slides. In the Hokkien and Cantonese dialects, 'pineapple' translates to *ong lai*, which means 'fortune comes'. The pineapple is golden in its raw form and is considered a symbol of wealth and prosperity and used in Chinese rituals such as rolling one into a new house to welcome riches into the home. This is a quintessentially Singaporean innovation, not practised elsewhere. In Chinese culture, red pineapples, knotted from silk cords, or in the form of lanterns, are a welcome sign of happiness and prosperity in the New Year.



During Chinese New Year, pineapple-shaped decorations can be seen on many buildings



A pineapple-shaped children's slide



Pineapple tarts

The intertwined food cultures of Singapore gave new dimensions to the taste of pineapples in various recipes such as *rojak* (an eclectic mix), fried rice, cakes and the famous, bite-sized pineapple tarts. The creation of pineapple tarts was largely attributed to the locally born, the Peranakans, who were strongly influenced by the Portuguese settlers of Malaya.

The delicious, tangy pineapple tart captures not only the city's history, but also its complex tapestry of ethnicities. The central dollop of piquant pineapple jam is balanced by the soft, sweet and subtly savoury texture of the Western shortbread base, while the star anise, cloves, cinnamon and pineapple that constitute the jam are aromatic reminders of the Spice Islands.

Be it in the form of balls, rolls or open-faced, the humble pineapple tart is considered the king of festive foods, symbolizing prosperity and good fortune. The tarts, which are sold in red-topped plastic jars, are served to guests by the Chinese and Malay communities in Singapore during their main festivals and are ubiquitous during the Lunar New Year as gifts for families, friends and business associates.

If you receive some this year, do savour the delicious taste that is integral to the historical and cultural aspects of Singapore.



One of the pineapple motifs under the eaves of the National Museum's building

Durga Arivan is a health researcher, passionate photographer and docent who believes her style is simple, bold, classical and true. She guides at the IHC, ACM and NMS.

All photos by the author

The Wuliangshouzunfo Thangka

By Patricia Bjaaland Welch

Thangkas can be difficult to interpret at the best of times, so we have to forgive the person who misidentified the lampas-weave thangka now part of the Chris Hall Collection and on display in the Asian Civilisations Museum's (ACM) Ancient Religions Gallery. There it is identified as a 'Thangka of Amitabha'. Amitabha belongs to the Mahayana Pure Land School of Buddhism, where he is believed to reign over the western Pure Land of Sukhavati. The misidentification is based upon the fact that one of the popular names of Amitabha is *wuliangshoufo* (which consists of four Chinese characters), which can be translated as 'The Buddha of Infinite Life' but is a known reference to Amitabha. However, the translator missed the fifth Chinese character that appears in the title at the top, which actually reads *wuliangshouzunfo*. That character *zun* (尊) in the middle of the title adds the concept of 'venerable' and when we see that there are three Buddhas depicted as the central figures, tells us that the title should be translated as 'Venerable Buddhas of Infinite Life' or more colloquially, as 'The Buddhas of the Three Generations'.

The three central Buddhas can now be identified as: (Right to Left) Kasyapa, a Buddha of the Past, Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha of the Present Age, and Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future.

Thangkas generally follow a set pattern with the most important figure in the centre, in an easily identifiable form, whether it is a single Buddha or a grouping as on this thangka. Beginning at the top of our thangka are the sun (symbolized by the three-legged bird) and the moon (symbolized by the rabbit preparing the elixir of life in a mortar). Below are an assembly of male (?) celestial beings (*gandharvas*)¹ bearing offerings.



The Qianlong Period (1736-1795) wuliangshouzunfo thangka, on loan to the ACM from the Chris Hall Collection



Detail of the tiger-taming luohan

Directly below the three main Buddhas are the two monks Ananda (left) and Kasyapa (right), who can be differentiated by age, Ananda being the younger. Do not confuse the monk Kasyapa with Kasyapa, the Buddha of the Past (the third Buddha in the chain of five Buddhas of the present period, immediately preceding Shakyamuni) – they are two different individuals. Below them are the original 16 *luohan*, grouped into eight on each side, who are always depicted as elderly monks with shaved heads, each identifiable by the attributes they hold or wear. Their role is to protect and preach the Dharma. Two additional *luohan* were added by the end of the tenth century, one paired with a tiger and the other with a dragon. You see them as the larger figures standing in front of each group of eight. The one on the left is holding a *khakkhara* (staff) and is accompanied by a tiger, while the figure on the right seems to be holding up a *patra* (alms bowl). You can just make out the coils and head of a dragon by his feet.

The Chinese influences in this thangka are very apparent, beginning with the Chinese characters at the top to the multi-coloured *ruyi* clouds to the faces and clothing of the 18 *luohan*, to the waves at the bottom. From the 14th century on, the four directional guardians in Buddhist thangkas also began to be depicted in Chinese armour, as they are here. On the left are: Vaisravana (north – holding a stupa and umbrella) and Virupaksa (west – holding a bag or coiled dragon); on the right are Dhrtarastra (east – playing a lute) and Virudhaka (south – holding a spear).

This thangka dates from the Qianlong period (1736-95) and was an extremely popular design, often commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor for use as gifts to the lamas of Tibet and Mongolia.

Patricia Bjaaland Welch is an author, former overall co-head of docent training for FOM, and an active ACM docent who enjoys researching. For further reading, she recommends Patricia Ann Berger, *Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism 850-1850*.

¹ Not all *gandharvas* are 'celestial musicians'; the term also refers to 'transitional beings' who appear in scenes bridging current and future existences (a theme of this thangka).

Photos courtesy of the author

The Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, Japan

By Margaret White

Those with a yen for East Asian ceramics could easily devote a couple of hours browsing the Museum of Oriental Ceramics in Osaka. Relatively modest outwardly, this museum was purpose-built in 1982 by the city of Osaka. Step inside and view what many regard as one of the best oriental ceramic collections in the world. The museum's mission is to collect, study, conserve, exhibit and interpret Asian ceramics, primarily from China and Korea but also from Japan, Vietnam and Persia. Osaka was Japan's original merchant city with a long history of international trade and is thus a logical home for the museum. The collection now has approximately 6,000 pieces based around the original Ataka Collection donation. From China, the Han, Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties are represented and from Korea, works from the Silla, Goryeo and Joseon dynasties can be found. The museum also holds Japanese ceramics from the Nara to Edo periods to the *mingei* folk art movement of the 20th century.

I enjoyed exploring the current Korean celadon exhibition, *Sparkles of Jade – Goryeo Celadon* (12th century). The colour of celadon evoked "the radiance of jade and the clarity of water". Between the eighth and 12th centuries, traders and envoys travelled to Korea to admire and acquire celadon pottery with the bluish-tinged glaze known as *bisaek* or kingfisher colour and the wholly Korean invention of inlaying. This celadon was particularly sought after by the Persians who believed that celadon dishes would break or change colour should poisoned food be served from them.

The exhibition was organised into various sections including tea bowls, dishes, ewers, covered boxes, water droppers and incense burners. I noticed small 'guy ropes' anchoring certain pieces to platforms and later discovered these platforms were shock-absorbing, to earthquake-proof these special pieces. Of course,

this is Japan where there are frequent earth tremors.

Two celadon plaques skilfully inlaid with a delicate design of six cranes (cranes are the symbolic bird of Korea, representing longevity, happiness and good fortune) had me intrigued as to their function. Some suggest the plaques

were used to face buildings, but I am not convinced. A restrained and elegant celadon ewer shaped as a bamboo sprout had a carved and incised design. In contrast, a large, cream-coloured iron glaze jar (not in the Goryeo exhibits) but from the later Joseon dynasty (second half of the 17th century) was decorated in an artistically freehand style of a tiger among clouds.

Examples from the permanent collection are rotated and highlighted every few months. Two of those I particularly admired were Japanese, both probably made for export. The first was a pair of evocative white porcelain figures of sumo wrestlers from the Edo period (circa 1680s), decorated with overglaze enamels and gilt. The other was a large dish from Arita in the *Ko-Kutani* style, sporting a bold palette of rich, deep greens and blues, also from the Edo period (1640-1650s). Such wares demonstrated the painters' in inventiveness as no two examples were the same.

The museum also houses a wonderful collection of snuff bottles. 150 of the 1,200 late Qing dynasty snuff bottles exhibited were donated by Oki Shoichiro. These small artistic gems were crafted in a huge variety of materials including metal, coral, agate and glass, reflecting the Chinese love of working on a miniature scale.

The beauty of the exhibits and the care with which they are displayed make for a fascinating and highly enjoyable visit. Spending time here gives some clues as to why traders came from around the world to find these sought-after pieces as art as well as functional wares.

Margaret White is convenor of the Ceramic Study Group of The Asian Arts Society of Australia and welcomes the opportunity to view and learn about ceramic collections worldwide.



Arita ware, Ko-Kutani style, Edo period, 1640s-1650s



Two figurines of sumo wrestlers, porcelain with overglaze enamels and gilt decoration, Edo period circa 1680s



Jar with tiger, Joseon dynasty



Bamboo sprout ewer, celadon, with carved and incised design, Goryeo dynasty, 12th century



Plaque with inlaid design of six cranes, Goryeo dynasty, 12th-13th century

All photos courtesy of the author

The He Hua Temple, Amsterdam

By Anne Pinto-Rodrigues

In the heart of Amsterdam's bustling Chinatown, sandwiched between typical Dutch buildings on the Zeedijk, lies a rather interesting sight – the He Hua Buddhist Temple, with its traditional Chinese architecture and its bright pastel-coloured walls. Founded by the Fo Guang Shan order of Taiwan, this temple is the first and the largest temple in Europe to be built in the traditional Chinese palace style.



The three-arched entrance to the He Hua Temple

He hua is Mandarin for 'lotus', a flower of great significance in both Chinese and Buddhist symbolism. Like a lotus that radiates purity while rooted in muck, the He Hua Temple is said to have reshaped the neighbourhood, once a favourite hangout of drug dealers and junkies.

The history of the Chinese in Amsterdam is a long and colourful one: from the steamship coal stokers of the early 1900s, to the mid-20th century owners of gambling houses and opium dens, to the restaurateurs and businessmen of today. In 1994, a few businessmen of Chinese origin sought the permission of the Amsterdam City Council to build a temple in the playground at the Zeedijk. Dutch architect Fred Greven was hired to design a temple complex based on the temples of China yet retaining some of the Dutch aesthetic of the neighbourhood. This fusion design is reflected in the ancillary buildings on either side of the temple, one of which serves as the nuns' residence and the other as a library. The



Volunteers place fruit offerings before Guanyin, during Chinese New Year 2018



Traditional figurines on the roof of the temple

construction of the temple complex took nearly two years, with characteristic elements such as the exterior granite stairway, the balustrades, the roof tiles and the traditional ornamentation all sourced from China. Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands inaugurated the temple on 15 September 2000.

The Fo Guang Shan order and the He Hua Temple focus on Humanistic Buddhism, which seeks to make Buddhist practices relevant to modern life. This modern branch of Buddhism has six core tenets: humanity, emphasis on daily life, altruism, joyfulness, timeliness and universality. The temple's main shrine is dedicated to Guanyin (the Goddess of Mercy) and she is represented as the 'Thousand-Hand Guanyin'. According to Buddhist legend, Guanyin was blessed with a thousand arms to enable her to help all those in need. Interestingly, the Guanyin statue in this temple is unique as it is made out of bronze, hence bears a dark coloration, as opposed to the more prevalent white porcelain statues of the goddess. This intricate and detailed statue was sculpted by Taiwanese master craftsman, Fa Cheng Xian.

The guardians of Buddhist monasteries and teachings, Qie-Lan and Wei Tuo, flank the Guanyin statue. On the outside, the roofs of the three entry archways are decorated with animals from the Chinese zodiac.

The temple not only serves as a religious centre for the Chinese Buddhists of Amsterdam, it also plays an important role in making Buddhism accessible to the Dutch and people from other backgrounds. During the Lunar New Year, in addition to the more solemn New Year's Day blessings and offerings, celebrations include a festive parade, a Lion Dance and fireworks, which are popular with locals and tourists alike. I too, am looking forward to welcoming the 'Year of the Pig' with my new friends at the He Hua Temple.

Heartfelt thanks to Venerable Miaoyi, Director of the He Hua Temple, for sharing her knowledge and time.

Anne Pinto-Rodrigues is an Amsterdam-based writer and photographer. She documents several subjects of interest to her. More about Anne on her website www.annepintorodrigues.com

All photos courtesy of the author

Chinese Ceramics: The Han

By Patricia Bjaaland Welch

China has had a long tradition of pottery making, but because of the spectacularly bewitching ceramics China has produced since the Song Dynasty (960-1279), the ceramics of the preceding dynasties are often neglected. So let us dwell for a moment on the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), which was one of China's longest and most prestigious dynasties. The Han potters made significant advances over their Shang and Zhou predecessors, creating a large variety of new ceramics conceptualised for a variety of specific purposes – domestic, ceremonial, architectural, and of course, as articles to be entombed with the dead to serve them in their next life (*mingqi*).

Domestic Ceramics

The elite of the Han probably dined off lacquer, jade or fine ceramic dishes¹, while the masses would have made do with woven reed or wooden containers or simple unglazed earthenware. Hundreds of thousands of grey and brick-red pottery shards dating to this period have led archaeologists to assume that they are the remains of what once served as domestic pottery for the masses. (Because of China's iron-rich clay, both red and grey shards

are common – red resulting when the pots were fired in an oxygen-rich environment and grey when fired in an oxygen-deprived atmosphere.) However, these shards manifest a variety of compositions and decorative techniques, showing that domestic ceramics had already been modified to meet a variety of specific needs. For example, pressing a cord or rope into the exterior of a pot to leave an impressed design would hasten a pot's heating process and adding sand to the clay made a finished pot's texture coarser, so it was better suited for cooking over an open fire.

One of the great contributions of Han potters was the use of glazes, especially on stoneware containers. The glaze's colours would have been derived from metal oxides (copper and iron), which the potters unfortunately needed to mix with lead (for its role as a flux to promote the glaze's vitrification), which would have made the containers somewhat toxic if used for the storage of liquids or food items that could absorb the lead.

Most early glazed stonewares were storage

jars, with a dark glaze (showing the presence of iron in the glaze) covering only their upper half (the mouth, neck and shoulder), and decorated with horizontal incised grooves, as if made with a fork (Fig 1). Many have vertical handles.

Ceremonial Ceramics

Most ceremonial ceramics were used for offerings of food although this category also includes incense burners and oil lamps. During the Han, some of the earlier bronze ceremonial wares began to be replaced by unglazed grey pottery,² including large pots, tripods, square (*fang*) containers, and smaller jars and pots.



Fig 3. An Eastern Han (9 -220 CE) glazed earthenware boshanlu. Courtesy of the Ethnological Museum, Berlin



Fig 1. A Han Dynasty jar glazed with an incised band depicting a hunting scene, a classical design found on Han artefacts. Courtesy of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

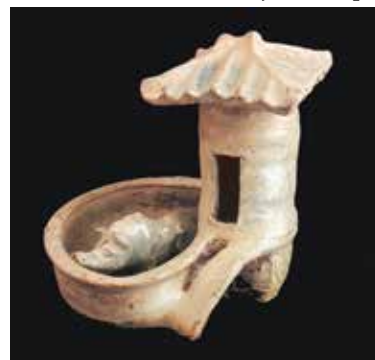


Fig 4. A Han Dynasty unglazed earthenware pigsty mingqi. Courtesy of Laure Lau

Sometimes it is difficult to differentiate between the ceremonial ceramics used in real life and those used as mortuary ware, "because some objects found in tombs had been used by the deceased and were deposited with him when he died, and other material was made expressly for the grave."³ A ceramic in this category could be

the waisted neck, cocoon or duck egg-shaped *hu* (Fig 2). Because they exist as both plain and painted pottery (traditionally with vertical or horizontal bands, and some unpainted examples with beautifully burnished and/or incised decorations), scholars are divided over whether they were used by the deceased and then buried with them or made expressly as grave goods. "Painted pottery is said to have been exclusively for burial purposes."⁴ Most believe, however, that they were probably designed for storing liquids, in all likelihood wine.

Glazed incense burners, many with striking incised and relief decorations showing mountain ranges are peopled with animal (e.g. tigers, boars, deer and



Fig 2. A cocoon-shaped cold-painted hu. Courtesy of T S Loh, KenSoon Asiatic Art Pte Ltd, Singapore



Fig 5. A Han Dynasty painted earthenware dancing lady mingqi. Courtesy of the ACM

monkeys) and human and non-human figures emerging from an ocean. These *boshanlu*, which were said to reflect the “Isles of the Immortals”, reflect the period’s fascination with Daoism and the search for immortality (Fig3).

Architectural Ceramics

Roof tiles, drainage pipes and antefixes, as well as unglazed ornamental tiles for tombs, were the most common architectural ceramics that appear in the Han. We know from the miniatures of houses and farms that most Han buildings were made of wood with sloping, tiled roofs. Clay roofing tiles were long and tube-shaped, split longitudinally (approximately 35 cm long). The tiles at the lower edge of the roof have an enclosed ornamental disc decorated with auspicious motifs or inscriptions so the roof edge appears as a continuous line of circles. Underground burial chambers were often decorated in moulded grey ceramic tiles that depicted hunting scenes or royal processions.



Fig 6. A Han Dynasty painted earthenware mingqi entertainer performing Shuochang. Courtesy of the ACM



Fig 7. Tens of thousands of nude, armless earthenware mingqi unearthed from the Hanyangling Museum in Xi'an, China. Wikicommons, Creative Commons Licence

Mortuary Ceramics

The Han’s mortuary ware confirms the important role that ceramics play in recording history owing to their indestructible nature – bury them in tombs, garbage dumps or the ocean and they still survive. It is from these earthenware models of farms, sheep pens, watch towers, stoves, furniture, temples, houses and even pigsties (Fig 4) that we know how the rural and urban Chinese landscape would have looked 2,000 years ago.

The human figures often display “sculptural genius”⁵ showing individual facial features and expressions, and their clothing, their social class or profession – eg officials, soldiers, grooms and servants (Fig 5). They



Fig 8. Han Dynasty painted ceramic horses. Hohhut Museum, China. Photo courtesy of the author

include entertainers, especially performers of *shuochang*, a form of entertainment that included both talking and singing (Fig 6). “During the Han Dynasty vaudeville had become quite popular and had attained a high standard.”⁶

While many of the tomb figurines’ dress is part of the ceramic sculpture, during the Western Han (206 BCE-9 CE), the clay figures were left unclothed, with wooden arms and silk clothing added at the time of burial (Fig 7). Animal figurines include most farm animals (ducks, dogs, fowl, pigs, sheep) as well as horses, tigers and bears, a popular motif during the Han (Fig 8).

Because most glazed *mingqi* were made, glazed and fired at a relatively low temperature in a single process, the glazes were somewhat fragile (especially the green, which often acquired an almost silvery iridescence in the moist atmosphere of ancient tombs). “Pottery objects were specifically produced for burial before the Han Dynasty; however, it was during the Han that the quantities and types of *mingqi* were so greatly expanded that tomb furniture becomes one of the major elements in a study of ceramics.”⁷

Amongst the architectural forms, it appears that the South preferred single or two-storey buildings, often with a courtyard, in contrast to the structures found in northern Chinese tombs where the edifices tended to consist of tall, multi-storey pottery towers distinctive for their height, perhaps imitating the watch-towers along China’s northern borders (Fig 9). Both Singapore’s Asian Civilisations Museum and the NUS Museum have a large variety of Han ceramics on display. Do visit them.



Fig 9. A Han grey earthenware tower with a moat with ducks and a dog. Courtesy of the ACM

¹ And eventually gold and silver, introduced from Central Asia.

² Lu Yaw, “Providing for Life in the Other World” in *Spirit of Han*. Singapore: Southeast Asian Ceramic Society, 1991, p. 11.

³ Valenstein, Suzanne G. *A Handbook of Chinese Ceramics*. NY: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975, p. 28.

⁴ Lu Yaw, p. 12.

⁵ Paludan, Ann. *Chronicle of the Chinese Emperors*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1998, p. 58.

⁶ Chen Huasha, “The Splendour of Han Pottery” in *Spirit of Han*. p. 64.

⁷ Valenstein, p. 28

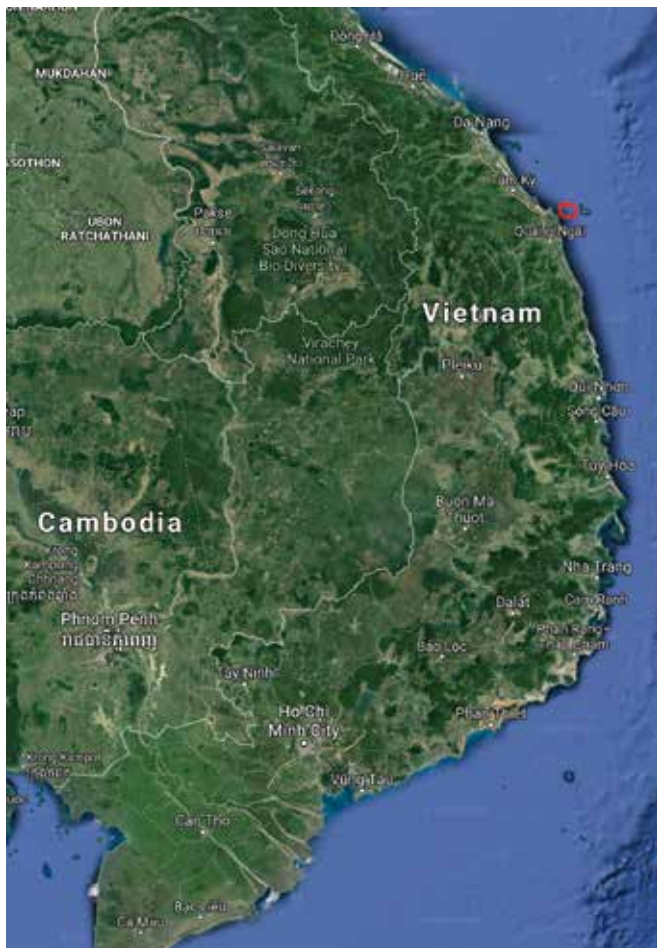
Patricia Bjaaland Welch is president of the Southeast Asian Ceramics Society, which she urges those interested in learning more about ceramics to join. www.seaceramic.org.sg

More Insights into Early Southeast Asian Trade

By Tara Manser

An International Congress

Five hundred participants from 40 countries attended the 21st Congress of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association (IPPA), from 23-28 September 2018, in Huế City, Vietnam. The IPPA promotes cooperation in the study of the prehistory of Asia and the Pacific region and maintains ethical standards in prehistorical research. Whilst the primary focus of the association is prehistory, the subject matter covered by the conference was much broader, with topics covering both history and prehistory in terms of art, settlement patterns, cultural landscape and maritime interactions, and from highly technical field work and laboratory analysis, to issues around community engagement, education and heritage protection. In the opening programme, Professor John Miksic from the National University of Singapore, spoke on the use of prehistory in the historical archaeology of Southeast Asia.



Location of the Châu Tân shipwreck (indicated by the red circle)

The scope and diversity of the subjects covered by the conference facilitated the opportunity for attendees to share and learn about new developments and findings within their specific field of interest, and to branch out beyond their own area and hear talks on new but connected fields of research. It brought together a diverse group of people: historians, archaeologists, museum curators, ceramic lovers, as well as



Fig 1. Changsha ceramics recovered from the cargo of the Châu Tân shipwreck in Central Vietnam © Tara Manser

people simply interested in hearing the latest research for the benefit of their own learning. The conference was a great opportunity to connect with people and to share contact details, information and ideas.

Ceramics in Southeast Asia

Sessions concerned primarily with ceramics included the panel titled *The Production and Technological Exchange of Ancient Porcelains in East and Southeast Asia*. Amongst others, it included papers discussing research from Jingdezhen on Yuan dynasty 14th century blue and white porcelains from the Luomaqiao kiln site, new insights into the Java Sea Wreck, and Vietnamese ceramics in the context of Asian history and culture.

The panel titled *People and the Sea: Current Research on Maritime Interactions Between Southeast Asia and the Wider World* presented research that connected archaeological evidence and historical accounts of the maritime interactions between Angkor and China during the ninth to 15th centuries. Several papers examined artefacts recovered from shipwrecks off the Thai coast, including the torpedo jars recovered from the Phanom-Surin wreck, an Arab-style ship dated to the first half of the ninth century or possibly earlier. A cartographic chart from the Thai royal collection was used to understand the sailing routes between Bangkok and Guangdong province in the 19th century and Stephen Murphy, a curator at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM), Singapore gave a talk on Tang period ceramics found throughout Southeast Asia.

In addition to research into ceramics and the historical and cultural information they can convey, Deliza Ridoloso of the Oriental Ceramic Society of the Philippines shared interesting insights into how the volunteer society organised, installed and curated an exhibition on 11th to 14th century Fujian ware found in the Philippines.



Fig 2. Examples of Changsha Wares © Do Truong Giang

Another Ninth Century Shipwreck

During the week, time was allocated for attendees to explore the cultural environs of Huế, the capital for nine generations of Nguyễn lords (1558-1945) from where southern and central Vietnam were controlled. About 200+ delegates attended guided tours around the complex of Huế monuments. A small group of ceramic lovers took the opportunity to visit the ceramic cargo of the *Châu Tân* shipwreck, which is tentatively dated to the latter half of the ninth century, possibly into the 10th century (between the late years of the Tang and the early Five Dynasties period).¹ This shipwreck was recovered from the coastal region of Quảng Ngãi province, Central Vietnam, and some of its recovered cargo is now on display in a private museum (Fig 1).

Salvaged by fishermen in 2012, this wreck is the earliest shipwreck found on the coast of the former territory of the kingdom of Champa (7th-15th century). The ship is a lash-lug and stitched plank vessel, of a Southeast Asian shipbuilding tradition.² The salvaged ceramics are primarily from the Chinese kilns of Changsha (Fig 2). Yue and Xing-Ding (Fig 3). Storage jars and basins from the kilns of Guangdong are also present. Research revealed shards with both incised and ink inscriptions. The ink inscriptions are in Chinese, Arabic and Indic script, with some remaining unidentifiable.³ The Arab inscriptions often end in a six-pointed or five-pointed star, which has been identified as the 'seal of



Fig 3. Xing-Ding White Wares © Do Truong Giang

Solomon', an emblem that was used across the medieval and early modern Muslim world and which carried with it magical and talismanic properties (Fig 4)⁴. It is proposed that the ship sailed from Guangdong in South China, stopping at the Hainan coast before arriving at Champa. After leaving the ports of the Champa coast, it is thought that the ship might have followed the same itinerary as the *Belitung* ship on display in the ACM and thus might have been expected to anchor at a port in the Java Sea before setting out for its final destination in the Persian Gulf.⁵

The *Châu Tân* wreck and its cargo shed light on the diplomatic relations and commercial links the kingdom of Champa had with China, the Middle East and Southeast Asia during the latter part of the ninth century, providing evidence that the Champa



Fig 4. Arabic script inscribed on the bottom of Guangdong basins, ©Do Truong Giang

coast, as mentioned in both Chinese and Arab maritime inventories, was an important hub for cross-cultural exchange on the maritime silk route.

It also reveals a ceramic cargo believed to be of a slightly later date than the *Belitung* wreck (circa 840 CE), and therefore is an important continuum from one of the earliest dated shipwrecks recovered in the region to date and is further evidence for early bulk commerce in Chinese ceramics. In the similarities and differences of its ceramic makeup to that of the *Belitung* and the *Intan* shipwreck, dated to first half of the 10th century found off the coast of Sumatra, it sheds light on the progression of wares developed at Chinese kilns sites in terms of style and form. The Changsha wares in particular, produced during the Tang and Five Dynasties period, seem to represent a later phase of production than the ceramics included in the *Belitung* wreck. It also stimulates questions about market-specific production and export in this early period of trade. Ongoing research on this shipwreck is being conducted by a joint team of Japanese and Vietnamese archaeologists.

The IPPA conference is held every four years, so look out for the next one in 2022.

Tara Manser is a member of the Southeast Asian Ceramic Society, Singapore and a member of FOM.

¹ Do Truong Giang, 'Diplomacy, Trade and Networks: Champa in the Asian Commercial Context (7th-10th centuries)', *Moussons*, no. 27, 2016, pp. 73-74. (<https://journals.openedition.org/moussons/3494>)

² *Ibid.*, p. 73

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 76

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79

ACM'S Beneficent Benefactors

By Patricia Bjaaland Welch

"Nothing is forever. You are the custodian of art, and you pass it on." (Dr Earl Lu¹)

How many times do we look at a museum artefact without looking at the last line of the artefact's label where the sponsor's or donor's name is indicated? If you're like me, not very often, until I began writing the history of Singapore's Southeast Asian Ceramics Society (SEACS) and one day recognised the name at the bottom of a label as that of an early society member. Call it an awakening.

Since then, I've begun to uncover some of the stories behind the names. Let me introduce you to just a handful of those whose gifts helped build the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM).

Pamela and Frank Hickley are undoubtedly the best-known as the donors of the extensive *dehua* or *blanc-de-chine* collection gifted to the ACM in the 1990s. Frank passed away on 5 August 1989 and Pamela announced not long after that the entire Hickley collection would be bequeathed to the ACM at her death. (Pamela passed away in 2017 at age 98.) Few FOM members know that Mrs Hickley had not only been born in Singapore, but had also been the personal assistant to the last two colonial governors of Singapore, Sir William Goode and Sir Robert Black, in the late 1950s.



1992-01278 E, Han ceramic stove, gift of Mrs Annie Wee

1997-04791. Necklace from Aceh, gift of Mrs Annie Wee

Stephen and Gilbert Zuellig had owned one of the largest privately listed companies in Asia, which had enabled them to build their collection, today virtually priceless. The older part of the collection was transferred to a foundation and is on long-term loan to the Museum Rietberg in Zurich, Switzerland. Once upon a time, they were members of Singapore's Southeast Asian Ceramics Society.

Today, the ACM has on display two iron-spotted



2001-00008-9. Yuan Dynasty Qingbai jarlets, gift of Dr Stephen Zuellig



2001-02611. Yaozhou bowl with gold rim, purchased with funds from Mr David Zuellig

Qingbai 13th or 14th century porcelain jarlets (#2001-00008-9) "Gift of Dr Stephen Zuellig". In the same showcase is a lovely Northern Song Yaozhou bowl with peonies, circa 11th century with a gold rim possibly added in Champa (inventory #2001-02611), "purchased with funds from Mr David Zuellig", one of Stephen Zuellig's sons.



2002-00097. Yaozhou vase carved with peony sprays, 12C, from the Xiang Xue Zhuang Collection

Dr Earl Lu was a well-known local general surgeon, generous philanthropist and art patron. Over the years, he and his wife gave Singapore's National Museum, the ACM and the LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts (today home of the Earl Lu Gallery) significant donations, including his "200-piece collection of Southeast Asian pottery dating from the ninth to 14th centuries, which he donated entirely to the Singapore Art Museum."² No fewer than 162

ceramics are listed on ROOTS as gifts of Dr Earl Lu. Many of the Vietnamese and Thai ceramics currently on display are from Dr Lu's collection.

In 2007, **Mr and Mrs Toshio Egawa** donated their extensive collection of 17th and 18th century Chinese, Japanese and European ceramics to the ACM, several of which are displayed in the Trade Gallery and were featured in the 2010 exhibition *China Mania*. Mr Egawa was the Managing Director of the Konica Corporation and a philanthropist with a keen interest in history, culture and the arts. He also donated a



2014-00434 Painted enamel on copper plate, gift in memory of Eng-Lee Seok Chee

large collection of historical documents and memorabilia to the National Library and in 2016 gave his life-long private archive collection to the ISEAS Library at the National University of Singapore.

As you wander through the Trade Gallery, look for the lovely blue and white ceramic *kendi* amongst the earthenware and metal *kendi* (spouted drinking vessels). This made-in-Holland (Delft) donation by Ceramic Society member and shop owner **T S Loh** is a perfect example of cross-cultural influences between East and West. In a nearby case is the delicately painted 18th century enamel dish with a central medallion of butterflies and flowers in the *famille rose* palette of colours acquired by the ACM with funds from the Eng family in loving memory of **Eng-Lee Seok Chee**. Chee, as she was known, was a former curator at the National Museum and a big supporter of the FOM docent community.

In the China galleries, the majority of the Chinese textiles on display are loans from the **Chris Hall** collection, one of the world's premier collections of Chinese costumes and textiles. In 2007, ACM held a fabulous exhibition entitled *Power Dressing* that featured row after row of imperial robes and cases of rank badges and thangkas – the first time the collection had been exhibited in its current entirety.



C-1199. 17C Jingdezhen kendi donated by Michael Flecker & Royal Selangor Pte Ltd



2015-02129 17C Delft kendi, gift of TS Loh

Educated at Oxford, **Edmond Chin** began buying Indonesian jewellery to learn more about the culture. After a short period working at the Monetary Authority of Singapore, he quit to work at the National Museum for a few years before joining Christie's in Hong Kong as head of their jewellery department. When he gave his gold jewellery collection to the then-National Museum (ACM) he said, "I gave it away because it was by then quite a complete collection ... and I learnt that you can't

possess anything forever. The important part of the process is the learning."³ He was responsible for the stunning *Gilding the Phoenix* exhibition in the National Museum in 1991.

That very same year, his aunt, **Annie Wee**, was lending some of her superb Han earthenware tomb furnishings to another exhibition at the ACM. Today, visitors to the ACM's third floor galleries can see some of the pieces she has gifted the museum. Like her nephew, she has also gifted ACM



CH195h Daoist silk hanging of Xiwangmu, from the Chris Hall Collection

some antique gold jewellery, including the delicate necklace from Aceh in North Sumatra that many FOM docents will remember from the Mary and Philbert Chin Gallery (dedicated to Edmond's parents) currently being revamped and due to reappear in a new, third floor location in 2019 or 2020.

Peter Lee is the donor behind many gifts of textiles to the ACM and other museums (including Baba House), plus such historical memorabilia as photographs and jewellery and as importantly, his expertise and time. The *Port Cities* exhibition reflected his commitment to the ACM while including many items from the Lee family's collections.

And let us not forget the many family foundations: it was from the Xiang Xue Zhuang Collection in memory of **Dr Tan Tsze Chor** that we have so many literati artefacts, ranging from poetry-inscribed porcelains to inkstones. The gallery that houses the Tang Shipwreck was only possible through the generosity of the estate of the late **Khoo Teck Puat**, the owner of the Goodwood Group of boutique hotels and the largest single shareholder of the Standard Chartered Bank, once Singapore's wealthiest citizen. Other early donors include the **Kwek** family, who donated millions to the ACM's building fund (hence the Kwek Hong Png Gallery and the brand new Kwek Hong Png Wing), the **Ngee Ann Development Pte Ltd**, the **Jurong Town Corporation**, the **Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple Gallery of Ancient Religions** (whose major gift funded the acquisition of masterpieces of Buddhist art on display in the gallery), the **Shaw Foundation**, the **Lee Foundation** ... to all these and our other generous donors and supporters, go the grateful thanks of FOM, our docents and of course, our visitors.



Dehua Bodhisattva Guanyin with child. Hickley Collection

¹ <https://www.esplanade.com/tributesg/patrons-and-champions/earl-lu>

² http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1255_2006-12-02.html

³ <http://www.businesstimes.com.sg/lifestyle/arts/the-fine-art-of-collecting>

All photos taken by the author unless otherwise indicated.

Necklace from Aceh and CH195H Daoist silk hanging of Xiwangmu, courtesy of the ACM

Finding a Voice: The Southern Chinese in Northern Australia

By Margaret White

A visit to the Top End of Australia provoked my curiosity about the role of the early immigrant Chinese in this region. When did they arrive here and what did they do? Historically, it has been postulated that the Chinese had been visiting Australia for a long time. However, what is certain is that Chinese traders were visiting here for at least the last 250 years, seeking sandalwood and *bêches de mer* (sea cucumbers).

Darwin, formerly Palmerston, the capital of the Northern Territory, sits in the far north of Australia clinging to the edge of the continent. It suffers from the tyranny of distance from the rest of Australia and has been influenced by a melting pot of Aboriginal, European and Asian cultures. In the 1850s, the Chinese came to Australia lured by the discovery of gold. The port of Darwin was only established in 1869, the fifth attempt to do so by the British Empire to build an outpost in the inhospitable tropics.

The first group of 200 Chinese were *coolies* brought to Darwin from Singapore in 1874 to work the mines. They carried everything on their backs and arrived exhausted, but immediately set to work. The Chinese labour force worked in conditions that others spurned. *The Northern Territory's Quarterly Report to the South Australian Government* in Nov 1884 observed that, "so far as alluvial digging is concerned... (mining) is wholly in the hands of the Chinese...working with unflagging industry, even when working on old ground which has been repeatedly turned over and washed out and where anything but a most meagre return is impossible".



Altar in Chung Wah Chinese Temple, Woods Street, Darwin, NT

To meet the demand for essential public works, the government agreed to the immigration of additional Chinese. These men were instrumental in constructing the overland telegraph line to Alice Springs, providing a vital link to the Far North. By 1885, the Chinese population in the Northern Territory numbered 3,500; about 2,500 were on the goldfields outnumbering Europeans by at least four to one. The comparative failure of white settlement in Australia's north throughout the 19th and early 20th century meant Europeans felt constantly threatened by competing imperialists, by other races and by Aborigines. Consequently, the government

FANG CHONG LOONG,
TAILOR,
CAVENAGH STREET, . . . PORT DARWIN
Shop is situated on south side of street, a few doors from Eastern Esplanade Corner.

COUNTRY VISITORS SHOULD CALL
and inspect large supplies of excellent material, suitable for every kind of garment: also varied assortment of European goods stocked at this establishment.

Workmanship and Quality of Material Guaranteed.
Note the following examples of

MOST MODERATE CHARGES
for suits, trousers and coat, made to order, viz. —Silk Khaki, splendid quality, everlasting wear, 20s and 21s; Khaki, 16s (trousers only 7s 6d, coat 8s 6d); Dungaree, 13s and 14s (trousers only 6s 6d); Jute 14s. Other lines, including Shirts from fine Crepe, Silk, or other material, at like low prices.

Repairs of all kinds also undertaken.

NOTE—Orders from Country Residents unable to visit Palmerston promptly attended to. Good fitting suits made where only usual size worn (as No. 8 or 9) is given, but where more exactness is required the following measurements may be sent. For Coat: (1) neck (2) round chest under armpits; (3) round shoulders and chest; (4) from point of shoulder to elbow; (5) from elbow to wrist; (6) round waist; (7) for length, from top of shoulder as low as is required. For trousers: (1) round the waist; (2) round hips; (3) round knees, showing whether required wide or tighter fitting; (4) from waist to ankle (outside); (5) from fork to ankle (inside measurement).

Country Orders from strangers must be accompanied by Cash.

An advertisement for the Fang Chong Loong emporium, 1880s

became increasingly alarmed at the rapid increase of the Chinese population in Australia and legislation restricting the Chinese was quickly passed.

South Australia did not have such restrictions at this time and as a Chinese labour force was still needed for the development of the Territory, Chinese indentured labour was brought out from Hong Kong to build a railway from Port Darwin to Pine Creek in 1887. Later, the discovery of gold in the Pine Creek area brought more Chinese from southern China. The Chinese were also employed by Adelaide mining companies to work the mines because the reefs were difficult to work. Once the rail line was complete and the government had no further need of Chinese labour, the South Australian government also enforced immigration restrictions. In 1901, under the White Australia Policy, further restrictions were introduced and more Chinese were repatriated. By 1905, the Chinese population was reduced to about 2,000. This was disastrous for the Territory as its total population dwindled to an all-time low.

However, not all Chinese worked in the mines or railways and those who stayed behind seized every opportunity to make good. One example from the *Northern Territory Times* of the 1880s shows an advertisement by the Fang Chang Loong Emporium, which was patronised by the whole community. It "sold imported carved ivory and pearl shells, embroidered silk and fragrant camphorwood boxes... every shop in Chinatown had shrines and images of ecclesiastical deities, the books were written in Chinese ink and in the dark interiors, guarded from the eyes of men, you may see



Artefacts dug up from the old Chinese mining sites of Brooks Creek and Pine Creek - at the Chung Wah Museum



Chinese awaiting transport to return home

the smiling lips and frangipani complexions of trousered women”.

Chinese market gardeners also provided locally grown fresh fruit and vegetables. They established piggeries and were engaged in the fishing industry, hunting for *bêches de mer* as well as fish, which was salted and dried for export to Hong Kong. They successfully grew rice without mechanisation and proved to be skilled tradesmen – carpenters, stonemasons, cabinet- and boiler-makers and fitters who helped construct many buildings in the town.

In Darwin, as is common with other overseas Chinese communities, along with the first arrivals, a Chinatown was established in 1874 on Cavanagh Street, which stretched straight up from the harbour receiving any cooling breezes. Many though, regarded Chinatown as threatening, sinister and a type of forbidden city. It was eventually demolished on the pretext of being perceived as having squalid living conditions and posing health problems,

At the Chung Wah Temple in Woods Street, Darwin, the caretaker told me that this temple was its umpteenth rebuild and constructed according to *feng shui* (Chinese geomancy) principles, although not on the original site; the European community forced its relocation from the original site in 1887 as it occupied a prime position. It was also determined to be too noisy with the ringing temple bells, gongs and drums and exploding firecrackers at festive occasions. It was replaced by a Catholic church. Two cyclones and World War II had also destroyed the temple. However, 200-300 people still worship here following Daoist, Buddhist and Confucian beliefs. Three main dialects were spoken here before 1942, Cantonese by the Sze Yup (The Four Counties), Hakka and Heung-Sun of southern China. After the upheaval caused by civil conflict in East Timor in 1975, there was an influx of Timor's Chinese evacuees. These people spoke Hakka and in Darwin today, more Chinese speak Hakka than any other dialect.



Chinese procession along Cavanagh Street, Darwin, circa 1916.

The small museum next door to the temple was established to provide a comprehensive account of the Chinese in the Top End from 1874 to the present. This is done through photos, memorabilia, heritage objects and family histories. Interviews with older residents provided a clearer picture of the Chinese involvement in the community. By the 1920s, the Chinese had become economically powerful and by the 1930s, the Chinese ran most of the businesses in Darwin. Chinese survival was in large part due to the interlinked relationships of businesses and extended family, clan association and domestic economies. Early hostilities against the Chinese prevailed until the early 1940s.

The Chung Wah Society was formed in 1946 to promote harmony and goodwill between Chinese residents in the Northern Territory and people of other nationalities. It also aimed to provide and



Chung Wah Temple in Woods Street, circa 1930s

maintain the Chinese temple as well as to promote cultural, educational and social interests. In the last few decades, the largely silent history of the Chinese in Australia is being told from their perspective. It illuminates the courage, determination and boundless optimism of these early settlers to make themselves successful. It could be argued that the Chinese have played and continued to play an important part in the development of the Northern Territory.

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Margaret White lived in Singapore from 1991-2011. It was during this time that she became more curious about her Chinese heritage, which spurred her to research Chinese immigration to Australia.

Photos by the author except the black and white images, which are courtesy of www.chia.chinesemuseum.com.au

No Delft Without China¹

The Dynamics Between Dutch Delft Ceramics and Chinese Porcelain

By Dorien Knaap

The introduction of large quantities of Chinese porcelain from the end of the 16th century and early 17th century by the Portuguese and Dutch East India Company (VOC) would bring about a revolution in material culture in Europe. Porcelain was much thinner, harder and shinier than the coarse ceramics the Europeans had been making since the Middle Ages, especially the bright blue and white colours of Kraakware. The elegant shapes, together with the exotic oriental imagery of the porcelain, would cause a China mania all over Europe, everybody wanted to get their hands on it.

This development was part of Europe's economic growth in the 17th century. In the Netherlands, this is referred to as the Golden Age, when trade, art and the sciences prospered. In addition to rich merchants, a large and varied middle class emerged and all loved to display their wealth by furnishing their homes with fine furniture, rugs and tiles, paintings, silver objects and porcelain. At the beginning of the 17th century, the Chinese were the only ones who knew the secret of making porcelain. In Europe, good quality Chinese porcelain was rare and expensive; only the rich could afford it. So what do you do if you cannot afford it? You fake it.

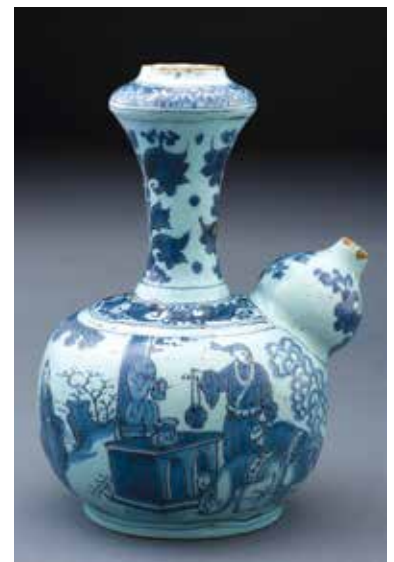
It was in the Dutch town of Delft that potters would rise to the occasion by developing a type of ceramics that imitated Chinese blue and white porcelain. They built on a technique that originated in the Middle East in the eighth and ninth centuries. A red/yellowish soft clay was glazed with an opaque white, tin-based glaze that covered the decoration painted in tones of blue, green, orange, yellow and purple. A transparent lead glaze gave the pieces some shine. They were then fired at a low temperature. The technique was introduced in Spain in the 10th century. From there it was exported from Majorca to Italy, where it received its name, majolica. By the end of the 16th century, the technique had spread from Italy to northern Europe.

Delft potters made important technological improvements to majolica by using much finer clay and moulds to mimic porcelain's thinness. After an initial firing, the wares were dipped in a tin glaze to create a completely white body. After that, decorations, only in blue and white to copy the Chinese wares, were painted on and fired together to fuse them. For more shine, a layer of transparent lead glaze could be added before firing. The price? Ten times cheaper than real Chinese porcelain. The quality? Initially, probably ten times worse. But the average Dutch customer was not too picky. As long as a piece was affordable and breathed exotic, oriental blue and white imagery, there was a market for it.



A Delft copy of Chinese porcelain, but the chipped and flaking edges along the rim that reveal the red clay underneath show it is not Chinese porcelain. Photo by Patricia Bjaaland Welch

The Delft pottery industry took off from the middle of the 17th century, when the import of Chinese porcelain was disrupted between 1645-1683 because of internal political struggles. By 1680 around 30 Delft potters had specialised in the production of this new kind of pottery. There were a few other producers in Holland, but the industry concentrated in Delft as many potters had taken advantage of a sudden downfall in the local beer industry, leaving many factory buildings empty.



17th century Delft kendi

As kraak porcelain was the first Chinese porcelain to be imported on a large scale in Europe, these pieces were initially copied the most. The Trade Gallery of the ACM showcases a very nice example of this. The dish dates from the 1670s. At first sight it does not seem to differ much from the Chinese kraak porcelain dishes also on display. All are blue and white and have the segmented and panelled bordering, which is characteristic of kraak wares. But with a closer look, the differences become clear. First, the Delft dish is much thicker than the others and when you examine the

rim, you will notice that the glaze has broken off, exposing the red-yellowish clay underneath. But it is the imagery on the dish that gives away the fact that it is not Chinese. The Dutch painter of this dish wanted to copy a Chinese example, but he lacked the technique to do so. Therefore, the image is painted in a rather simple fashion and the figures look more like cartoons. There is also a Delft *kendi* in the Trade Gallery. Dutch customers liked not only Chinese-like decorations, but also the unusual shape of Chinese porcelains. As the Dutch were unfamiliar with the use of *kendis*, a piece like this was considered very exotic and would have been proudly displayed in a special display cabinet.

From the 1670s onwards, Delft potters started to use colours on their wares, utilising the old majolica techniques. When Chinese exports ceased, the VOC introduced more colourful wares from the south of China and from Japan. Japanese porcelain was an immediate hit in Europe and provided new inspiration to the Delft pottery painters. The design that features a basket of flowers, much seen on Japanese porcelain, became a very popular theme on Delft pottery.

There are only a few known Delft pieces that are a true copy of Chinese or Japanese porcelain. Both the Dutch artist and consumer of Delft were totally unaware of the meaning or symbolism behind the imagery on this porcelain. Delft pottery painters therefore tended to paint their own interpretation, by combining different Chinese and Japanese motifs and/or adding traditional majolica designs that they were already familiar with. This makes Delft pottery one of the first and finest examples of Dutch chinoiserie. The potters even started to call their product *Hollants Porceleyn* (Dutch porcelain). Nowadays, this type of ceramics is referred to as faience.

The Delft ceramics industry was at its height between 1650 and 1725, when Delft potters were successful in producing tableware and a large variety of decorative objects, both in Dutch and Asian styles and all price ranges. Wares of the highest quality were much sought after and were even exported all over Europe.

The cross-cultural influences between European and Asian design would lead to the development of new products such as the so-called *kaststellen* or garnitures. This was a combination of three, five or even seven vases and/or lidded jars that would sit on top of display cabinets. Although the first inspiration for the vases was taken from Chinese altar sets, *kaststellen* became a totally European phenomenon, so popular that at one time Delft examples were sent to China to be copied in porcelain.



Spirit keg depicting a Dutchman sitting on top of a barrel

The ACM Trade Gallery has two very good examples of Delft copies in porcelain. One is a delightful piece, a spirit keg, with a cheerful Dutchman sitting on a barrel. Follies



Dish with stag. Gift of Mr and Mrs Toshio Egawa

such as this were very popular in Europe at the time and were usually made from low-fire ceramics. This piece was made in Arita in Japan in the 18th century and was quite likely copied from a Delft example.

Another typical Dutch design made famous by Delft potters is the tulip vase. The name is somewhat misleading as the vases were used for all kinds of flowers. They became very popular as they were collected by Queen Mary II (1662-1695), the wife of King-Stadholder William III (1650-1702). The shape of these vases varies, but they all have in common a large number of spouts where one or two flowers can be inserted. The vase in the ACM's Trade Gallery (shown on the cover of this issue) has a pyramid or pagoda shape. It was made around 1700 and is likely a copy of a Delft tulip vase in the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, but there are a few differences. The Delft original is blue and white, like most tulip vases, yet this one is multi-coloured. When one looks closely, one can see that the Chinese painter struggled with copying the original design and probably decided to give his own interpretation – just as the Delft painters had done with the Chinese designs.

The Delft pottery industry slowly declined after the middle of the 18th century. By that time large quantities of Chinese porcelain had been imported into Europe, making it affordable for all classes. At the same time, other faience industries were established in France and England, slowly pushing the Delft potters out of business. And in 1708, Johann Friedrich Böttger had discovered the secret of making porcelain, which led to the founding of the first European porcelain factory at Meissen in Germany. Only one factory in Delft, named The Porcelain Bottle, founded in 1653, would withstand all the upheavals. Although the production process of today's Delft is very different from that of the 17th century, the blue and white decorations inspired by Chinese Kraakware are still being produced and can be considered part of Dutch national heritage.

Dorien Knaap is of Dutch descent and is a docent at the ACM. She likes to research the cross-cultural influences in art between Asia and the Netherlands.

¹ No Delft without China was one of the slogans in *The World of the VOC*, an exhibition that took place in the Dutch National Archives in The Hague in the first half of 2018.

Except where noted, all photos collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum

Object-ification: Found Objects in Philippine Contemporary Art

By Lourdes Arbela Samson

Vials of an oily substance. Faded devotional prayer cards. Used rubber flip-flops. An antique piano. What might seem like a list of items in a junk shop are actual found objects incorporated by artists from the Philippines into contemporary artworks. The process of selecting, arranging and incorporating these old and often discarded materials into contemporary works transforms them into new forms that can stir the imagination and evoke new meanings, much in the same way that the artful combination of words gives poetry its own rhythm, symbolism and depth.

The use of found objects in Philippine contemporary art finds its strongest proponents in conceptual artists such as Norberto Roldan, Alwin Reamillo and Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan. Through their works these artists demonstrate the various artistic impulses that animate assemblage and installation, such as the desire to create order and meaning through the grouping or categorisation of objects; the desire to link the present with the past through personal memories or communal histories associated with objects; and the use of objects as 'social sculptures' for communities to participate in the process of art-making.

Many of Norberto Roldan's assemblages and installations incorporate found objects, texts, and images in organised groupings or grid-like presentations that are likely influenced by his background in graphic design. His passion for collecting has turned his studio into a treasure trove of various antiques, old photographs, heirlooms and relics collected over the years from old houses and thrift shops. Roldan describes his work thus, "The installations straddle between contemporary art and anthropology. It borrows anthropology's focus on the interpretation of objects as material culture. While contemporary art is a process of negotiation between 'life' and 'art' within the context of a discourse, anthropology approaches this negotiation in relation to a wider public context. Contemporary Asian art tends to be more personal and intricately enmeshed with everyday life while anthropology is expected to be socially and historically contingent."¹

In *Faith in Sorcery, Sorcery in Faith* 13 -14, (2009), (Fig 1) for example, Roldan pairs Catholic devotional cards or *stampitas*, with folk amulets or *anting-anting*. He presents them in carefully arranged rows, conscious of the balance and symmetry of both panels. Roldan deliberately uses the objects' characteristic opaqueness or transparency to create a positive and negative image of a cross. By juxtaposing these talismans of protection from the Catholic and animist traditions, the work invites audiences to reflect on the role of religion as a tool of Spanish colonialism and the selective adaptation of religious practices by the local population in response to this colonial imposition.

Objects can embody personal stories and memories because people associate their forms or usage with significant persons or life events. In his work, Alwin Reamillo uses objects to link personal histories within



Fig 1. Norberto Roldan, *Faith in Sorcery / Sorcery in Faith*, diptych, assemblage with found objects (assorted bottles with anting-anting, old stampitas, flattened bottle-caps).



Fig 1a. Detail of *Faith in Sorcery / Sorcery in Faith*

the larger contexts of national history and contemporary culture as part of his explorations of memory, migration and intersecting cultures. In 2005, Reamillo sought out craftsmen from his family's defunct piano factory in the Philippines, Javincello and Company. With their help, the artist used old fragments and spare parts found on-site as well as made-to-measure components ordered from Japan, to create a grand piano sculpture dedicated to the memory of his father, master piano-maker Decimo Reamillo. This work, *Mang Emo + Mag-himo Grand Piano Project* is now part of the Singapore National Collection.

Reamillo returned to his piano series in 2008, paying



Fig 2. Alwin Reamillo, *Mutya ng Pasig*, Restored Art Case Piano (Wittenburg Chippendale II, ca. 1990)

tribute to the late Nicanor Abelardo, the first modernist composer of the Philippines. In *Mutya ng Pasig*, 2008-2009/2017 (Muse of Pasig), (Fig 2) Reamillo recalls Abelardo's 1926 musical composition of the same name. This contemporary sculpture transformed an old upright piano made by Javincello and Company into an art-case instrument. Through a glass cover that makes the piano's inner workings visible, a small portrait of Abelardo can be seen. The lower panel features an image from the eponymous 1950 movie, which was inspired by Abelardo's composition. Reamillo notes, "*Mutya ng Pasig* has also been performed by invited pianists in around six mini-concerts/public events staged from 2008-2016. It's a well-travelled instrument around Manila."² The performative aspect of this sculpture thus layers the artist's own personal story and the historical legacy of Abelardo with the individual stories of the contemporary musicians and audiences who have encountered this art work and heard its music.

The husband-and-wife duo Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan emphasise the social aspect of art-making in their practice. Working with marginalised communities, the artists ask participants to collect objects that represent their shared identity or reflect a social issue. Isabel Aquilizan explains, "Our work, in the end, is not about the object on view but the engagement with the site, how this informs the meaning



Fig 3. Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan, *Last Flight*. Used slippers, polyfibre and metal stand



Fig 2a. Detail from *Mutya ng Pasig*

of the work, the engagement with the materials and how it relates to the idea of the work, the engagement with the space where it was created, the engagement with the community and the engagement with our audience and how their own personal experience and background transform the meaning of the work and multiply the meaning... The actual work is just a documentation of the whole process".³

In 2003, for example, the Aquilizans collaborated with Barangay Uno, a small fishing village in Bagasbas, Camarines Norte in the Philippines. The villagers relied on dried fish for their livelihood and bamboo beds used in the drying process had been laid across the shoreline. Unfortunately, tidal movements caused debris and garbage from surrounding islands to collect underneath the beds, resulting in a severe garbage problem. Through this art project, the Aquilizans worked closely with the villagers to discuss practical solutions and collaborated on an art installation to represent their plight. Discarded rubber slippers were gathered by villagers as they cleared the garbage, and these were then placed atop bamboo poles scattered on the beach, like a school of strange fish returning to sea. The artists also included wind harps that created a wailing sound in the installation. The work was called *Daing*, which in Tagalog means both the preserved salted fish and the lament of those who suffer.

The Aquilizans continued working with the community for many years thereafter, using the rubber slippers gathered by the villagers to create several wing sculptures. In *Last Flight*, 2009, (Fig 3) the slippers become angel's wings that perhaps allude to the salvation of a community through art, but also to the larger issues of migration and displacement, which are at the core of the Aquilizans' artistic practice.

These artists from the Philippines demonstrate different artistic strategies that make use of found objects in contemporary art. In their hands, everyday objects are transformed into materials that embody not only the past but also the present, that reflect the hopes and concerns of local communities, and that show in visual form the poetry of contemporary life.

Lourdes Arbela Samson has been collecting Southeast Asian contemporary art for many years. Her interest in the region's art led her to pursue an MA in Asian Art Histories at LASALLE College of the Arts. She graduated in 2018.

¹ Norberto Roldan, "Artist's Note: *Rituals of Invasion and Resistance*," Silverlensgalleries.com. 20 July 2017, <http://www.silverlensgalleries.com/exhibitions/2017-09-02/rituals-of-invasion-and-resistance> (Accessed 5 Nov 2018).

² Alwin Reamillo, email to author, 19 April 2017.

³ Isabel Aquilizan, email to author, 27 September 2018.

All photos courtesy of the author

BP De Silva

The Preservation of a 145-year-old Legacy

By Nilofar Iyer

'To me, jewellery is meant to be enjoyed through all seasons of life, like a soft whisper, reminding you of who you are, who you want to be, and most of all, that you are loved, no matter what.'
(Shanya Amarasuriya)

FOM docents often pass by and miss a quiet corner in the National Museum of Singapore's History Gallery, the one dedicated to BP De Silva Jewellers. Recently, I had the opportunity to research the man, his story and his legacy. So who was this now relatively unknown man who played a significant role in the history of early Singapore?

BP De Silva was a renowned jeweller to Singapore's wealthy as well as neighbouring royalty. Balage Porolis De Silva or BP De Silva as he was most commonly known, was born in Ceylon, today's Sri Lanka. In the late 1860s, a young De Silva set sail with his father from their home town Galle, in



An oil painting of BP De Silva

Ceylon, to the Far East with a pocketful of gemstones. They travelled around the world visiting many countries, trading in gems. After visiting the Straits Settlements, China, Japan, Australia and America, they continued to Europe, India and Burma, finally arriving in Singapore in 1869. Here, BP De Silva saw great trading potential and decided to take a chance and bring his entrepreneurial dreams to life.

By 1872, at the young age of 21, BP De Silva had opened his first jewellery shop in a shophouse at 21 High Street, situated across from what was then the luxury Hotel d'Europe, the site today of the Supreme Court. Over time, he became a respected member of the mercantile community, garnering high praise from the movers and shakers of Singapore as well as from an elite international clientele for

his beautiful jewellery creations. BP De Silva soon became the most successful diamond merchant and jeweller in the region, his name synonymous with fairness, integrity and the finest jewellery. A testament to his fine craftsmanship and exquisite gemstones was his long list of royal patrons such as the King of Siam, the Sultan of Johor and members of the British Royal family.

One of the key highlights of BP De Silva's career was the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York's visit to Singapore in 1901. During this visit, they were officially gifted with BP De Silva's masterpieces. Not only did he receive accolades for the gem-studded caskets commissioned as gifts for the royal couple by the local European and Asian elites but was also chosen to be one of only two representatives from the Asian community to officially welcome the royals. This was quite an honour.

When BP De Silva announced his intention to retire to his native land in 1919, he received many letters from clients and friends, including Dr Lim Boon Keng. The letter (which you can find in the National Museum) sends warm wishes for happiness from Dr Lim and his wife, as well as commends BP De Silva's four decades of service to the community. The BP De Silva company has survived for 145 years and remains the oldest family-run business in Singapore. It is interesting to note that Lee Kuan Yew's father, Lee Chin Koon, used to work in the Sales Department of BP De Silva in the late 1950s.



A newspaper report including a photo of the casket given to the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York during their 1901 visit to Singapore



The flagship BP De Silva Jewellers first shop at 21 High Street

I had the privilege of meeting and interviewing the fifth-generation granddaughter of BP De Silva, Ms Shanya Amarasuriya, in November 2018. Shanya recently graduated from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York with a degree in jewellery design and is the first in the family who has worked on the jewellery bench, having studied gemology and design.

What is the driving force behind the success of BP De Silva?

Values. Definitely values. From our family to our staff, to how we operate the business. Not many family businesses last through five generations. We have been around for 145 years because those underlying values have seen us through. There is also a priceless loyalty and dedication from our staff. I can trust my team 110%. Let me share a



Our meeting at BP De Silva's atelier in Redhill in Nov 2018. From left: Regina Foo, Nilofar Iyer, Christine Zeng, Marian Tan, Shanya Amarasuriya and Jane Ong

great example of how values saw us through. During World War II, when the Japanese had occupied Singapore, one of BP's youngest managers, a Mr Titus, took all the jewellery, packed it in a sack and buried it under a tree at his house till the war was over, not uttering a word about it. Everyone had assumed that the store was looted during the Japanese occupation. After the war, Titus dug out the sack and returned it to the company without expecting any reward. It is such values that I treasure the most because they are the real gems.

Another story of values comes from my late great-great grandfather BP De Silva himself. He ensured that every employee put aside a portion of his income every month to ensure he had sufficient funds for his retirement and to buy a house in Sri Lanka when he went home. Sure, there have been tragic circumstances or family conflicts along the way, but we have overcome them through a combination of the right values, the right timing and a healthy dose of luck.

BP De Silva Group has diversified. Some of its brands today are the 1872 Clipper Tea Company, the heritage brand Risis, the luxury Swiss watch company Audemars Piguet and Envipure Water Purification Systems. Why this diversity?

My father, who is 69 years old, entered the business under dire circumstances at the age of 28, yet managed to turn the business around against all odds. His experiences have taught him the importance of diversification in business, plus he honestly loves learning about new industries and is passionate about helping people develop. It's served us kids well because this way we have to think laterally and cross-pollinate ideas across industries.

What has been the most significant change in BP De Silva Jewellers' operations in recent years?

Our perspective on jewellery for sure. Jewellery used to be a status symbol and to a large degree it remains so for many people, but we believe that wearing jewellery is an extension of who you are and your life's stories. We want BP to be the jewellers who are inspired by the inherent beauty of the individuals we meet and their personal stories.

It's because of this that we delved into 3D prototyping as a tool for our customers to imagine how it would feel to wear a piece of jewellery before we move into handmaking the item. The idea is to marry modern and traditional techniques to create charming and finely crafted artisanal jewels.



'The Duchess' ring is a one-of-a-kind ring with a Royal Blue Sapphire surrounded by round brilliant diamonds

What do you foresee in the future for BP De Silva Jewellers?

I foresee a huge change ahead. One of our key goals is to become the first jeweller in Asia to be B-Corp certified. This is an American certification given to companies who have a commitment to improve the social and environmental sustainability of everyone they work with, be it the gem miners, gem dealers and suppliers, but especially their own employees. We want to create a legacy that is congruent with our family values and a love for what we've been doing for generations.

Legacy and preservation are also key family goals, so we hope to relaunch the brand in a shophouse just like we had in the old days. I envision a beautiful modern romantic jewellery gallery, where we will serve the finest teas sourced from Sri Lanka as clients look through trays of exquisite gemstones and jewellery.

There will also be a workshop upstairs where our designers and craftsmen co-create wonderful jewellery. Lastly, I would love to dedicate a corner to the real gem himself, BP De Silva, who started with a pocketful of gems, but also a pocketful of dreams.



Shanya Amarasuriya with a tray of precious gemstones sustainably sourced from Sri Lanka

One of the joys of researching is that you will never know what you may unearth in the process and what or whom it may lead you to. For me, it was the opportunity to meet the great granddaughter of BP De Silva. I look forward to more beautiful collections from BP De Silva Jewellers and their 150th anniversary celebrations in 2022.

Nilofar Iyer guides at the National Museum of Singapore and heads a charity group called Helping & Empowering our Neighbours (HEN) which brings fellow docents together to help the underprivileged communities of Singapore.

All images courtesy of BP De Silva Jewellers

S.E.A. Focus 2019

A Spotlight on Southeast Asian Modern and Contemporary Art

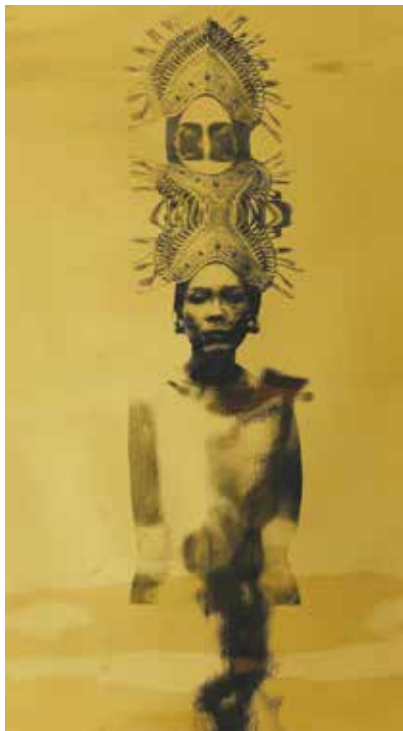
By the Gillman Barracks Outreach Team

As part of Singapore Art Week 2019 (19 – 27 January), STPI Creative Workshop and Gallery is holding a specially curated showcase of art galleries. S.E.A. Focus is the first-of-its-kind homegrown initiative that shines a spotlight on Southeast Asian modern and contemporary art, providing a platform to foster deeper appreciation and increased demand through dynamic collaboration between international and local galleries. The inaugural edition of S.E.A. Focus takes the form of a boutique art fair and will be held from 23 to 27 January in a special pop-up structure at the Gillman Barracks visual arts cluster. A recognised visual arts destination, with 11 galleries already established alongside the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) Singapore, Gillman Barracks will provide a lush and historical backdrop to S.E.A. Focus 2019.

The much-anticipated showcase will bring to light the vibrant and dynamic local and regional arts ecosystem, while simultaneously fostering collaboration among galleries that will help drive the development of the commercial art industry. S.E.A. Focus offers the wonderful and unique opportunity to bring art closer to the Singapore public through an excellently curated of quality exhibitions, galleries and fringe programmes aimed at engaging the larger audience.



Emerging artist, Yeo Kaa, uses stylised figuration drawing from animation and fictional children's book characters to conjure up a fantasy world in her installation, *ALONE BUT NOT LONELY*, 2018.



Indonesian artist, Octora Chan, explores the ethnographic portrait photograph through the post-colonial gaze in this work, *Tat Tvam Asi 2*, 2017, Mixed media (vinyl, metal, video performance projection).

S.E.A. Focus will be featuring 26 established international and local galleries in this inaugural exhibition. Visitors can look forward to works from over 54 artists, including local pioneering artists such as Cheong Soo Pieng (Singapore) and Chua Ek Kay (Singapore), as well as contemporary masters such as Kamin Lertchaiprasert (Thailand) and Agus Suwage (Indonesia). They will be complemented by cutting-edge, emerging artists such as Julian 'Togar' Abraham (Indonesia), Brisa Amir (Philippines), Yeo Kaa (Philippines), Gala Porras Kim (Columbia/USA), Amy Lien and Enzo Camacho (Philippines). The show is an excellent exposure of the array of artistic practices and experimentations that have shaped the identity of Southeast Asian modern and contemporary art – a visual feast for every visitor.

Apart from the powerful presence of local galleries, international galleries hailing from the United States, Australia and our regional neighbours, the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia, are also establishing their presence at S.E.A. Focus.

FOM has partnered with the S.E.A. Focus team to offer free guided tours to the public during the fair. All FOM members can attend this ticketed event at no cost and enjoy the suite of exciting visual art activities, curated exhibitions, industry dialogues and multidisciplinary lifestyle events lined up. For more information, please visit their website www.seafocus.sg

Opening hours

Thursday, 24 January 2019: 3PM – 9PM

Friday, 25 January 2019: 3PM – 10PM (Art after Dark)

Saturday, 26 January 2019: 11AM – 7PM

Sunday, 27 January 2019: 11AM – 9PM

Leadership Appreciation Dinner 2018



Once a year Friends of the Museums says thank you to some 70 people who volunteer in a leadership role for FOM. Without the hard work of these dedicated volunteers who put in so much energy and hard work towards fulfilling their respective roles, FOM would not be able to provide many of the activities it offers to the museums and its members.



Sadiya Shahal, the council representative for members and volunteer appreciation, has been looking after this important job for the past three years and each year has managed to outdo herself. This year was no different. The event was held at the Coriander Leaf and as you can see from the photos, everyone had great fun. The event began with a toast by Clara Chan, FOM's president. She thanked all volunteers for their contributions towards making FOM's 40th anniversary celebration a memorable event. We then sat down to a sumptuous four-course dinner, which had been specially prepared for us. After the main course, we heard some speeches, which were quite emotional, since seven council members, including our president, are stepping down this year for various reasons. All of them will be dearly missed.



Each year, the token of appreciation that FOM receives from the National Heritage Board for our donation towards the FOM-NHB Heritage Grant is raffled off and Christiane Duckworth, a long-serving volunteer, won the prize.



The highlight of the event was a flash mob performance by our council for volunteers, to the tune of Uptown Funk. The performance brought lots of cheers from all present, so much so that they gave an encore. In the end, everyone agreed that they had lots of fun and were looking forward to next year's event.

Text and photos by Gisella Harrold



Curio – Foodies

Food, G

By G



At the revolving restaurant



Delicious Beijing duck at the revolving restaurant



Foodies visit a hawker centre



The type of chicken that samsui women ate



In honour of an FOM member who looked after samsui women we went to Soup restaurant



At Joo Chiat



The duck rice at the hawker centre



Hawker Centre ice kachang



New Foodie Group at bak kut teh restaurant

What makes mankind tick? I am certain everyone has their own answer to this question, but the next time you are at a party and you don't know what to talk about, try to find out which 'favourite' chicken rice stall the other person goes to. I guarantee that you will have found a way to have an endless conversation. This was the idea behind a new FOM activity, the Curio Foodies.

The original FOM Foodie group has been around for almost two years now and proved so popular that a second group was started. We meet for lunch once a month to sample cuisines off-the-beaten-track. The main criterion we have for the restaurants we go to is that there should be an interesting story to be discovered. We have been to a revolving restaurant that specialises in Beijing cuisine and is located on top of a grain silo. We also visited a restaurant that was founded by the 'four heavenly chefs' credited with the elevation of the much-loved Singaporean Chinese New Year dish called *yusheng* from a simple street food to a glorified restaurant item. Recently we went to a hawker centre to sample some of the foods there and discover why Singapore has proposed its hawker centre culture for UNESCO World Heritage status.

For members who might not be able to join a Foodies outing during the day, we created Foodies after Dark (FaD). The first FaD destination was Quentin's at the Eurasian Community House where we tried great classics like devilled chicken or *feng*, finely chopped liver. Quentin's has a unique background and according to Eurasian friends of mine the food is totally authentic. A further highlight was

Excursions in 2018

Delicious Food

Gisella Harrold



Eating paper-thin dosas



Foodies group at Mustafa's



Celebrating CNY with a yusheng salad



Meeting the owner of Spring Court one of the oldest restaurants in Singapore



FaD at Quentin's; a well-balanced meal



FaD a fantastic prawn curry



FaD at Quentin's discovering all the different dishes



FaD chicken skin served as crispy chips over sweet corn



Bak kut teh delights



New Foodie Group visit to Non Entree Dessert Restaurant



The owner of NUDE explaining the food to us



FaD grilled short rib over roasted carrots

the live band that gave us an opportunity to dance off some of the calories.

The next FaD outing was to a new restaurant located in Marina One. The owners have developed a unique concept – 'nutritious and delicious' food to create the restaurant's name, 'NUDE'. Recently they opened NUDE Chill and Grill where we were treated to a specially created, community-style evening. We started off with some yakitori chicken, which had been 'opened up' to expose the maximum amount of skin to the grilling, making it extra crispy. The aubergine, in a tempura batter served with a spicy miso-flavoured aioli sauce, was absolutely to die for and is now one of my favourite dishes. Of course, the short rib served over oven-baked carrots would be the out-and-out winner of any food competition, whether you are a meat lover or not. This signature dish was the favourite of the entire FaD party. The food was only topped by the excellent service we experienced throughout the evening. Why not join the next FaD outing? We plan to have an event every two months. The next one will be on the last Thursday of January 2019. Stay tuned and find out more by checking the FOM website (www.fom.sg). Just click on members' events and then select Curio and look for Foodies after Dark.

Gisella Harrold has lived in Singapore for over 20 years and has been an active FOM member for the last 10 years. She started Curio in 2017 to replace an earlier programme, Super Saturdays. Curio offers different events throughout the year for FOM members and their guests – from workshops or theatre events to Foodies.

Explore Singapore!

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



NEWater and the Marina Barrage

Thursday 17 January
9.00 am – 12.00 noon
Fee: \$30

Have you ever wondered how a small country such as Singapore manages to supply its households

and industry with an ample supply of fresh, clean water? We will learn about the four ways by which Singapore manages to accomplish this feat. Join Explore Singapore! on this guided tour to the NEWater plant with its state-of-the-art technology and equipment and then on to the Marina Barrage where we will tour the bridge, the Sustainable Singapore Gallery and the Green Roof. After the tour you may wish to join us for lunch (at your own cost) at the Satay by the Bay Food Centre.



Geylang Serai Market

Thursday 24 January
9:30 am – 12:30 pm
Fee: \$30

From a citronella press factory and the eastern terminal for Singapore's first tramline, a bustling hub once called the

'Malay emporium of Singapore' emerged. The Geylang Serai Market was built in 1964 and soon became popular with Malays in the Kampong Ubi area as well as the surrounding suburbs. We will discover this marketplace's history as well as the variety of herbs, spices and other ingredients used for Malay cooking and find out how they are used at the food centre, where we will savour its splendid array of dishes. Lunch over, you may wish to explore stores selling traditional cosmetics and medicine, pandan-floral potpourri, roasted coffee beans, blended tea, pickled fruits and gold jewellery.



Tour of Freemasons' Hall

Thursday 31 January
10.30 am – 12.30 pm
Fee: \$25

There is a colonial building in the heart of Singapore that not many people have entered and

a society that not many people know anything about. Come with Explore Singapore! on this special tour to find out about the Freemasons who have been here since 1845, who they are, who their most famous members were and how they have contributed to Singapore. This guided tour will take us around the splendid building, which was constructed in 1879 for their meetings. You will learn about the Freemasons' history, rituals, costumes and community.



Artisanal Chinese Tea and Bak Kut Teh

(not suitable for vegetarians or Muslims)
Thursday 14 February
10:00am – 12:30pm
Fee: \$40 (including lunch)

Join Explore Singapore! for a specially curated Singaporean experience – enjoy traditional *bak kut teh* with specially blended Chinese tea. First we will take you to a nearly 100-year-old shop which has been blending Chinese tea by hand since 1925. Hear the stories and historical events behind the branding of each tea blend and watch how the teas are blended using old-fashioned equipment.

We will have lunch at a restaurant that serves *bak kut teh*, literally 'meat-bone tea', a soup of pork ribs boiled with garlic and pepper until tender. The restaurant is one of the tea shop's earliest customers and still serves its own special blend of tea.



Achieving Life Balance through Ayurvedic Cooking

Thursday 28 February
9:30 am – 1:00 pm
Fee: \$30

Balance in the way we live and eat for a healthy life; this is the underlying premise of *Ayurveda* – the ancient Indian philosophy and system of medicine. Ayurveda means 'knowledge of life and longevity'; its practices developed in the mid-first millennium BCE. Over the years it spread beyond India and is now globalised and modernised as an alternative medicine. We will introduce you to the system's basic ideas and have a hands-on class in Ayurvedic cooking. Ayurvedic diets emphasise balance, therefore you will gain knowledge about the spices and foods utilised to achieve this. After cooking, you will get to enjoy the dishes. All ingredients, recipes and methods will be provided.

Monday Morning Lectures

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



14 January: Reimagining China through Fashion
Speaker: Gong Pan Pan

When one says, “never judge a person by what he/she wears”, it clearly does not refer to the

ancient Chinese. Fashion was never frivolous to a people who had been codifying their dress and style for over 2,500 years. From Sogdian-influenced fashion to Tibetan-influenced make-up, the styling of aristocratic women gave important clues to the cultural exchanges between traditional China and the world at large. You will get some insights into China’s evolving sartorial identities from this talk.



21 January: Revival of Chinese Opera in Singapore
Speaker: Chua Soo Pong

Xiqu, Chinese traditional theatre, commonly known as Chinese opera or *wayang* in Singapore, overcame its decline.

The various genres of Chinese opera that have been practised in Singapore for almost 200 years, are increasingly seen as its intangible cultural heritage. Brought to audiences by professional companies and devoted amateur groups, supported by community and the government, Chinese opera is set to flourish in the decades to come.



28 January: Pig Tales
Speaker: Patricia Welch

As the Chinese world approaches the Year of the Pig, come learn about the many forms and meanings pigs have taken in Asian and Southeast Asian art and history. From the pig-headed house god of ancient Tibet to one of

China’s most beloved literary figures in *Journey to the West*, the pig holds a special position throughout the region.

There will be NO LECTURE on Monday, February 4, 2019, due to the Chinese New Year public holiday.
恭喜发财 Gong Xi Fa Cai to all who celebrate!



11 February: From Embarrassment to Icon: The Biography of Raffles after His Death

Speaker: Timothy Barnard

Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles died in 1826.

This talk will survey and analyse the commemoration of Raffles during the first 75 years of colonial rule, through the commissioning of statues and the attachment of his name to establishments and institutions, and explain how these actions solidified and justified a British presence in the region and also the larger imperial story, which continues to echo in the modern nation-state of Singapore and its history.



18 February: Inclusion, Exclusion
Speaker: Marina Thayil

This lecture focuses on the ongoing 2018-19 Kochi Muziris Biennale, the largest contemporary art event in India. The biennale was founded on the conviction that art is an essential element of life. The 108 days of the celebration include art exhibitions, talks, workshops, film screenings and music and theatre performances

in public spaces and heritage buildings in the multicultural city of Kochi. The theme for this edition of the biennale, curated by artist Anita Dube, is to explore “the possibilities for a non-alienated life”. This lecture takes a look at both local and international artworks that provoke thought and encourage dialogue.



25 February: All that Glitters is not Gold
Speaker: John Ang

This lecture is about *kelingkan* embroidery, a quintessential category of Malay textiles. John will explain what *kelingkan* is, what it was used for and where it was produced. He will also

discuss its possible origins and how its technique spread to a major part of the Malay world, and the areas where it is still produced. When talking about *kelingkan*, John will illustrate how closely connected the Malay world was. It is John’s hope that his many stories about Malay textiles will inspire as well as spread awareness and a better understanding of the different people in the Malay world.

Dia de Muertos

By Darly Furlong

Dia de Muertos (Day of the Dead) is a Mexican celebration to honour departed family members and friends on 2 November. On this day, *offrendas* (private altars) are built, *calaveras* (skulls made of sugar or other forms of skull representation) are offered at the altar, along with marigold flowers and the departed person's favourite food. It is believed that the dead return home to enjoy these offerings. This year, *Dia de Muertos* was commemorated in Singapore at the F1 pit building, with live Mexican music, stalls showcasing their flavourful fare and beautiful *calaveras* painted on faces, thus making it possible for people with a multicultural heritage to get a taste of this Mexican tradition.



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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 topics 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 pot-luck 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.



Our next theme is **Great Journeys of Asia – by rail, river or road as well as religious pilgrimages**

Starting on 9 January, join us for some armchair travelling as we explore the great journeys of Asia. We plan to cover all types of journeys in this study group, including historical expeditions, river and ocean voyages, 'iron horse' travel (railroads), religious pilgrimages, literary excursions and perhaps your own personal tale of exciting explorations. For more information and to join the January Study Group, please visit the FOM website.

A few potential topics: (A longer list is available on the FOM Study Group website and feel free to develop your own.)

- Alfred Russell Wallace and his journey through the Malay Archipelago
- The travels of Marco Polo
- The Shinkansen – a history of the Japanese Bullet Train
- Explorations along the Irrawaddy River
- The Hajj – the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca
- *Journey to the West* – the 16th century Chinese classic
- The Eastern and Oriental Express – Bangkok to Singapore
- China's Belt and Road Initiative – transforming trade by building infrastructure
- The Australian Aboriginal Walkabout – a rite of passage



Textile Enthusiasts Group

Programme: Power and agency in the traditional textiles of eastern Indonesia

Speaker: Dr Geneviève Duggan

Date: Friday 25 January

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

Location: Ixora Room at the Peranakan Museum

Online Registration: Textile Enthusiasts Group at www.fom.sg

Culture is not a commodity and traditional textiles cannot be reduced to merely their commercial value. In this talk Dr Duggan will uncover the invisible power and unspoken agency of textiles and reveal new ways to appreciate the hand-woven cloths of eastern Indonesia.

About the Speaker:

Dr Geneviève Duggan is an anthropologist and during three decades of research in Indonesia, she has studied textile traditions in social contexts (*Ikats of Savu*, White Lotus, 2001) and the transmission of knowledge in an oral society (PhD thesis, NUS 2008). From 2010 to 2013 she was a Visiting Fellow at ISEAS (Singapore). She is also the author of numerous articles.

Programme: Investigating the origins of *Ikat Loseng*: Malaysia's Lesser Known Warp Ikat

Speaker: John Ang

Date: Friday 22 February

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

Location: Indian Heritage Centre

Online Registration: Textile Enthusiasts Group at www.fom.sg

Many of us have heard the term *kain limar*, which refers to the weft ikats from Malaysia's northeast states of Terengganu and Kelantan. However, *ikat loseng*, a warp ikat produced in the same states is largely unknown. John Ang's interest began with the purchase of his first Malay *ikat loseng*. Although he believed it was from Terengganu, friends insisted it was a warp ikat from Uzbekistan. His talk will focus on the investigation he then undertook and its interesting results.



About the Speaker:

John Ang is an avid collector of textiles. Since 2014 he has focused on collecting and researching textiles of the Malay world. After 32 years in Taipei, he recently moved to KL to facilitate his research. He is also accumulating interesting stories about these textiles to compile into a book.

Textile Enthusiasts Group Committee (TEG)

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Japanese Docents

As a writer with a journalistic background, I have always been excited by Asia and its rich cultural heritage. Seven years ago, I began studying Japanese as a language and at that time, I could never have guessed how much of a passion it would become. I have spent several years translating content from Japanese to English, but a chance trip to the ACM for a friend's Japanese docent (JD) debut in April 2018 opened a new door for me. Becoming a JD myself seemed like a wonderful challenge. Not only would it allow me to learn more about Southeast Asia and my own country of birth, India, it would also allow me to share this knowledge with Japanese visitors while speaking in a language that I love.

At the orientation session, I was struck by the camaraderie among the JDs. I believe that learning becomes more enjoyable in a nurturing atmosphere of friendship and support. The journey to becoming a JD was my first experience of studying with and working alongside the Japanese community and I have been deeply encouraged



by the warmth of their welcome. Over these past months, I have had the opportunity to interact with and learn from a dynamic group of individuals, as well as make many new friends. I feel enriched by the knowledge I have gained and I look forward to being a contributing FOM member for years to come.

Malavika Nataraj, Japanese docent



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Visit www.adm.ntu.edu.sg/MA for more information.



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www.ntu.edu.sg

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

Understanding Asia through Singapore

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

Raffles in Southeast Asia: Revisiting the Scholar and Statesman (1 February to 28 April 2019)

Sir Stamford Raffles was stationed in Southeast Asia between 1805 and 1824. He is known for establishing modern Singapore as a British port, as the author of *The History of Java*, and as a collector of natural history and cultural materials. Opinions of Raffles have changed over time. He has been viewed as a scholarly expert on the region, a progressive reformer, a committed imperialist and even a plagiariser. This exhibition is co-curated with the British Museum to mark Singapore's bicentennial anniversary and presents a multi-layered picture of Raffles, illustrating that his legacy is more complex than has been understood.

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 online 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

Jef Geys: *Quadra Medicinale* Singapore (Through 1 March)

Quadra Medicinale by the late Belgian artist Jef Geys (1934–2018) will be shown for the first time in Asia. Initially commissioned for the Belgian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2009, the project surprised the art world with its organic subject matter and its collaborative process. The exhibition introduces an artistic practice that questions the hierarchies and adaptability of nature and society, provoking reflections on both their communicable and imperceptible structures. It also poses the question of whether conceptual artworks can be continued after an artist's death.

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

11:00 am for the permanent galleries

2:00 pm on Wed and Fri for the special exhibitions

Tamil tours (FOM) 11:30am on the first Friday of each month for the special exhibition

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

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

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

Malay Heritage Centre

85 Sultan Gate, Singapore 198501
Tel: 6391 0450
www.malayheritage.org.sg

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 provides wonderful cultural exposure and learning opportunities for visitors of all ages and interests. Situated amid 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.

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

In an age where apps provide instant services and smartphones allow us to capture just about anything and everything in an instant, the culture of now has never been so prevalent. Its origins can perhaps be traced back to the late 1940s when Edwin Land first introduced the Polaroid camera to the world, marking a technological breakthrough in the history of photography. Polaroid's unique qualities inspired artists and photographers including Andy Warhol, Ansel Adams,



Museum Information and Exhibitions

Lucas Samaras and Barbara Crane, while capturing the imagination of everyone else. Through a wide range of Polaroid artworks and artefacts, this exhibition offers insight into the story of Polaroid photography, while exploring the impact of instant photography and the social phenomenon of instantaneity on us today.

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.

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

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

NUS Baba House

157 Neil Road, Singapore 088883
Tel: 6227 5731
www.babahouse.nus.edu.sg

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

Opening hours:

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



FOM guided tours:

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

This intimate museum possesses one of the finest and most comprehensive collections of Peranakan objects. Galleries on three floors illustrate the cultural traditions and the distinctive visual arts of the Peranakans.

Amek Gambar: Peranakans and Photography (through 3 February)

This will be the Peranakan Museum's first historical photography exhibition, tracing the history and evolution of photography in the region with a focus on how the Peranakan community captured and projected themselves to the world through the multi-faceted medium of photographs.

Singapore Art Museum

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

Opening hours:

Daily 10:00 am – 7:00 pm, Fri 10:00 am – 9:00 pm



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. Museum exhibitions and programmes continue to take place at SAM at 8Q, the annexe building located at 8 Queen Street, Singapore 188535.

President's Young Talents 2018 (through 27 January)

The *President's Young Talents* is Singapore's premier and only mentoring, commissioning and award programme, which recognises promising artists aged 35 and below, whose practices chart new dimensions in Singapore contemporary art.

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

Closed Sundays & Public Holidays

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

Please refer to STPI's website at www.stpi.com.sg for STPI's public programmes and Japanese, Mandarin and special evening tours.



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

(19 January to 9 March)

Lauded as one of Southeast Asia's most important artists emerging from the post-war Chinese diaspora and a pioneer of East-West modernism since the 1950s, Cheong Soo Pieng created a new visual language for artists in Asia, rising above the catastrophes of war and the schisms of nationalism. This show gleans from important private collections to provide a definitive selection of some of the artist's most seminal creations, aiming to present a thoughtful review of both popular favourites and newly revealed masterpieces, allowing fresh considerations of some of the artist's most important achievements: the subject of the personality of the people in Southeast Asia, the re-creation of the Chinese-style landscape and the artist's development of modern abstraction.

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



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

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

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