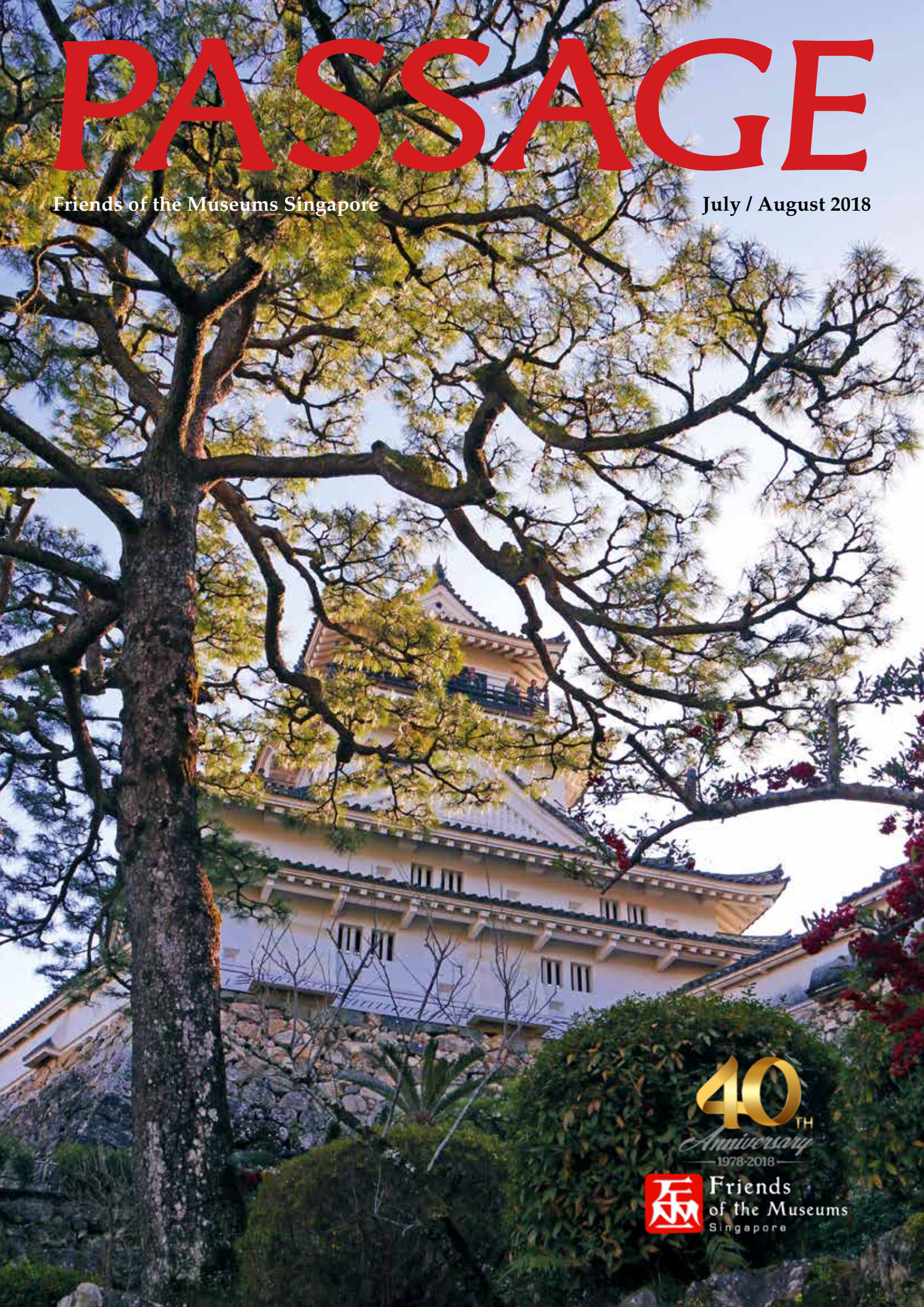


PASSAGE

Friends of the Museums Singapore

July / August 2018



40TH
Anniversary
— 1978-2018 —



Friends
of the Museums
Singapore

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

I hope everyone has been enjoying the many exhibitions that have been held during the last two months. Some of them are still ongoing, so do plan your visits before they end. Some notable ones include *Angkor: Exploring Cambodia's Sacred City* at the Asian Civilisations Museum; *The More We Get Together: Singapore's Playgrounds 1930 – 2030*, at the National Museum of Singapore; and *Anek Gambar: Peranakans and Photography* at the Peranakan Museum.

Our volunteers had a remarkable experience at the annual Volunteer Appreciation Morning (VAM) on 11 May. This year, 69 volunteers were recognised for their contributions to FOM, the museums to which we provide guiding support and the community at large. Vatsala Mohandas, the stalwart of the Monday Morning Lecture programme, received her 30-year service pin, the first time in the history of FOM that this pin has been awarded. It is a timely recognition of Vatsala's long-term contribution to FOM and to the Monday Morning Lecture (MML) programme. The society is very fortunate to have volunteers such as Vatsala who has worked tirelessly for FOM for all these years. Diana Loo wrote a comprehensive account of the VAM event, which you can read about on pages 2 and 3. Her article is accompanied by the beautiful photos that Gisella Harrold took.



Sadly, both Vatsala and her co-coordinator Brooks Goodyear have decided to step down from their roles after helming MML for 18 and 8 years, respectively. I would like to take this opportunity to give my heartfelt thanks to them both for organising speakers for the lectures over the years and bringing us a line-up of high-quality programmes, making this popular series the pride of FOM. I wish them the very best in their future endeavours.

This year's recipient of the Salome de Decker award is Sabine Silberstein, who has served FOM as a docent at both the Singapore Art Museum and the Asian Civilisations Museum for more than 20 years. Receiving this award was especially poignant for Sabine since she knew Salome personally and, before Salome lost her life to cancer, had enjoyed many happy moments with her over coffee and chocolates. Both Salome and Sabine shared the ideals that this award represents: teamwork, respect for others, giving freely and growing through service.

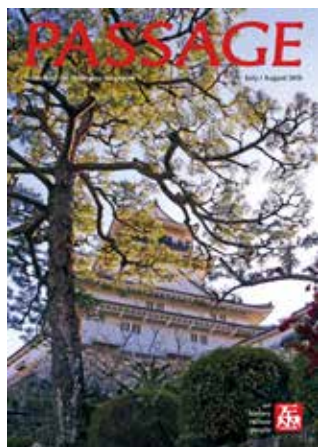
The FOM40 logo created to mark our 40th anniversary was also unveiled at the VAM this year. Formed in October 1978, FOM has grown in leaps and bounds. The council is excited about the countdown to the FOM40 celebration, as are our activity leaders who have lined up a slew of programmes in October to commemorate this special occasion. More information will be made available soon on our website, social media and our newsletter. With 40 years of history behind us, we would love to have you share your photos and videos of past FOM events and activities via the FOM40 page on our website.

Would some of these memories you have be of the Explore Singapore! (ES!) tours? Many of our members have discovered Singapore's hidden gems during these tours, which are designed to allow participants to immerse themselves in the local culture. The ES! coordinator, Lim Chey Cheng, takes us back to the early days of this popular activity on pages 10 and 11.

With this year's National Day theme, *We are Singapore*, in mind, I would like to call upon all FOMers, regardless of where they come from, to unite and take collective responsibility for shaping FOM's journey over the next 40 years. We are FOM!

I would like to wish all who are in Singapore a happy National Day.

Clara Chan
FOM President 2018



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On the Cover: A View of Kochi Castle, Kochi, Shikoku Island, Japan.
Photo by Andra Leo.

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 \$25 (senior) - \$100 (family) depending on category of membership.

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FOM is not responsible for statements expressed in the signed articles and interviews.

Mantua and Verona: 2017 World Federation of Friends of Museums Congress

By Ron Stride



A panoramic view of the Palazzo Te, the Gonzaga family's country home

Every three years, the World Federation of Friends of Museums (WFFM) holds a congress to discuss topics relevant to museums and the volunteers who support them. National associations from all over the world come together to share their best practices. The spirit of these meetings is passionate, scrupulous, meticulous, creative and always friendly. In 2017, the theme in Mantua and Verona was "trends in communications and media in favour of museums".

The programme was spread over four days, 17 to 20 May, but the core academic sessions were one morning and one afternoon session on Friday 19 May and one morning session on Saturday 20 May. The sessions were followed by cultural tours of the city and visits to local museums and villas. This format allowed for a good mixture of information-sharing and time for experiencing the beauty of both cities.

In order to understand why these cities were chosen by the Italian Federation of Friends for the congress, here is some background. Verona is one of northern Italy's main tourist destinations because of its artistic heritage. The city hosts annual fairs during which ancient Roman amphitheatres ring with the sounds of Italian opera. Two of Shakespeare's plays were set here, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The city has been of strategic importance throughout its history because of its geographical position in the centre of the vast plain that covers northern Italy. This made Verona the focus of many invading armies, from Roman times to World War II. Its main sites are Roman edifices and the medieval architecture, especially its churches. The city is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Mantua is situated about 45 kilometres south of Verona and is a very old city, having been established in 2,000 BCE. The city's historical power and influence under the rule of the Gonzaga family in the 14th to 17th centuries, made it one of Italy's main artistic and cultural centres. The Gonzagas were benevolent rulers and were hosts to many of the Renaissance period's important artists. The city has numerous Renaissance, Baroque and neoclassical landmarks, including palazzos, churches and official buildings. Mantua is also a UNESCO World Heritage city.



The interior of the Gonzaga ducal palace in Sabbioneta



The Romeo and Juliet balcony in Verona

On Wednesday 17 May, the executive committee of WFFM held its meeting at the palatial, late-13th century home of the Count and Countess Castiglioni, just across the square from Mantua's ducal palace. Committee members were welcomed by the count and countess, who still live in the palace. The two-hour meeting was followed by cocktails with distinguished guests from Mantua. The seven of us, along with another group of guests from Mantua, then walked a short distance to the Levoni family's home, for dinner. The Levoni family home is also very old but has modern elements.

The next day, the WFFM Council held its annual meeting in an old theatre in the town of Sabbioneta, almost two hours from Verona. Sabbioneta was built by a branch of the Gonzaga family as a model Renaissance city in the mid-16th century. After the meeting, council members along with their companions, visited the Gonzaga ducal palace, which has interesting carved wooden ceilings and walls decorated with frescoes. There are also several equestrian statues of the Gonzaga family. The entire group of perhaps 80 to 90 people then went to Mantua to visit the Palazzo Te, the large country mansion of the main branch of the Gonzaga family. The major attraction was in the Room of the Giants – a large fresco depicting the destruction of the Titans, from Greek mythology.

Friday was an all-day meeting of delegates to the congress. One of the meeting's highlights was a presentation by a Google panelist who gave a demonstration of their programme for digitising any museum's entire collection. At 4:30 pm, the two groups met for a tour of the Gonzaga family's huge ducal palace, with over 500 rooms (luckily, we saw only about 20 of them). The palace is actually a number of buildings built over the centuries starting from the late 13th century. The walls are covered with parts of frescoes and Flemish tapestries. The most important fresco is in the Room of the Spouses – a court scene of Ludovico Gonzaga

II and his family, one of the famous artist Mantegna's most important works, painted between 1465 and 1474. Some of the palace's interior rooms and wings were altered by the French after Napoleon conquered this region in 1797. After a reception, the group returned to Verona.

The congress delegates attended another morning meeting in Verona while their spouses went sightseeing. After lunch, we all attended the unveiling of a restored painting, *Madonna col Bambino e San Giovannino*, heavily damaged in the earthquake of August 2016. The restoration was funded by Verona's Friends of Museums. After the ceremony, the entire group went sightseeing. The old city was very lively, with many tourists and local people, especially in the area around the House of Juliet, the supposed location of the famous balcony. The imposing Castelvecchio was built in 1354 and houses the Museum of Art.

In the evening, all attendees had dinner at the Marquis Canossa's palace, a splendid example of Renaissance architecture that has been in the same family since 1530 – a very pleasant event in a splendid setting. On Sunday, the congress ended with a brunch for all attendees.

Janet and I certainly enjoyed the congress and the opportunity to visit Mantua and Verona, two cities with a significant cultural heritage. I encourage FOM members to consider attending future WFFM congresses.

Ron Stride has been a member of FOM Singapore for more than 20 years. He has represented FOM at the WFFM meetings for the past decade and is currently the organisation's treasurer.

Photos by the author



Verona's red-brick and white marble Castelvecchio Bridge, which spans the Adige River

Volunteer Appr

By



The Volunteer Appreciation Morning (VAM) is an annual event that celebrates FOM's volunteers. VAM 2018 was held on 11 May in the building below the iconic Singapore Flyer. Guests were treated to fantastic city views, cheerful decorations and an entertaining photo booth. VAM 2018 had the biggest turnout ever when almost 200 volunteers and guests attended. A hundred and sixteen volunteers were honoured for their contributions and commemorated for the length of their service. It was our privilege to have Ms Chang Hwee Nee, CEO of the National Heritage Board and Ms Sim Wan Hui, Director, Volunteers Engagement, gracing this exclusive event.

During this special morning, Ms Clara Chan, FOM's president, unveiled the new logo for FOM's 40th birthday, another festive event to be held in October this year. Mr Melvin Ooi was thanked for his design of the logo and other work for VAM 2018, which included the Instagram board – an immediate hit with our photo-savvy volunteers.

The reward volunteers receive is the pleasure of giving their time and sharing their talents. Nevertheless, it was heartwarming to be honoured and recognised in such style. For the first time in FOM's history, we commemorated a volunteer's 30 years of service. How beautifully timed it was to acknowledge Vatsala Mohandas for her extraordinary dedication and service to FOM as she retires from the Monday Morning Lecture team after 18 years. Vatsala, in her illustrious 30 years of volunteering, has served in the FOM library, Study Groups, Study Tours and the Strategic Planning Committee; she also co-founded the Book Groups. When she was the first Member Activities Representative



Appreciation Morning

Diana Loo



on FOM's Council, Vatsala received the 2010 Salome de Decker Award. She has also been conferred the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts' Special Recognition Award in recognition of her volunteer work. It is often said that FOM, even though a volunteer organisation, builds connections and camaraderie among volunteers. Sue Ellen Kelso delivered a moving tribute to Vatsala; it was both humorous and touching.

Since 2005, the Salome de Decker Award has been presented each year to an FOM volunteer who has quietly and positively given time and skills to the society and who 'models' the values to which we all aspire – growing through service to others. This year's winner, Sabine Silberstein, has been quietly serving FOM for the last 20 years and has taken on various roles. Sabine was in Africa celebrating her birthday and 40th wedding anniversary but had recorded her thank you speech. The award was especially meaningful to her because she had known Salome personally; they had worked together in training teams. As Clara said, Sabine epitomises the Salome de Decker spirit as a quiet, but tireless contributor.

VAM 2018 was an exceptional success during which we heard many inspiring personal stories and experienced memorable moments. Each of us walked off with a special gift. Our heartfelt thanks go to Sadiah Shahal, Council Representative (Volunteer Appreciation and Membership) and her sub-committee for this creative event. Sadiah and her team have shown how a volunteer organisation says thank you with class. Congratulations to the team and all volunteers!



Diana Loo is a Singaporean docent at the National Museum of Singapore and was co-head of NMS docent training in 2017/2018.

Photos by Gisella Harrold



The Brunei Shipwreck

By Patricia Bjaaland Welch

“Nothing better exemplifies the linking of the East and Southeast Asian states and polities into a coherent regional complex of producers and consumers than the ceramic trade networks.” – Geoffrey Gunn

(History without Borders: The Making of a World Region 1000-1800, Hong Kong University Press, 2011)

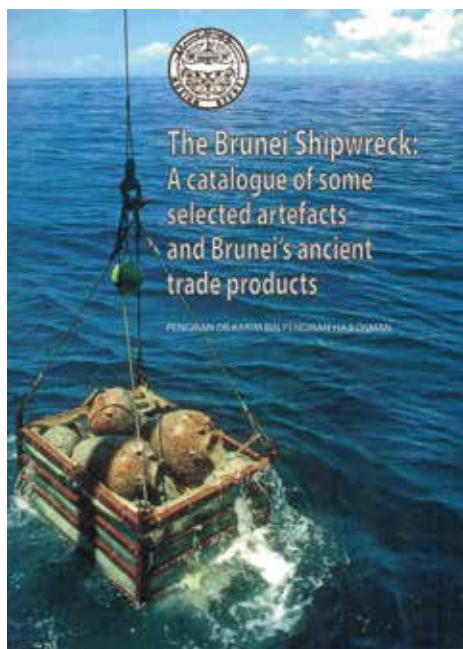
Three Southeast Asian shipwrecks dating to the late 15th/early 16th century – the *Brunei*, *Lena Shoal* and *Santa Cruz* – were, upon excavation, each found to be carrying more export Chinese blue & white ceramics than found in all earlier shipwrecks combined. This stunning fact led ceramic experts, including Ming-Gap specialist Roxanna Brown, to a myth-breaking conclusion, “The near absence of blue & white roughly prior to the reign of the Emperor Hongzhi, 1488-1505] as revealed by shipwreck cargoes, is startling since blue & white has become synonymous with the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). ‘Ming blue & white’ rolls off the tongue so fluidly that it is difficult to realise that it was exported in significant quantity to Southeast Asia (and perhaps elsewhere) *only* during the second half of the reign of the 276-year dynasty.”¹

When a long-held truth is discovered to be false, it’s major news, so when the opportunity to visit Brunei’s Shipwreck Museum as well as Kota Batu, one of the two sites in Borneo that gave birth to the term ‘Ming Gap’ presented itself to me, I jumped at the chance.²

The Brunei Shipwreck

Like Singapore’s Belitung shipwreck, the Brunei shipwreck was an accidental discovery by Elf Petroleum (now Total) when carrying out a geophysical survey off the coast of Brunei in May 1997. The nearly intact wreck was excavated in adherence to strict marine archaeological procedures, with a careful network of metal grids laid on the wreck site that ensured centimetre-perfect record-keeping.

The ship’s destination was most likely the capital of



The Brunei Shipwreck catalogue, out of print and very hard to find

Brunei’s first royal Islamic sultanate and port at Kota Batu, today an important archaeological site. (Like many of Southeast Asia’s ports, it lies not along the coastline but a few miles upstream along the Brunei River.) Ninety percent of the 13,261 recovered artefacts were ceramics – predominantly export ceramics from China, but also wares from Vietnam, Thailand and Burma. The remaining cargo consisted of various metals (cannons and hand guns), beads, glass bracelets, game tokens and assorted ‘other’ remains.

Some, if not the bulk, of the cargo would have been traded for such extremely valuable local products as camphor (*kapur barus* or *karpura*), considered worth its weight in silver for its use as a preservative and for various medicinal purposes. Brunei’s camphor was considered the best in the world and was highly sought after by both the Chinese and the Arabs. In fact, China’s overseas trade had historically been based upon primary substances from Southeast Asia such as turtle shell, pearls, cowrie shells, bird’s nests, beeswax, rattan, *areca* (betel) nut, and the aromatic gharu wood (still valued at tens of thousands of dollars per kilo).



The Brunei Shipwreck Museum, photo by the author

The Lena Shoal

The second wreck identified as belonging to the Hongzhi Period (1488-1505), was also discovered in 1997, on a reef off the island of Busuanga (northeast of Palawan) in the Philippines archipelago. Like the Brunei wreck, it was a local trading ship, approximately 22-25 metres in length, probably a Southeast Asian, lashed-lug junk made of tropical hardwood planks and dowels.

The *Lena Shoal*’s cargo was dominated by Chinese ceramics, especially blue & white, together with other Asian ceramics that included a small number of Vietnamese blue &

1 Roxanna Brown, *The Ming Gap and Shipwreck Ceramics in Southeast Asia*. Bangkok: The Siam Society, 2009, p. 19.

2 The term ‘Ming Gap’ first appeared in the 1950s when an archaeologist working in Borneo noticed a ‘gap’ in the Chinese export ceramics found at the Sarawak River delta and a site at Kota Batu on the Brunei River. Why there was a gap between 1354 and 1436 is a topic for another article.



Blue & White dish with the motif 'Prawn in Eel Grass', 15th-16th century, from the Brunei Shipwreck, courtesy of Roxanna Brown



Blue & White dish with the motif of a flying qilin (a mythological animal), 15th-16th century, from the Brunei Shipwreck, courtesy of Roxanna Brown

In the words of Roxanna Brown, "visualise the Hongzhi years [1488-1505] as a great bubble of Chinese blue & white that flowed onto the Southeast Asian market."⁴

The Brunei shipwreck alone carried nearly 5,000 pieces of Chinese blue & white plates, wine/tea cups, jarlets and kendis – one-third of all the recovered wares. They were richly decorated with Chinese mythical animals such as the *qilin* and dragon, along with, spotted deer and cranes, horses, fish, aquatic plants and various floral motifs – the classic designs of the period. Most originated in Jingdezhen, China's foremost production site from 1350 to 1750, but there were also large Longquan plates from Zhejiang Province (which had 20

white, a large Martaban jar, over 100 large Burmese celadon plates, a small number of miscellaneous Chinese brown glazed ware, and a single Sukhothai jarlet. Other trade goods included bronze cannons and bracelets, glass beads and elephant tusks. The cargo was described as a "remarkable trove" of Ming Dynasty ceramics.

The Santa Cruz

The *Santa Cruz*, the largest of the three ships at 25 metres, tentatively identified as being of Filipino construction, was found approximately 270 kilometres north of Manila close to Hermana Menor Island and salvaged during the summer of 2001 when the looting had reached such a frenzy that the wreck needed to be excavated immediately despite bad weather.³ The lower hull was still intact, however, and like the two previously named ships, it carried an unexpectedly large number of Chinese blue & white (plates, bowls, small teacups, jarlets, boxes, kendis), again estimated at 90% of the original cargo, some within their original packing. Remarkably, 11,500 pieces have been identified as porcelain or "ceramic of excellent quality and in perfect condition".

The remaining cargo consisted of large numbers of stoneware jars, some Longquan celadon, Vietnamese blue & white, and some Thai (Sawankhalok) celadons, some of which are on display in the National Museum of the Philippines in Manila – together with select pieces from the *Lena Shoal*.

Chinese Blue & White

Although blue & white porcelain appeared during the Yuan dynasty, it wasn't made in quantity until the Ming dynasty. These three shipwrecks therefore not only testify to the existence and volume of intra-Asian trade during this period, but also mark the dramatic appearance of blue & white in large quantities destined for foreign markets.

kilns during the Ming producing such celadons), many with the foliated edges we can see in the ACM collection.

Furthermore, the presence of Southeast Asian ceramics, even when Chinese kilns were producing large quantities of export ware, shows that there was still a market for Southeast Asian ceramics regionally; they weren't just filling a 'Ming Gap'.

The discovery of the Brunei shipwreck and the number and age of the finds at the Kota Batu site show that Borneo was part of a long-established Southeast Asian trade circuit. This trade circuit's importance grew after the Portuguese arrival in Southeast Asia, an event that marked the beginning of a sea change in the region's peaceful trade patterns.

My visit to Brunei was bittersweet. The Brunei Maritime Museum, although relatively new, had the look and feel of an abandoned property. The parking lot was empty. There were no tours, no museum flyer nor catalogue, no bookshop. The displays were well sign-posted, but not updated⁵. The

projection room showing the video of the shipwreck's story was closed. The best pieces were roped off

(although I was allowed access on request) and no photography was allowed. The

14th-17th century site of Kota Batu,

mentioned by the Italian traveller Antonio Pigafetta in 1521 and a

two-minute drive away, was also

deserted both times I visited. The

nearby Brunei National Museum

(which includes export SEA

ceramics in its collection) remains

closed, as it has been for the past

several years, with no re-opening

date in sight. What appears to be

a lack of local and official interest in

Brunei's historical heritage despite the

position it once held – when it was

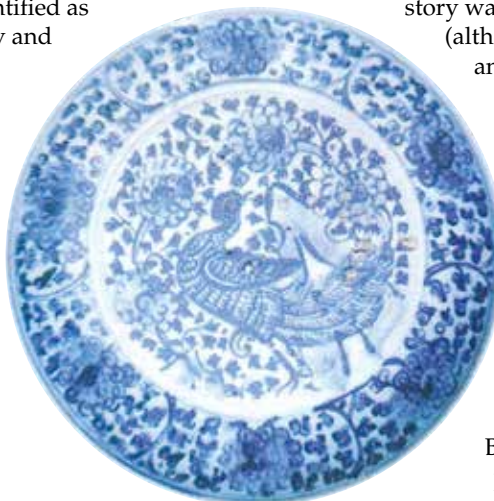
known to the Spanish as "the 'Venice of

the East' with merchants coming from

China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Ayudhya,

Patani, [and basically all of Southeast

Asia]"⁶ was most disheartening.



A Chinese B&W plate from the Brunei shipwreck featuring a peacock, from the Brunei Shipwreck catalogue

3 Talk given by Bobby C Orillaneda at the ACM, summer 2013.

4 Roxanna M Brown, *History of Shipwreck Excavation in Southeast Asia*, ISEAS, p. 53

5 Burmese wares originally misidentified as Thai were still identified as Thai.

6 Arthur Cotterell, *A History of Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2014, p. 226

Patricia Bjaaland Welch is a docent at the ACM and President of the Southeast Asian Ceramic Society.

Colours in the Park

By Shivani Kanwal Kulpati



Pink Mempat blossoms in the Joo Chiat area, photo courtesy of Mr Edmond Wong

The recent months have seen the trees in the East Coast Park seemingly explode in a riot of colours, an event I've had the luck to observe from my window. The usual green canopy transformed itself into myriad shades, adding brightness to the verdure. Some trees blossomed, while the leaves of others changed colour. For those who miss the changing of seasons in colder climates, it was as if nature had decided to give them a gift, for it was truly 'Sakura in Singapore'.

In a tropical climate such as Singapore's, one that is mostly wet, the mass flowering of trees is a rare event, with long intervals in between. This is because flowering is usually triggered by long dry spells followed by heavy showers. We are fortunate that this mass flowering happens, one that's the cynosure of all eyes.

Singapore has a variety of flowering trees lining the various roads as well as growing in housing estates and parks. These trees bloom at certain times of the year and make the entire island look more like a garden in full bloom than a bustling city. Colours range from white to yellow to various hues of pink, purple and orange. These colours, interspersed among the lush greenery, make for some picturesque settings.

These are some of the flowering trees you can see in Singapore:

The *Tabebuia rosea*, commonly known as the trumpet tree, grows to a height of between 18 and 25 metres. It derives its name from the trumpet-shaped flowers that come in various shades of pink and can also be white. When in bloom, they cover the tree's entire canopy, obscuring the green leaves. This tree has a large, almost conical and shady crown that gets covered in blossoms during the flowering season. It flowers twice a year, in April and in August. The

flowers make not only the treetop look ethereally beautiful, but the ground around the base of the tree as well as it gets blanketed with fallen flowers. The East Coast Park has a number of trumpet trees and it's a treat to see the colourful carpet on the ground.

The blooms of the *Cratoxylum formosum*, or Pink Mempat tree are often confused with those of the trumpet tree, as they too have pink flowers. The difference is that these mildly fragrant flowers have small pink petals with yellow



Montage of the trumpet tree's flowers



Crowning glory of the Yellow Flame tree

centres and the blossoms grow in clusters on bare twigs. They remind one of cherry blossoms bursting into bloom at the start of spring. Natives of Southeast Asia, they are on the endangered list in Singapore and usually bloom in the dry months of February and March and then again in August and September.

Another tree found in abundance in the East Coast Park is the *Peltophorum pterocarpum* also known as *Peltophorum ferrugineum* or Yellow Flame tree, also native to Southeast Asia as well as northern Australia and Sri Lanka. It commonly grows along the coast in sandy or rocky areas. In other parts of Asia, it is popular for its shade and beauty and is cultivated along avenues as an ornamental tree. A medium tall tree with a wide-spreading, umbrella-shaped crown, the Yellow Flame tree grows to a height of about 20 metres. Its brilliant golden-yellow blossoms are small and fragrant. The petals are crinkled and wavy, resembling tissue paper. The flowers grow in clusters on long stalks and when in season, cover the tree's canopy with masses of yellow flowers, giving it a golden hue. After the flowering season, the blooms mature into fruit pods that are flat and thin, with a hue that is



Multicoloured hues of the Sea Almond tree's leaves



A Flame of the Forest tree

purplish-brown. They remain on the tree for several months before they finally drop off.

Delonix regia, or Flame of the Forest, is as the name suggests, known for its flowers' fiery colours, hues that add brilliance to the surroundings. This tree, with its broad, umbrella-shaped crown, is hard to miss when in full bloom as its faintly scented, bright scarlet flowers make it easily identifiable. The flowers grow in dense clusters and at times cover the tree's entire crown, giving it an exuberantly flamboyant appearance. The flower is unique – of its five petals, four are a dazzling scarlet while one has a white patch with streaks of red on it. The sepals are green on the outside and crimson on the inside. Originally from the island of Madagascar, the Flame of the Forest was introduced to Singapore in the early years of the 19th century and is today grown as an ornamental tree all over the island. It usually flowers after prolonged periods of dry weather. When in bloom, this tree adds eye-catching splendour to the areas where it grows.

The *Terminalia catappa* or Sea Almond tree catches one's attention not because of the bright flowers but because of its leaves; they are what change colour. This tall, pagoda-shaped tree, known locally as *Ketapang*, is found in the coastal areas of tropical Asia, northern Australia and Polynesia. When the leaves are about to shed they change tints and transmute from green to yellow to hues of maroon and red. The leaf shedding happens twice a year when fallen leaves and those left on the tree create brilliant colours that glow in the sunlight. When many of these trees grow in close proximity, one's eyes can feast on the beautiful earthy tones of the canopy, which seems to stretch far into the distance.

It is not just these trees that add richness to their surroundings; there are many other trees and shrubs that do this job, making a trip to the island's parks a must.

Shivani Kanwal Kulpati is a docent at the ACM and has been guiding since 2013.

Unless otherwise noted, photos by the author

Looking Back – Explore Singapore!

Members' Programmes 1996 – 2018

By Lim Chey Cheng

Explore Singapore! (ES!) programmes attract an average annual attendance of 400 members who participate in about 20 events. Apart from the summer and year-end breaks, ES! conducts two to three programmes a month. When FOM was founded 40 years ago, one of its stated goals was “to broaden members’ understanding of Asian arts, customs and culture”. The ES! committee has fulfilled and expanded this goal through the years.

When and how did ES! begin, what has it done and what has changed since its inception? Unfortunately FOM’s office does not have any records of its activities before 1998. However, its 25th anniversary (2003) booklet stated that the Members’ Programmes (MP) committee was formed in 1996 and, in October 2003, changed its name to Explore Singapore! Before the MP committee’s formal inauguration, a discussion group called *Thursday Mornings at my House* was introduced in 1989. This was probably the forerunner of MP/ES!

I have not been able to trace who the first committee members or what the first programmes were. The earliest member I contacted, Lindy Kerr (coordinator 1998 – mid 2002), joined the committee, chaired by Bobby Martini, in 1997. However, Lindy is uncertain as to whether Bobby was the first chair. According to Lindy, back then “the National Heritage Board was not focused on outreach, [and] general community interest in cultural [and heritage preservation] in Singapore was only just beginning. For FOM members, Monday Morning Lectures, docent training and activities such as MP provided valuable opportunities to explore and learn [about the history and culture of Singapore and the region]”

Initially Members’ Programmes was divided into three sub-groups of activities: *Discovering Singapore*, held on Thursday mornings; *Seminars*, two or three half-day events meant to provide participants with in-depth knowledge of a topic; and *Special Events*, luncheons, afternoon teas or dinners that incorporated a talk. In February 1999, a fourth group, *Collectors’ Forum*, was added. This provided participants with the opportunity to research and share their knowledge of collectibles, as well as visit collectors, dealers and exhibitions. Group members held their first meeting in March and thereafter monthly.

Some of the earliest *Discovering Singapore* events were tours of the former Bidadari Cemetery and Bukit Brown Cemetery, and activities to learn about the Samsui women, Chinese Opera and Peranakan culture.



Liz McKenzie guiding FOM members in Bukit Brown, courtesy of Liz McKenzie



Members at a Collectors’ Forum event on chapings, photo courtesy of Margaret White

MP/ES! can take pride in its role in sparking interest in cemetery tours and, in the case of Bukit Brown, its preservation. Long before Singaporeans became interested in Bukit Brown, committee member Liz McKenzie did pioneering research on it and fought against many obstacles to get it recognised as a place worthy of preservation for its historical and cultural value. Liz was a stalwart contributor to MP and conducted many tours. However, she is best remembered for her hugely popular tours of Bukit Brown, from April 1999 till she left Singapore in 2003.

Another cemetery enthusiast, Sue Williams, researched and conducted tours of Bidadari Cemetery before the graves were exhumed and the land redeveloped. Liz’s and Sue’s separate research findings were later incorporated into the book, *Spaces of the Dead – A Case from the Living*, published in 2011 by the Singapore Heritage Society.

Long-term FOM members will remember another stalwart, Liesel Strauss, who befriended the last few remaining Samsui women and introduced them to FOM members through MP.

MP’s *Seminars* included workshops on topics that ranged from photography (conducted by Lindy herself), etching and woodcuts, to beads and ethnic crafts, as well as food and cuisines such as the spices of Thailand. There was even a series of four ‘overseas’ seminars consisting of day trips to Nongsa, Batam, to learn about Lombok culture. After six



Introduction to Chinese Opera – FOM members practising the water sleeve movement, from FOM’s ES! files, source unknown

or seven years, around 2003, the seminars ceased owing to a lack of volunteers to organise them. Several committee members left the country in 2003 and there was a shortage of replacements.

Special Events were usually organised together with the Study Tours Committee and involved talks related to the tours. A highly successful event that I helped to organise was on Bhutan, based on a 2003 study tour. The evening programme of talks and slides, with wine and finger food, was attended by nearly 100 people. No more such events were organised after this.

Collectors' Forum also ended the same year. During its active years, members investigated many interesting collections, including exquisite old lace and antique lace-making tools, as well as antique *chapings* (or *capings* – modesty discs).

With only *Discovering Singapore* activities remaining, the committee decided to change the name of the committee from Members' Programmes to Explore Singapore! in October 2003. From then on, all programmes, with rare exceptions, were held on Thursday mornings and lasted two hours.

At its peak, between May 2001 and June 2002, MP conducted an astounding 53 programmes, including 11 Saturday/evening ones – more than one every week, attended by 1,008 participants.

The committee usually has eight to ten members of mixed nationalities, including a coordinator. The most challenging task has always been to find replacements whenever someone leaves. In the early years 'advertisements' for new committee members were placed in the newsletters. In more recent years, committee members have tried to recruit enthusiastic programme participants. Regular meetings are held monthly and all members help to identify, research and organise programmes three to four months in advance.



Liesel Strauss with Samsui woman, photo courtesy of Liesel Strauss

Many ex-committee members have fond memories of their experience in ES! Former FOM president Jane Iyer, who led the committee in 2002 and currently runs her own tour company said, "I loved working with the team, [and] researching interesting things about Singapore and meeting fascinating people. In many ways it's led me to what I do today."

For Louise Macul (member 2000 – 2004), "My greatest reward from working with MP was the chance to explore and develop new programmes to highlight many of the little-understood or obscure events, crafts or stories from Singapore and the region."

I was recruited into the committee by Marijke den Ouden, who had kept her old ES! files from the early 2000s and supplied me with useful information. She said, "Some of the best friendships during my first seven years in Singapore originated from the committee, it really was a great bunch of women."



Mirella Dicancro Moracchini (head of Collector's Forum) and Lindy Kerr (coordinator of Members' Programme), photo courtesy of Margaret White

For many years I enjoyed researching and organising the programmes. However when Mandy Bailey, the previous coordinator left, I had to take on the role. Although I am still coordinator, some of the administrative work is shared with a few other members.

Mandy's memories are of "feeling so privileged to attend meetings with such interesting people, like having tea with Iskandar Jalil and coffee and cake with Ketna Patel, and a massive sense of pride when we managed to get the first *Art on the MRT* programme arranged. ...I also have very fond memories of making rice dumplings at your house with your mother".

Members' Programmes/Explore Singapore!'s focus has remained largely unchanged over the years, but has come a long way in terms of its procedures. Registration forms used to be sent by snail mail with cheques, and sometimes cash, enclosed for payment. Frequent reminders showing members how to write cheques correctly were published in the newsletters. Committee members had to laboriously tabulate all registrations, noting down personal information, cheque numbers and bank names. Being totally IT inept in my first few years, I always found it a nightmare when, after spending hours at the computer, I found my tabulations suddenly disappearing when I pressed the wrong key. The new computerised system has alleviated most of the tedious work and is a boon to committee members.



Introduction to Peranakan Culture – from FOM's ES! file, source unknown

Many people are surprised at the ability of ES! to continually offer exciting new programmes. This is the pride of the committee – to provide opportunities for FOM members to dig deeper into this Little Red Dot.

I would like to thank all the people who provided me with information and photos for this article. My special thanks to Lindy Kerr, Liz McKenzie and Marijke den Ouden.

Lim Chey Cheng has been coordinator of Explore Singapore! since 2013. She joined the committee many years ago. Chey Cheng is also a docent at NMS, TPM and SYSNMH.

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Explore Singapore! organises events for FOM about every aspect of Singapore you can think of: architecture, food, furniture, batik, religions, Tai Chi and the list goes on. We organise the events as a team: at one time a couple of members make the necessary preparations, the next time other members take their turn. The good thing is that you can spend as much time with ES! as you have and as you want.

Right now we have a lot of very interesting subjects waiting to be turned into events. But we simply miss the people who could explore them together with us to make them real.

Explore Singapore! recruitment advertisement in the newsletter

Encoded Changes – the 72 Seasons of Japan

By Liisa Wihman

Frothy clouds of pink *sakura*, maple leaves bright enough to challenge the shiniest of *torii*-gates – when the season is right, images of the spring and autumn in Japan are so ubiquitous that they’ve almost become a cliché. They fill the pages of both tangible and virtual media, and adorn the surfaces of countless products, rendering them more appealing to the viewer and potential customer.

If there is a spring and an autumn, Japan must logically have a summer and a winter too, which brings us to four seasons in total. Those who have been living in Japan for a while might want to add a fifth: the hot and humid rainy period from late June to early July called *tsuyu* or *baiyu*, literally the ‘plum rain’, as these heavy downpours coincide with the ripening of plums. A closer look and one understands that this is only the beginning – as with so many things in Japan, just when you thought that you’d mastered something, the next level of knowledge or skill reveals itself.

Officially, Japan does have only four seasons, all of which are listed in the traditional Chinese-derived lunisolar calendar. Their names mark the onset of each of them – *Risshun* refers to the beginning of spring, *Rikka* to the beginning of summer, *Risshū* to the beginning of autumn, and *Rittō* to the beginning of winter. But definitions and their related seasons do not end here. Each of the four – *Risshun*, *Rikka*, *Risshū*, and *Rittō* – is further divided into six equal sections called *sekki*, which means that the lunisolar year consists of 24 *sekki*. With names such as *Usui* (Rainwater), *Keichitsu* (Insects awaken), *Bōshu* (Grain beards and seeds) and *Sōkō* (Frost falls), they record the passing of the seasons and at the same time highlight the important milestones of the old agricultural society of Japan.

However, the twenty-four *sekki* weren’t enough to handle the Japanese seasons in satisfactory detail, so each of them was further split into three phases, resulting in a total of 72 periods called *kō*, all lasting about five days. These 72 ‘micro-seasons’ track the subtle changes of Japan’s nature and weather throughout the year, highlighting their essence with poetically allusive names.



A view of the Imperial Palace Moat during sakura season

In spring, nature awakens with a *kō* called “East wind melts the ice” (February 4-8), after which “Bush warblers start singing in the mountains” (February 9-13). When “Silkworms start feasting on mulberry leaves” (May 21-25), then spring turns into early summer. Later on, “Rotten grass becomes fireflies” (June 11-15) evocatively refers to the unbearably hot and humid days of the Japanese midsummer. When the “Evening cicadas sing” (August 13-17) and “Dew glistens white on grass” (September 8-12), it is clear that autumn is imminent. And finally, there is no escape from the bone-chilling mid-winter when even the “Rainbows hide” (November 22-26) and “Deer shed antlers” (December 27-31).

With such sensitivity for the passing seasons, it is no surprise that they were early embraced in Japan as an endless source of inspiration for poetry, literature, arts and crafts. Already during the eighth century, letters were usually started with a reference to the current season and its telltale signs in nature, making the message more elegant and polite. From greetings and letters, seasonal expressions spread to other areas of Japanese culture and communication.



Autumn in Arisugawa Park

It is said that *waka*, the Japanese classical poem, became a major influence for how the seasons were expressed in the arts and crafts of Japan. Immensely popular, the terms and phrases from *waka* spread widely and turned into an ‘encoded language’, where weather conditions, plants, and animals became so tightly connected to a certain season that just a mention or visual hint of them revealed the time of the



The red berries of the firethorn, (*Pyracantha*), which is native to China and Japan and can be seen in mid-winter, photo by Andra Leo



Women dancing in pink kimonos during the sakura season



Picnicking in Hanami Arisugawa Park during the sakura season

year, for example, artworks depicting plum blossoms and bush warblers were instantly understood to refer to spring. In addition, seasonal expressions came to symbolize humans and their feelings, so expressions such as ‘autumn dew’ were perceived as a direct reference to tears, just as summer rains were linked to melancholy.

Of course certain phenomena such as the wind, animals, birds or many others, are present all-year-round, so they could be problematic as seasonal symbols. In these cases, their ‘seasonal affiliation’ was decided by when their perceived ‘poetic essence’ was highest. For example, deer and the moon became tightly linked with autumn since this was when the deer’s call was loudest and the moon looked the largest during harvest time.

To ensure the correct use of terms, thematically arranged poetry anthologies emerged as early as the eighth century. During the early Edo period (1603-1868), these were succeeded by poetic seasonal almanacs called *saijiki* that categorised seasonal words related to almost all aspects of nature and human activity. They became increasingly detailed over the centuries, so while the *Haikai Saijiki* from 1803 listed some 2,600 topics, the 1983 version contained over 5,000 seasonal words. In today’s highly urbanised and technological age, some words such as the one for the small cuckoo, have lost popularity. Still, some of the earliest seasonal markers, such as the cherry blossoms and autumn foliage, remain cultural heavyweights. As the almanacs have evolved with the times, contemporary words have been added. Excellent examples of modern ‘summer words’ are beer (*biru*), camping (*kyampu*), baseball night game (*naitaa*), sunburn (*hiyake*) and sunglasses (*sangurasu*).

The *saijiki* became an extensive and encoded representation of the seasons as connected to Japanese life. In addition, they provided a foundation for much of Japanese literary and visual culture, expressed through painting and other traditional arts such as ceramics, flower arrangement (*ikebana*) and the tea ceremony (*chanoyu*). Even items of daily life: the forms and designs of traditional sweet cakes (*wagashi*), the patterns and colour combinations of the kimono, the humble *furoshiki* cloths, used to wrapping and transporting clothes, gifts or other goods, were used to convey the seasonal changes in weather and nature.

Understanding this encoded visual language was of great significance as it provided an excellent opportunity to demonstrate one’s level of sophistication and elegance. Still, one needs to remember that utilising this cultural code was reserved for the middle and upper classes; labourers and peasants, that is, the majority who often lived their lives much closer to real nature than the well-off Japanese, could

not afford to spend time with luxuries such as *ikebana* or *chanoyu*, or to buy seasonally specific clothes and items.

Why this attachment to seasons? Some say it is based on the special closeness to nature of the Japanese people, springing from the agricultural roots of their culture. Or that it is a result of the ingenious Shinto religion, with rituals that have been tightly connected to agriculture and the seasons for more than a millennium, keeping the Japanese people acutely aware of nature’s changes as the year advances. While there might be no definite answer, it is certain that the encoded expressions for the seasons, derived from the *waka* and the *saijiki*, played a large role as they spread across different areas of Japanese culture. They provided, and still do, clear markers for what to watch for, enjoy and celebrate, making the annual journey through the months not just visually distinctive and poetic, but also concrete and predictable.

Today, over 94% of Japan’s population lives in tightly crowded cities. Many Japanese endure a long, congested commute between their homes and their workplaces; their days are spent in almost completely man-made environments, far from any “Bush warblers singing in the mountains”.



Wagashi sweets for the sakura season

But even now, seasons continue to play a huge part in their lives. When the *sakura* bloom or the maple leaves are ablaze, news sites daily report the best places for viewing, creating a frenzy in the most spectacular locations. During the steamy hot days of summer, many change into a breezy, traditional cotton kimono (*yukata*) and attend the countless seasonal festivals (*matsuri*). Throughout the year, carefully selected motifs in the arts, food and various products continue to convey the essence of each season, keeping the highly urbanised Japanese in touch with nature – however imaginary and far-removed from their daily lives.

(An excellent source for more information - *Japan and the Culture of the four Seasons. Nature, Literature and the Arts*, Shirane, Haruo, Columbia University Press, New York, 2012)

Unless otherwise noted, photos by the author

Amorous Gods and a Giant Catfish

The Many Shakers of the Japanese Islands

By Liisa Wihman



The thunder god Kashima is pinning the giant catfish Namazu in place with a huge stone. If Kashima got distracted or skipped his duty, Namazu moved its tail and caused earthquakes in the human world. Japanese woodblock print from 1855. (Image from: Pictures from History.)

On any given day some 20 earthquakes shake the islands of Japan. Most of them are so small that they pass without anyone raising an eyebrow. Even the slightly larger ones that would take down large buildings elsewhere usually just cause ripples in one's teacup, thanks to the excellent Japanese skills of constructing earthquake-safe buildings. Even so, a couple of large catastrophes happen each century, leaving devastation and sorrow in their wake. As records of earthquakes in Japan have been kept since 481 CE, these horrific events and their consequences can be researched in way not possible anywhere else in the world.

As humans, we are usually not content with just shrugging our shoulders and moving on when catastrophes happen. Instead, we want to find a culprit for them and if none can be found or explained with our five senses, we reach into our imaginations to fill the void. Figuring out 'why', even when the reason is completely out of our control, seems to be a universal human trait when confronted by disasters of any size.

Given the frequency of the shaking in Japan, it is no surprise that the theories behind the phenomenon have also been plentiful. Many of the earliest theories were

'movement related', with something shaking the earth from below. For example, ancient Japanese folk stories attributed the moving of the earth to the wild sex acts of male and female deities, with their body parts hitting the ground from underneath. Whether tiny new gods were thought to be created in the process, is unknown. Another theory was that human ancestors were carelessly wandering around in the underworld, smashing the earth's crust, their ceiling, as they went.

Halfway through the first millennium, during the Asuka period (552-646 CE), not only Buddhism and Confucianism were transmitted from China to Japan, but also knowledge about the ancient Chinese principles of *yin-yang* and the five elements, together with a vast array of learning connected to them. According to Chinese philosophy, *yin* and *yang* are two complementary opposing forces that regulate everything in the universe and make themselves manifest in the world through the five elements of water, fire, metal, earth and wood.

Applied to countless fields, from astronomy, fortune-telling and calendar-making to medicine and cooking, the principles of *yin* and *yang* with their five elements, were also thought to explain the various phenomena of the natural

world. Earthquakes for example, were thought to be caused by a temporary imbalance of the *yin* and *yang* within the earth. When everything is calm, water is the master of the subterranean environment, since according to the element theory, water (which is purely *yin*) overcomes fire (thought to be purely *yang*). This normal, calm state is disturbed when fire occasionally overcomes the underground water, resulting in earthquakes.

Studying and understanding the Chinese texts was mainly reserved for the learned classes, Buddhist monks and the ruling elites. This meant that folk explanations co-existed in Japan with the *yin* and *yang* theories of the five elements. Often, printed news-sheets explained earthquakes with the *yin* and *yang* forces but combined their information with creatures or deities from folk stories – used as metaphors and incorporated as colourful illustrations, they made the contents easier to understand for less sophisticated readers.

During the 18th century, a giant catfish called Namazu became one of the most popular earthquake metaphors. It is still in frequent use today, for example, as the logotype of a Japanese earthquake warning app and as various anime figures. Its origins reach to the early Edo period (1603-1868), when the idea that a giant dragon caused earthquakes by moving underground became common. Dragons appeared in native Japanese folklore and later merged with imported legends and beliefs from China, Korea and even India. While dragons were usually considered powerful and protective creatures that bring rain, in Buddhist-influenced earthquake divination, the dragon deity could cause earthquakes.

The dragon gradually transformed into Namazu, the giant catfish. As the story went, only the thunder god Kashima could keep Namazu in place with a heavy stone. However, if Kashima got distracted or otherwise skipped this duty, Namazu swiftly took the opportunity to move his tail, which resulted in earthquakes in the human world. As academic discussions of that time asserted, catfish were strongly *yang* creatures living in the highly *yin* environment of water, which made them a perfect metaphor for the more ‘scientific’ theory of the *yin* and *yang* imbalance that caused earthquakes.

However, all these mechanical (even if imaginary) reasons were not enough to satisfy the Japanese mind about why the earth shook, often with such horrific consequences. The difficulty seemed to be in accepting that these events could simply be random. This is when moral explanations came into consideration, combined with the ever-so-powerful theory of *yin* and *yang*.

As the ancient Chinese theories went, everything in existence is created from divine breath, or life force, called *qi*. This divine breath is the source of the two complementary forces of *yin* and *yang*, which must always be in balance and harmony – as already noted in the afore-mentioned underground water and fire theories. The free flow of both forces was thought to be vital – anything preventing this would lead to blockages, just as the blockage of blood or other fluids in the body leads to strokes, constipation and other illnesses. Not just the human body, but society, nature and the whole cosmos were subordinated to this order.

This meant that earthquakes could be seen as a purposeful attempt by cosmic forces to correct some imbalance in society. A great example of this thinking comes from the scholar *Kaibara Ekken* (1630–1714), who wrote during the highly affluent mid-Edo period:

“If the flow of material force (*qi*) through heaven and earth is obstructed, abnormalities arise, causing natural disasters such as violent windstorms, floods and droughts, and earthquakes. If the things of the world are long collected together, such obstruction is inevitable. In humans, if the blood, vital essence (*qi*), food and drink do not circulate and



The god Kashima pinning Namazu, the giant catfish, down with a stone. When Kashima's concentration slipped or he took a break, Namazu moved, causing earthquakes in our world. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

flow, the result is disease. Likewise, if vast material wealth is collected in one place and not permitted to benefit and enrich others, disaster will strike later”.

Even the moral decay of society, an incompetent ruler or a corrupt government, could be seen as constipation in the social body, with the earthquake acting as a purgative medicine administered by the universe. The rationale here was that while death strikes all classes equally, the most affluent members of the society lose the most owing to the shaking and the ensuing fires that mean they have to rebuild their vast and expensive dwellings. At the same time, manual labourers, shopkeepers, workers in the construction trades and other ordinary people actually benefited as new work opportunities arose because of reconstruction work.

It was not until the late 1960s that the theory of plate tectonics was officially accepted by an international body of researchers, but only after heated discussions during which its opponents declared it to be as imaginary as the Namazu legend. Japan was confirmed as being situated over four tectonic plates – the North American, the Eurasian, the Philippine Sea and the Pacific Plates – each of them moving from and into each other according to their own rhythm with the islands of Japan perching on top of a trio of unstable fault-lines. The frequent earthquakes that have been an immutable part of life in Japan since ancient times, had their scientific explanation, finally retiring the gods from their alleged amorous pastimes and proving poor Namazu innocent of any mischief.

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Japan's Feudal-Era Castles

By Andra Leo

For many visitors Japan evokes various mental images, the foremost among them often being the *sakura*, or cherry blossom, whose ethereally delicate, pink flowers make their appearance in early spring. The other image that defines Japan is that of its graceful white castles, their main towers rising up to five storeys in height, dominating their surroundings from atop sloping stone walls and surrounded by a moat. Not all were built on hills or outcrops, some were at sea level, built on a plain, but the majority were constructed in commanding locations and surrounded by almost impenetrable walls made of massive stones. Their other notable feature was the ingenious network of gates, planned to hold back attacking armies by trapping them between high ramparts dominated by towers from which arrows rained down upon the invaders. If they made it through a gate, the invaders faced more high stone walls and sharp turns that led to the next massive fortified gate.

The style of castle that can still be seen today evolved

from the wooden fortresses that had existed before that. The introduction of stone as a building material took care of issues such as soil erosion and weather damage, problems that had plagued the earlier wooden structures. The first of these improved fortifications made their appearance during the late 16th and early 17th century. Stone allowed castle designers to raise structures that earlier would have been considered impossible. The stone bases sloped dramatically outwards, so as to hold the inner core (the multi-storeyed wooden keep) and its weight. There was also the constant threat of earthquakes, but the gently sloping walls absorbed shocks very well. In the case of fortresses built at ground level, such as Osaka Castle, the platforms on which the strongholds were built had to be artificially created. The oldest original keep is probably beautiful Matsumoto, in Nagano. It can be reliably dated to 1597. This castle is among nine others that I visited and photographed during my travels in Japan.



One of Japan's most famous landmarks, Osaka Castle stands on two raised platforms of landfill; the central tower, or keep, is five storeys on the outside and eight on the inside. Toyotomi Hideyoshi began its construction in 1583 and completed the castle in 1597. However, it was burned to the ground during an attack in 1615. A new structure was built in 1630, but in 1660 lightning struck and again the castle burned down. Similar disasters followed in later years. The castle's final reconstruction was completed in 1997, restoring the main tower to its Edo-era splendour. The castle is a concrete reproduction and today it's a museum featuring Hideyoshi's history.



Nijo Castle was built in 1603 as the Kyoto residence of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first shogun of the Edo Period (1603-1867). His grandson Iemitsu completed the castle's palace buildings 23 years later and further expanded the castle by adding a five-storey keep. After the Tokugawa Shogunate fell in 1867, Nijo Castle was used as an imperial palace, before being donated to the city and opened up to the public as a historical site. Its palace buildings are arguably the best surviving examples of the palace architecture of Japan's feudal era.



Kanazawa Castle is a large, partially restored castle and was the headquarters of the Kaga Domain, ruled by the Maeda clan for 14 generations until the Meiji Restoration in 1871. After this, the castle site was turned over to the Imperial Japanese Army in 1871 and served as headquarters of the army's ninth division. Most of the surviving structures in the Ni-no-maru (second circle) enclosure were destroyed in a fire in 1881. From 1949 to 1989, a portion of the site was turned over to Kanazawa University, then in 2008, the castle was designated a National Historical Site. Most of the current buildings are reconstructions, based on how the castle looked in the 1850s.



Matsuyama Castle, in Kyushu, is one of Japan's 12 'original castles', that is, castles that have survived the post-feudal era (since 1868) intact. It is also one of the most complex and interesting castles in the country and is located on Mount Katsuyama, a steep hill in the city centre that provides visitors with a bird's eye view of the Seto Inland Sea. Constructed between 1602 and 1628, in 1635 the castle was assigned to a branch of the Matsudaira family, relatives of the ruling Tokugawa, and remained in their hands until the end of the feudal era. The current three-storey castle tower was constructed in 1820, after the original five-storey one was destroyed by lightning.



Kochi is another of Japan's 12 original castles, surviving fires, wars and other catastrophes of the post-feudal age. It is in Kochi, Kyushu Island, and was first constructed between 1601 and 1611. However, most of its buildings date from 1748 when they were reconstructed after a fire. A unique feature of this castle is that its main tower (donjon) was not only used for military purposes, but also as a residence. In most other castles, the lords resided in separate buildings rather than in the castle keep. The castle's wooden interior maintains the appearance of its Edo period origins.



Okayama Castle was begun by Ukita Naoie in 1573 and completed by his son Hideie in 1597. Three years later, Hideie sided with the ill-fated Toyotomi clan at the Battle of Sekigahara, was captured by the Tokugawa clan and exiled. The castle and its surrounding fiefdoms were given to Kobayakawa Hideaki as spoils of war. The period's architecture is exemplified on the walls of the castle tower (Tenshukaku); its boards were painted with black lacquer, so the castle came to be known as the Crow Castle (Ujo).



Takamatsu (aka Tamamo) Castle was built on flat ground in 1590, alongside the Seto Inland Sea – one of only three such 'water castles' in Japan. The Matsudaira clan governed for 228 years, through 11 generations, but this ended with the Hanseki-hoka – the return of registers to the emperor in 1869, the second year of the Meiji era, when the castle keep was torn down. It is currently being reconstructed, although only the foundation has been completed to date. The castle grounds, known as Tamamo Park, have been open to the public since May 1955.



Tokushima Castle, in Kyushu, was once a hilltop castle built around 1585, with a keep dominating the town below. Today nothing remains of its buildings – where they had once been, is now an almost featureless flat space at the summit of Inoyama Hill. The castle lasted eight years into the Meiji era before being demolished in 1875. Only the entrance gate (Washi-mon) survived, but was destroyed during a WWII air raid in July 1945. It was rebuilt in 1989. What does remain and is still interesting for a visitor, are the massive stone walls at the base of the hill and the park around it.



All that's left of the Uwajima Castle complex in Kyushu is its three-storey tower – nothing much else remains, just some rocks indicating old foundations. Uwajima developed into the central city in southwest Ehime after the Date family took over this region as the lords of the feudal-era Uwajima clan in the early 17th century. The castle was the symbol of the Dates' reign and its castle tower is one of only 12 surviving towers built in the Edo Period (1603-1868). It is therefore, an important cultural asset. The castle was abandoned in 1900 and in 1945, most of its turrets and gates were torn down.



Beautiful Matsumoto in Nagano is one of the most complete of Japan's original castles. It is a hirajiro – a castle built on a plain. Matsumoto Castle is unique for having a secondary donjon and a turret adjoined to its main keep. The main structures, with their characteristic black wainscoting, were built between 1592 and 1614. The castle's wooden interior provides an authentic experience, unlike that in castles rebuilt of ferro-concrete. Interesting features include steep wooden stairs, openings for dropping stones onto invaders and for archers, as well as an observation deck at the top of the main keep.

Andra Leo is a travel and history enthusiast. She enjoys writing about her adventures and producing photo journals as records of all she's seen and learned.

Photos by the author



Exploring Hokkaido in Spring

By Margaret White

The most northern prefecture of Japan, the island of Hokkaido, is the least visited by travellers and could be viewed as Japan's last frontier. However, there are many reasons why one might consider spending some time here – Hokkaido's abundant beauty, its cool climate and lovely spring and summer. From the delicate birch and evergreen conifer forests, the snow-capped mountains, to its volcanic plateaus which open to wide vistas that roll down to coastal plains, there is much to savour. Wildlife also abounds on Japan's least populated island and includes the renowned and protected red-crowned cranes as well as the Ussuri brown bears.

My fellow travellers opted to self-drive and we quickly discovered that the Japanese GPS system does not work with addresses, but with telephone numbers. This approach dates from former times when homes were given addresses according to when they were built. The Japanese GPS system seems superior to ours in many ways, as clear directions that include upcoming traffic jams, road works and the like, are provided in a timely manner.

Hokkaido's proximity to Russia has significantly influenced its history and signs of that legacy remain. In Otaru, to the northwest of the capital, Sapporo, Russian is the second language spoken and streets are signposted in both Russian and Japanese. In the late 1800s, Otaru served as a major port, trading in herring and whales. Old, squat warehouses made of the local stone hug the canal banks and waterfront. Large window shutters and huge decorated iron doors offered security and protection from fierce weather. Snow retarders stud rooftops. Inside, the walls, elaborate rafters and ceilings, now darkened with smoke, are redolent of fish from the many meals consumed in the repurposed buildings. Using tongs and scissors, you can cook your own abalone, clams, squid, scallops, smelt, salmon, mackerel and vegetables over a coal *hibachi* sunk into an old, wooden table.

Before recorded history, Hokkaido was settled by the Ainu, Nivkh and Orok peoples. At present, in the Shiraoi District, 24,000 indigenous Ainu (meaning 'the end of the earth') cling tenaciously to their cultural identity and language. The Ainu inhabited southern Sakhalin and Chishima Island before they were developed by Russian and Japanese settlers. At the Ainu Museum in Poroto Kotan, one can listen to ancient folk songs and watch traditional dances accompanied by a *mukkari* (mouth harp). In 1984, these dances were listed as part of Japan's intangible cultural

heritage. Thatched *cises* (houses) exhibit various aspects of Ainu life. Traditional customs such as drying salmon, the craft of millet curling and the weaving and embroidery of boldly coloured motifs on textiles seem reminiscent of those of New Zealand's Maoris and Vietnam's Hmong.

Arriving at the small town of Muroran on the south coast, we found the weather biting cold and windy. The hotel's manager was perplexed when we inquired about parking because we had driven. After much discussion, we eventually squeezed our large vehicle into someone's tiny backyard. A brisk walk led us to a cosy, traditional inn where we were seated right at the back away from other customers. As no English was spoken, the locals were much amused by our hand gestures and drawings to illustrate which dishes we wanted. Our delicious *yakitori* supper was just right for a chilly evening.

Meandering along scenic coastal roads fringed with beaches of grey, volcanic sands, the numerous seawalls and breakwaters are frequently signposted with tsunami warnings, reminding us of Japan's unstable geological position. Small fishing villages have many Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, both large and small, punctuating the high ground. The devout and the keen can scale steps to worship or contemplate the surrounding landscape. In spring, one can also eat some of the best-tasting strawberries ever, not to mention the rich, creamy ice cream of milk from Hokkaido's dairy cows. En route to Hakodate, we traversed mountains clothed in a tracery of fresh, spring foliage, cherry blossoms and conifers and glimpsed the still volcanically active Mount Koma in the distance. A lone sea eagle soared with the currents above serene Lake Onuma.

Hakodate, on the southwest peninsula, played an important



Seafood meal inside a warehouse, Otaru



Warehouses along the canal at Otaru



Ainu women embroidering at Poroto Kotan



Shinto shrine along the west coast Hokkaido



Lake Onuma with Mount Koma in the distance

role historically as one of the first treaty ports, following the opening of Japan by American Commodore Perry in 1854. In 1858, the US-Japan Treaty of Amity and Commerce was signed and special areas for foreigners were designated, even down to a 'red light' district. Leading up to the Meiji Restoration, the Tokugawa Shogunate realised that there was a need to prepare northern defences against a possible Russian invasion and took over most of *Ezochi* (Hokkaido).

Around 1866, the new Meiji government began land reclamation in Hokkaido as part of the nation's modernisation policy. This development was regarded as essential to Japan's security and defence. In 1868, during the so-called 'Hakodate War', inside Goryokaku fort, 3,000 people resisted the abolition of the shogunate under the reforms of the Meiji Restoration. The star-shaped fort is unusual for being the first and largest western-style fort built in Japan. Its walls are five metres high and enclose 25 hectares that house government officials for Hakodate's administration and to deal with commerce and foreign affairs.

In 1869, *Ezochi* was put under the control of the Hakodate Prefectural Government as the Japanese were concerned that Russia would extend its control of the Far East. The full-scale development of Hokkaido began with the establishment of the *Kaitakushi* (Development Commission). Railways and roads extended throughout the wilderness as more and more people and goods were transported through ports. The government invited farmer soldiers and other immigrants from across the nation to promote the development of the wild land.

Today, Hakodate bustles with tourists who are arriving via a new Shinkansen line. The Goryokaku fort is much more peaceful now with its 1,500 venerable cherry trees and their gnarled trunks, the multi-hued *kurume* and *mollis* azaleas, sinuous wisteria and fastidiously manicured pines in the grounds. Overshadowed by Mt Hakodate, visitors climb up



Goryokaku Fort, Hakodate

steep streets from the port to Motomachi, the site favoured by foreign residents in the 19th century including the British Consulate. Tales of a colourful past abound. Points of interest are the Russian Orthodox Church (the first Christian church in Japan after the country's opening) and the Chinese (*Huiguan*) Memorial Hall.



Asaichi Market

Agriculture and other primary industries play an important role in Hokkaido's economy as do marine products and aquaculture. Hakodate's thriving, morning *Asaichi* (fresh fish market) entices both locals and visitors and has all manner of seafood, including octopus, crabs, sea urchin, squid and canned whale meat for sale. Hawkers in indigo-dyed aprons that sport business logos, spruik their wares, doing their best to out-shout each other. You can sit down for a *donburi* rice bowl while absorbing the bustling atmosphere. All in all, we enjoyed a slightly different Japan than that experienced by many travellers.

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Margaret White has an MA in Southeast Asian Studies from the National University of Singapore and has been a keen traveller through Asia for the past three decades. She enjoys writing and illustrating her travel journals.

Photos courtesy of the author

SCRAPS - Waste Not Want Not

By Seema Shah

Recycle. Repurpose. Repair. Words we are all too familiar with and which in our daily lives translate to us carrying reusable grocery bags or wearing an upcycled sari necklace. My recent visit to the Textile Museum in Washington DC to view the recently concluded exhibition titled *SCRAPS: Fashion, Textiles and Creative Reuse*, threw a whole new light on these concepts.

The exhibition focuses on textile waste and highlights the works of three designer-entrepreneurs who have, through innovation and sophisticated design, elevated humble scraps into new and usable materials.

Having grown up in India where the women in our household were constantly advocating the merits of thrift and recycling, this to me didn't seem to be a terribly novel idea. I had seen many a cloth take on multiple lives before it was grudgingly discarded. But the staggering statistics of environmental pollution caused by the textile industry (second only to the oil industry) caught my attention. The United States alone accounts for about 21 million pounds of household textiles going to landfills. The United Kingdom sends more than 70 percent of used clothing overseas, where the items are sold to emerging countries. This lucrative trade in secondhand clothing has over the years been responsible for the decline in textile production and indigenous practices in these developing nations.

Clothing can be recycled into high quality fibres, but the process is a complicated one, as most fabrics in the modern world are blends of different fibres. It also involves the laborious process of the removal of zippers, linings, buttons etc.



Recycled Jamdani panel, designed by Christina Kim



Jamdani skirt designed by Christina Kim of *dosa inc.*

The three designers whose works were showcased in this exhibition are able to look at the potential in scraps and from the chaos of tangled fibre generate something from nothing. All three share a deep respect for the history and tradition of textiles and have been inspired by waste material that has been generated at different stages of textile production.

Christina Kim is the founder of the Los Angeles based *dosa inc.* Her designs draw from traditional textile cultures, especially India and Oaxaca. Kim is widely recognised for her sustainable design practices and was named one of TIME magazine's

Innovators of the Year in 2003. Using the Indian *Jamdani* sari from West Bengal as her raw material, she reconstitutes it into a whole new cloth. On her visit to India in 1996, she experienced first-hand the time and effort it took to create these handmade textiles. Woven on a pit loom, the patterns on these diaphanous saris are created with an extra weft using fine needles such as spindles. Over six years, she had purchased and used over 12,000 metres of *jamdani* to produce 4,700 garments, working with local women. Pushing her creative boundaries even further, she saved end pieces and scraps from her clothing production and took them



Applique artisans from Gujarat laying out scraps



Jamdani scraps sewn to make amulets



SCRAPS installation



Kibiso bundles - yarn spun from the outermost layer of the cocoon, photo by the author



Dobby-loom-woven raw silk and kibiso, designed by Reiko Sudo

to Gujarat, where she encouraged the local artisans to use their traditional appliqué techniques on these Bengali textile scraps to create re-engineered textile panels. The panels were then sent to Los Angeles to produce garments such as skirts and dresses or used as curtains and bed hangings. Even the tiniest of these beautiful *jamdani* scraps were further utilised by making amulets and, enclosed inside each one, there was a handwritten Hindu blessing.

Reiko Sudo is one of Japan's most experimental contemporary textile designers and managing director of NUNO, a company that creates products of remarkable creativity and design. Since 2007, Sudo has ingeniously repurposed several types of silk waste generated by the industrial silk industry. In the production of high-grade commercial silk fibre, filaments from several cocoons are joined into a mile-long thread and wound onto a small reel (silk reeling). Waste is generated at almost every stage of this process. Sudo focused initially on the discarded *kibiso*, a tangled mass of sticky filaments brushed from the outermost layer of the silk cocoons. She saw the potential in this waste as it contains long sections of filament that can be processed into yarn for hand-weaving. The coarse fibre generated, too rough for



Textured, handwoven textiles created by Sudo using kibiso, photo by the author

industrial looms, is handwoven into high-end textiles. Sudo uses *kibiso's* UV locking properties to make hats, parasols and scarves. By upcycling the *kibiso* into textiles, Sudo has not only kept them out of landfills, but also offered employment to retired silk weavers in the region. She has also ensured the preservation of the cultural traditions of her Japanese ancestors, for whom the *kibiso* was an important resource.

Italian designer Luisa Cevese loves waste. A self-taught textile designer, her work in Milan's silk industry made her acutely aware of the large quantity of textile waste produced. In industrial weaving, the weft is shot across on a jet of air, leaving behind a 'tail' on each side of the woven fabric, which is cut by a blade running alongside. She was drawn to this jumble of luxury silk selvages and after attending a seminar on plastic technologies, envisioned the potential to combine plastic with textile waste to create a hybrid 'third material' from which she makes waterproof bags and wallets. Her emphasis is to avoid generating further waste in the production process by manufacturing to order and by adopting a more relaxed approach to quality control by accepting imperfections as part of a hand-intensive process.



Darning samples turned into artworks, highlighting the need to mend and keep what we have

I left with a renewed respect for the works of these immensely talented women, who made me reflect on a time when textiles were not mass-produced and one honoured beautiful craftsmanship by repairing, mending and reusing garments. I was also filled with a sense of gratitude for my elders back home in India. They have always taught us to value and cherish our environment, reminding us that a little could go a long way if used respectfully.

What made the visit even more special was receiving a copy of the exhibition catalogue, bound in its own unique discarded Indian woodblock-printed textile.

Seema Shah is a textile enthusiast and collects traditional Indian cloths that are repositories of cultural beliefs. She is currently living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



Industrial scraps collected, sorted and turned into finished products designed by Louisa Cevese

Unless otherwise noted, photos courtesy of The Cooper Hewitt Endowment Fund

The Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple

Redevelopment and Renewal

By Jyoti Ramesh

In 1855, a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu was completed on land purchased for about 26 rupees and 8 annas (Indian currency equivalent to 50 cents today) from the British East India Company in Singapore. The principal deity in this temple was Lord Narasimha, the ferocious half-man, half-lion form of Lord Vishnu. Narasimha is worshipped for his victory over evil when he destroyed an *asura* (an evil being) by using shrewd stratagems, so the *asura's* protective spell could no longer work.

In the beginning, the Narasinga Perumal temple had only a *mandapam* (main hall) and a large pond fed by a tributary of the Rochor River and was surrounded by vegetable gardens. Devotees bathed in the pond in the mornings and after prayers. It was only from 1914-19 that a moderately ornate shrine was built with idols imported from India. In 1952, redevelopment works started since the structure was considered unsafe. Indian community leader, textile king of Serangoon Road and philanthropist, Mr P Govindasamy Pillay, financed much of the redevelopment works, including a wedding hall, and the entire temple project was completed in 1966.

At this point, community elders advised that the main deity of the temple be changed from the fierce Sri Narasimha to the gracious Sri Srinivasa Perumal. The statue of Sri Narasimha was laid to rest in the well in the temple; the well was subsequently sealed.

Flash forward 52 years to April 2018, and No 397 Serangoon Road was buzzing; the positive energy in the area charged the atmosphere with joy and gratitude. The occasion was the *Maha Samprokshanam* (*maha*: great; *prokshanam*: sprinkling) of the 164-year-old Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple. This ceremony of consecrating the temple is also called *Maha Kumbhabhishekan* (*kumbha*: sacred pot; *abhishekan*: another word for the ritual sprinkling). The elaborate ceremony is meant to re-sanctify, re-energise and homogenise the divine powers of the deities within the temple. Renovations take place every 12 years; the Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple last underwent a facelift in 2005.

The process for the re-consecration of a temple is considerably challenging as devotees must have uninterrupted worship while renovation and construction

are carried out. The *Agama Shastra* covers guidelines on this and includes the elaborate ceremonies that are involved in the *Maha Kumbhabhishekan*. *Agama Shastra* refers to a compendium of the codes of worship of divinity that have come down as tradition. Rules for constructing temples and religious practices are laid down in these classical texts, which deal with the philosophy and spiritual knowledge behind the worship of the deity, the mental discipline required for this worship, and the specifics of worship.

Since the temple is a gazetted national monument (1978), the restoration plan began two and a half years ago, not only adhering to *Agamic* rules, but obtaining the approval of the Preservation of Sites and Monuments division of the National Heritage Board.

About six months ahead of the *Maha Kumbhabhishekan* day, the deities were moved to a temporary location called *baalaalayam* (literally meaning mini house). This was done via prayers and fire rituals that first transfer the divine presence from the main idols to a sacred pot (*kumbham*). Once the idols were moved to the temporary location, the divinity was transferred back to the idol from the *kumbham* and daily worship continued uninterrupted in the temporary location.

In the meantime, renovation, repair and redecoration works were carried out in the sanctums and other areas of the temple. Mr Anand s/o Sivapragasam, a soft-spoken engineering graduate from Bharathidasan University in Tamil Nadu (India) was the chief *sthapathi* (sculptural consultant) on this project. A *sthapathi* is expected to have knowledge of *Vaastu Shastra* (theoretical and scriptural guidelines to architecture) and *Shilpa Shastra* (the science and art of sacred sculpture), in addition to religious ceremonies attached to the consecration of temples. Mr Anand's family has been in this field for nine generations and has a team of more than 150 specialists in cement work, stone work, painting, brickwork etc.

Most of the repair work, he said, was focused on weathering and damage caused by the elements, plants and vermin, involving patching up cracks, plugging and treating water seepage, and clearing weeds and vegetation. Worn-out or damaged granite tiles were replaced, and drainage and waterproofing works were carried out. The main flagpole, the teak *divajasthambam*, with copper sheeting, was plated with gold. All the decorative elements in the ceilings, walls and towers were repainted by experts. The painting was done



Anand Sthapathi at the rajagopuram of the temple, photo by the author



A view of the yaagasalai, photo by the author



Bhoomi Puja being performed to honour Mother Earth before construction work starts

with a set of five base colours, known as *panchavarna* –yellow, green, red, white and black (indigo). Only herbal and natural ingredients were used in the cleaning and pest-control treatments, including a favourite in South Indian kitchens, asafoetida; most of the techniques having been sourced from ancient Hindu scriptures. The only structural change within the temple was to move the shrine of Garuda (the mount of Lord Vishnu, which faces the main sanctum) back a few feet. Kitchens and dining areas for devotees were expanded and renovated in this round of redevelopment, which came in at a cost of about SG\$4 million.

While these renovations were taking place, the religious ceremonies continued. The 48-day *Yantra puja* was conducted twice daily. *Yantram* is the channel of power for the deities and consists of a gold sheet with important Sanskrit scriptures that is placed in the deity's pedestal.

A *yaagasalai* (integral prayer hall) was constructed in the nearby open field by specialist sculptors about a month before the main event and sanctified with prayers.

This hall was where the main fire rituals in 24 fire pits were conducted. The fires for these rituals were ignited according to *Agamic* practices using wood from a *peepal* (sacred fig) tree and elaborate rituals were conducted by priests invited from India for the occasion. Two important and elaborate ceremonies took place in the temple to transfer the divine powers of the deity to the sacred vessel (*Kalakarshanam*) and then to bring the *kumbham* in a procession and place them in the prayer hall (*Kumbhasthapanam*) five days before the *Maha Kumbhabhishekam*.

Closer to the date, the *Ratnanyasam* ceremony allowed devotees to step inside the main temple's sanctum sanctorum in order to place jewels inside the deities' pedestal base before the idols were installed. The temple created special lotus and *tulsi* leaf (holy basil) pieces in silver for devotees to offer. The *yanthram* sheets were then placed on top of these before the deities were reinstalled.

A mixture known as *Ashtabandhana* (*Ashta* - eight; *Bandhana* - binding) was used to fix the idol to the base. It typically contains natural ingredients such as finely-



The main deity, Sri Srinivasa Perumal



The kumbham representing each deity in procession to the temple on the morning of the Maha Samprokshanam

powdered conch, gall-nut, sealing wax, gooseberry, dammar resin, cotton, gravel and holy water. The modern scientist would perhaps analyse it thus: a mix of resin, fillers, fibre reinforcement, adhesive base and catalysts, converging into a thixotropic adhesive sealant.

The *Maha Samprokshanam* of Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple took place at the auspicious time of 10:50 am on Sunday, 22 April 2018. The holy vessels were taken in a procession from the *yaagasalai* to the temple. The pinnacles on the bright and glistening *rajagopuram* (the monumental five-tiered entranceway depicting various forms of Lord Vishnu) and *vimanam* (the tower above each sanctum) were reenergised with the holy water. With the chanting of auspicious chants and benedictions, accompanied by festive music from the *nadaswaram* and the *thavil*, and the devout prayers of 40,000 worshippers, the re-consecration ceremony was completed.



Installing the deity the day before the Maha Samprokshanam

The *Agama Shastra* says the *Kumbhabhishekam* is conducted to eradicate all illness, to obtain the merits of the various public prayers and to derive rich benefits for the well-being and healthy propagation of progeny, for the devotees as well as society. Truly, a universal benediction that resonates with all.

Jyoti Ramesh is a docent at the Indian Heritage Centre and the National Museum of Singapore. She also guides the Little India Heritage Trails.

Unless otherwise noted, photos courtesy of the Hindu Endowment Board

Imaginarium

– Into the Space of Time

By Isabel Urrutia and Magdalene Ho

During the school holiday period, the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) presents its annual family-friendly exhibition *Imaginarium*, its eighth year of revealing SAM's fun and playful facets and transforming the 8Q building into a wonderland. This year's theme is space and time – 10 international artists from Japan, Australia, Indonesia, Philippines, France, the Netherlands and Singapore have created beautiful and fantastic works based on the concept of time.

As you enter this wonderful world, you are presented with artworks that subtly ask questions such as, "Is time perceived differently by each of us? Do we really 'waste' time? How do we preserve moments? Are memories real and spontaneous?" The works range from drawings to videos and to interactive installations. Each one calls us to take time to discover and engage. And most importantly, each one has a beautiful message to share with the young ones.



Ronald Apriyan's *Song of Life (Bintang Kecil)*

FOM docents have already guided several groups of students, have loved seeing their eyes sparkle with joy and watched them jumping up and down with Japanese artist Mayuko Kanazawa's artwork while travelling through Japan's four seasons or interacting with the mutoscopes, full of images from space exploration films, in Boedi Widjaja's immersive artwork or walking around the glowing and cosmic grass in Matthew Sia's installation, among others. In all the galleries you can hear "wow" and "cool!" from their excited voices. As adults, we are reminded how important and much more fun it is to look at art through our "children eyes".

The third floor at 8Q presents you with *Momentarium*, an installation by French video artist Stephane Masson.



Mayuko Kanazawa's *Utsuroi Iroha, travelling through the seasons and time*



Stephane Masson's *Momentarium*

It consists of 280 glass jars that capture miniature video projections of a person in various sequences and movements. These people were volunteers from Singapore, including several of our own docents. The fun part to this artwork is the two cameras, which can record visitors' faces. Their images are captured and shown in the jars.

On the top floor, Singaporean artist Lee Mei Ling transports us to the time when we played with 'connect the dot' books. Her paintings slowly transform (in video) a baby's picture to an old person's, charting the progress of life and the passage of time, as the 'dots' are joined.

These artistic interventions bring a moment of magic and a bit of craziness into our everyday lives. They also make us ponder the deeper meaning of the passing of time and how we can maintain our memories and our bonds with our loved ones. We believe that art can be inspiring, thought-provoking and fun, all at the same time.

Isabel Urrutia and Magdalene Ho are SAM Docents and co-heads for student programmes. They love sharing their passion for art with the new generations.

Photos courtesy of the Singapore Art Museum



Lee Mei Ling's *Connect-the-Dots charts the progress of life through three characters*

Amek Gambar: Peranakans and Photography

By Katherine Seow

If you have a smart phone, chances are you have taken a picture during the last week. What did you shoot? A picture of your lunch to upload onto Instagram? A snapshot to remember your child's cheeky smile or maybe the lot number so you will remember where you parked your car. It boils down to capturing a moment.

We can do this and more because of the invention of photography in France in 1839. Within two years this technology had arrived in Singapore. Visit the *Amek Gambar: Taking Pictures – Peranakans and Photography* exhibition now on at the Peranakan Museum to see the first photographs taken in Singapore. For the history buff, discover how this art form developed. Find out who the first professional photographers in Singapore were, what commissions they undertook and see the equipment they used. For the people-watcher, observe the subjects in these old portraits, note how they posed and their expressions, if any. For the heritage enthusiast, learn how Peranakan involvement in this art form helped popularise it.



Portrait of a Peranakan couple in traditional pose (circa 1900s)



Racing driver Lim Peng Han with his trophies (circa 1950s)

The Peranakans were among the earliest resident groups to be photographed and the images that survive date back to the 1850s. Taking photographs of individuals started as part of a ritual – these commissioned photographs were

used for their ancestral altars when the individuals had passed on. For this purpose, the earliest portraits conformed to formal Chinese conventions:

face-on, life-size images of seated figures. Over time, western portrait styles, for example head-and-shoulder portraits taken from the side, became popular. Later,



Friends having a picnic at Tanah Merah (1953)

with rising affluence, many Peranakans commissioned portraits to make their ascent in society visible.

From the late 19th century, many Peranakans were involved in social advocacy and commercial enterprises. Outdoor shoots became popular and many groups chose to be photographed in the open. These included formal gatherings of businessmen, academic societies, schools and sports groups.

Then came the launch of the Kodak camera in America in 1888. Before the 20th century began, this user-friendly camera found its way to Singapore. Although posed commercial shoots, whether indoors or out, continued to be popular,



Amek Gambar docent research team (2018), photo by the author

the Kodak camera allowed a new type of photographer to emerge – the amateur. With a handheld camera, anyone could take a photograph or have his photograph taken. The subjects still posed, but the snapshots often captured a lighter mood, influenced perhaps by the facial expressions people saw in the movies coming out of Asia and Hollywood.

And when you have had your fill looking at what special moments these photographers of the past captured, head to the Ixora Room and take a framed photograph of yourself!



Group of Nonyas (circa 1950s)

Katherine Seow is a docent at the Peranakan Museum. She is rediscovering her heritage and has started Bahasa Baba language classes.

Unless otherwise noted, all photos courtesy of the Peranakan Museum

Handmade Readymades

The Art of Innovation and Collaboration

By Jessica Braum

Handmade Readymades, STPI's annual special exhibition, explores the legacy of collaboration, innovation and figurative imagery in printmaking. The exhibition features selected graphic works by Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein and James Rosenquist, printed by Ken Tyler, credited with catalysing the contemporary aesthetic of printmaking. Tyler's love of perfection and technological advancements, coupled with a dedication to precision and fine-tuning, contribute to the technical mastery of this exhibition's prints.

Jasper Johns' *The Color Numeral Series*, published in 1969, clearly reflects the nuanced aesthetics that Johns applied to ubiquitous, ready-made subjects through his exploration of lithographic techniques. This significant series reflects Tyler's dichotomist interests in technological innovations and the traditional washes used by 19th century printers.

Rauschenberg was involved in collaborative projects throughout his career and most liked the collaborative nature of printmaking, not just with the printers but also with the materials, because he felt the result was immeasurably greater than working alone. It was through a symbiotic artist-printer dynamic, that Rauschenberg and Tyler created some of the most formidable prints: *Booster* printed in 1967 and later *Sky Garden* in 1969, the largest hand-pulled lithographs to date at the time they were published.



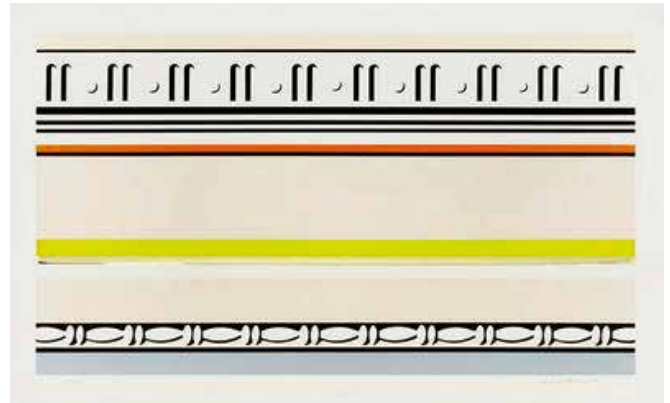
Rauschenberg, Robert. *Booster*, 1967. Colour lithograph and screenprint on paper. Edition of 38



Johns, Jasper. Figure 2 from *Colour Numeral Series*. 1969. Colour lithograph on Arjomari paper. Edition of 40

Unlike Rauschenberg, who initially had to be persuaded to try lithography, Lichtenstein was familiar with a variety of printmaking techniques through his study of fine art at Ohio State University. His *Entablature* series, printed at Tyler Graphics, evidences a thematic departure from the motifs of comic books and advertisements. However, the series is still based on a ready-made design of photographs of entablatures on 20th century building façades around Manhattan. The series of 11 prints took two years to print owing to the frailty and complexity of the material.

Throughout his career,



Lichtenstein, Roy. *Entablature VIII*, 1976. Screenprint and gold foil on BFK Rives paper. Edition of 30

Tyler continued to prodigiously pursue new ideas, techniques and materials to expand the possibilities of printmaking. He viewed Rosenquist's series *Welcome to the Water Planet* as Tyler Graphics' most complicated work.

Rosenquist wanted to create prints as big as paintings and requested handmade paper that was 5' x 10'. To facilitate this scale, Tyler built a new paper mill, devised an apparatus to handle a large-scale mould and deckle and mechanised a dual function litho/etching press, dubbed 'Double Trouble' by Rosenquist, which is now part of the STPI workshop. Drawing on the possibilities of printmaking techniques, Rosenquist collaged imagery by painting with coloured paper pulp through stencils and printing lithographs on these large sheets of paper.



Rosenquist, James. *Welcome to the Water Planet: The Bird of Paradise Approaches the Hot Water Planet*, 1989. Colour lithograph, pressed paper pulp, and collage on paper

The prints created by these prolific artists in collaboration with Ken Tyler advanced not only printmaking, but also fine art, and in the process created new means of visual expression. The exhibition runs at STPI till 9 September. Information on guided tours can be found in the Museum Information and Exhibitions section, pages 32 and 33.

Jessica Braum is an FOM docent at STPI. She has a background in printmaking and a keen interest in artworks on paper.

All photos © STPI – Creative Workshop & Gallery

Let's Explore!

2018 Children's Season at the ACM

By Jolie Davies and Abhilasha Mahan



Storytelling for the Tales of the Sea

Children's Season is always an exciting time at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM). Held during Singapore's school holidays, this year's season coincides with ACM's special Angkor exhibition. Activities such as Cambodian dance performances, shadow puppets and special storytelling tours featuring the myths and legends of Asia, take place throughout June. This year's theme 'Let's Explore', allows us to share not only the mysteries of Angkor with our youngest visitors, but also the many treasures of the ACM's permanent collections.

We have yet to meet a child who is not thrilled by the chance to explore a shipwreck. In the Tang Shipwreck gallery, a beautifully crafted miniature boat floats above a wave of bowls. Around the corner, a room of precious silver and gold awaits. The story of an Arab ship setting sail from China nearly 1,100 years ago also tells the story of the thriving maritime trade between China and the Arab world. Motifs seen on the artefacts include birds, clouds and mystical creatures – many of which are in ancient myths and legends.

In the Southeast Asian Performing Arts gallery, young visitors can slip off their shoes and explore inside the replica of a Toraja house. Colourfully carved panels reveal the symbols they portray and the rich meanings behind them. One of the most cherished symbols is that of the water buffalo, who features in colourful folk tales throughout Southeast Asia.

In the Trade gallery, artefacts tell the story of how adventurous sailors from Europe came to Asia and what



The Tang Shipwreck gallery



Cambodian shadow puppets

treasures awaited them here. In the Scholar's gallery, we are transported back to the world of China's literati. The Shaw Foyer reveals Islam's emphasis on *Ilm* or knowledge in Islam and showcases various arts and sciences from the Islamic world.

Leaping forward to the present, young conservationists and nature lovers will be amazed by the monumental sculptures of Sopheap Pich in ACM's contemporary art space. Drawing inspiration from his own childhood, Pich primarily uses natural materials for his sculptures. *Big Beng* resembles the seeds of Cambodia's highly endangered Beng tree, while *Ordeal* was inspired by the African Ordeal tree's seed pod. Its bark was used both as medicine and to make poisoned arrows; it can also be found in Singapore.

From here, the young ones can continue their journey in the Angkor exhibition, for stories of the ancient Khmer temples' exploration by the French. Artefacts tell tales of Hinduism and Buddhism in Cambodia, a treat for both young and old who learn how these religions travelled and thrived in Asia.

While Children's Season takes place only in June, young visitors can explore the delights of the ACM all year round. Peep into the world of the Chinese scholars, admire the wonderful Dehua collection, meet the gods and goddesses of Asia's ancient religions and marvel at the courage of those who sailed the oceans and along with trade, brought ideas, religions, languages and technologies.



Replica of a Toraja house

Jolie Davies and Abhilasha Mahan are both docents at ACM as well as ACM Student Guiding Co-coordinators.

All images courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum

Monday Morning Lectures

This lecture will be held in the White Room, the URA Centre, 3rd Floor, 45, Maxwell Road (S 069118) and will begin promptly at 11:00 am. Refreshments will not be available.

27 August: Last Days of Kampong Potong Pasir
Speaker: Josephine Chia



Josephine's talk will cover the last days of her own village, Kampong Potong Pasir, and the demise of all kampongs in Singapore. She will give you a flavour of the historical and social happenings of 1960s and 1970s Singapore featured in her new book, *Goodbye My Kampong*, launched in April 2018.

Study Group

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



URA Trails

The URA/FOM Chinatown Heritage Trails will continue throughout the summer. Please check our FOM website, under Public Events, for details.



Singapore and Asia in 1978

Singapore turned 13 in 1978! A second generation of government ministers was coming to grips with nation building. Plans for a new airport at Changi were underway. Whether to build a Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) was a hotly debated topic. Men with long hair were fined or denied entry to the country. The Friends of the Museum was founded and its "initial programmes focused on Study Groups." (from the FOM website)

ASEAN was 10 years old and had five members. The Peoples' Republic of China was becoming more active two years after Mao Zedong's death. Japanese electronics were all the rage; although the revolutionary Sony Walkman was not yet available in Orchard Road. Asian 1978 GDP per person was US\$1,000; in 2016 it was US\$10,000.

Starting 19 September, come join us as we learn about Asia and Singapore 40 years ago. For more information and to join the Study Group, please visit the FOM website.

A few possible topics: (A longer list is available online and please feel free to develop your own.)

- Entertainment in the 70s and 80s: What were Singaporeans listening to and watching?
- The Singapore government's social campaigns (see poster above)
- From 1978 to now: Comparative statistics for Singapore and Asia
- The Cambodian / Vietnamese War
- Laying the Groundwork for Technological Innovation: Sony's amazing products

Study Tours

FOM Study Tours is planning many exciting journeys for our travel enthusiasts – do check the FOM website for more details and registration information, but here's something to whet appetites and put in your calendars:



1. **Penang, Malaysia** - Hungry Ghosts Photo Trek, August 24-27, 2018, with Gisella Harrold and Lester Ledesma - online registration is open; check website for details and sign-up process.
2. **Melaka, Malaysia** - Cultural Immersion with photography, September 27-29, 2018, with Gisella Harrold and Lester Ledesma - check website for registration launch date and process to sign up for this bus tour to celebrate FOM40.
3. **Israel** - A Trip to Remember, 11-21 October 2018, with Sarah Lev - this tour is full, but you may sign up to be on the waitlist.
4. **Bhutan** - Paro, Punakha, Thimpu, 2-8 December 2018, with Khatiza Van Savage - online registration opening in early July.
5. **Gujarat, India** - Kite Festival and textiles of Kutch, 12-20 January 2019, with Rashmi Panchal - online registration is still open for the last few spots, so do join this tour by signing up now.
6. **Karnataka, India** - Hampi and Deccan Heritage, 9-23 February 2019, with Abha Kaul - online registration opening in mid-August.



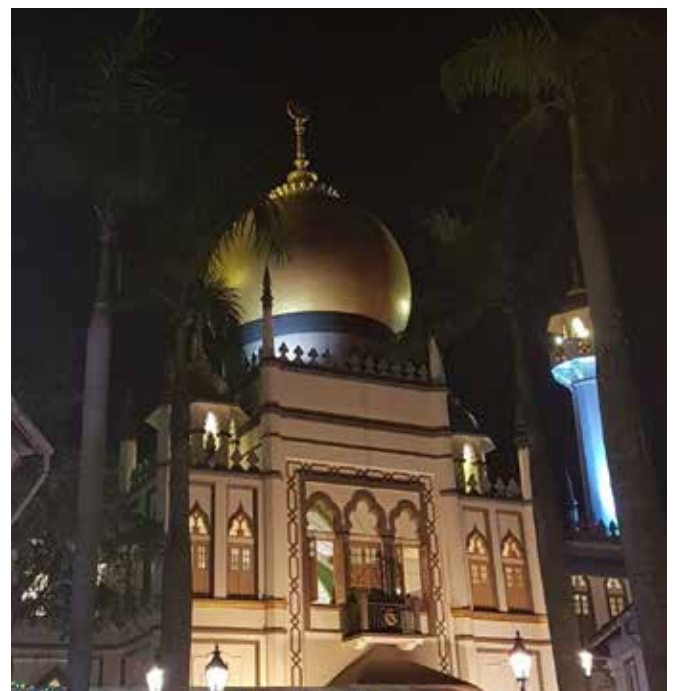
Island Notes

Kampong Glam

By Darly Furlong



The Kampong Glam area is the crown jewel in the Hari Raya celebrations in Singapore. It supposedly derives its name from a cajeput tree known as *gelam* in Malay and a *kampong* is a village. It used to house Malay aristocracy before colonial times and in 1822, Sir Stamford Raffles allocated this area to Sultan Hussein, his family, other Arab and Bugis traders. Today, the Kampong Glam area has rows of shophouses selling curios, art galleries, the glamorous Sultan Mosque and numerous restaurants, where celebrants break their fast during Hari Raya.



Darly Furlong is an avid history and mythology buff. She enjoys living in the Katong district and exploring Peranakan culture.

Japanese Docents

The Japanese docents (JDs) started their training programme in April 2018. Here's a message from one of the trainees. Please join us in welcoming all of them to the FOM community.

This term, 10 trainees from various backgrounds joined the Japanese docent group. Each one came with different interests and expectations, but all wanted to understand Singapore better, were interested in Asian history and wished to volunteer and contribute to the museums.

In addition to the training, we covered a wide variety of topics and background information. Studying Southeast Asian regional history again, a long time after we had done so at our junior high schools, we realised that now we viewed it in a very different way. Previously our knowledge had been fragmented, but we gradually began to connect pieces and really enjoyed the discoveries and surprises.

Although we initially winced at the amount of reading material we received, we became interested not only in learning world history, but also in the JDs' activities. The information had been compiled by senior JDs who generously gave their time and shared their knowledge.

For visitors to Singapore, an hour of time is very precious. We feel we have a responsibility towards the people who attend our guided tours, therefore we intend to continue



learning and passing on our knowledge about the history and art of Singapore and Southeast Asia.

We are sincerely thankful that we have had the opportunity to learn and connect with others through this programme here in Singapore.

Makiko Kura, Japanese Docent Trainee



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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.

Angkor: Exploring Cambodia's Sacred City (through 22 July)

FOM guided tours Mon to Fri 11:30 am and 2:30 pm

The civilisation of Angkor left an artistic legacy that lives on most spectacularly in its architecture and sculpture. In this exhibition, visitors will see rare Khmer sculptures, along with French drawings, photographs and memorabilia that tell the story of French encounters with Angkor and its sensational emergence onto the international stage.

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

DISINI (through September)

A brand new site-specific festival of programmes, outdoor sculptures and murals by home-grown, regional and international artists at Gillman Barracks, celebrates the precinct's rich heritage as a former military barracks and its current role as Asia's leading contemporary arts cluster. Highlights include captivating outdoor artworks located across various spaces, a multi-functional artist-designed pavilion where a series of exciting and stimulating programmes will take place, and curatorial-led showcases to capture your attention.

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
3:00 pm on Wed and Fri for the special exhibitions

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.

Malay Heritage Centre

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



Opening hours:
Tues to Sun 10:00 am – 6:00 pm (last admission 5:30 pm), closed on Mondays
FOM guided tours: Tues to Fri 11:00 am;
Sat: 2:00 pm (Subject to availability. Please call ahead to confirm the availability of a docent).

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

National Museum of Singapore

93 Stamford Road, Singapore 178897
Tel: 6332 3659
www.nationalmuseum.sg



Opening hours:
Daily 10:00 am – 7:00 pm

FOM guided tours:
Mon to Fri 11:00 am and 2:00 pm (English)
Mon to Fri 10:30 am and every first Saturday 1:30 pm (Japanese)

The Singapore History Gallery

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

Desire and Danger

Discover the fine line between desire and danger at this stimulating new exhibition at the Goh Seng Choo Gallery. Featuring creatures that arouse appetites and instill fear, and exotic plants sought for their ability to induce pleasure or pain, this selection of drawings from the William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings explores the complex and sometimes uneasy relationship between man and nature.

The More We Get Together: Singapore's Playgrounds 1930 – 2030 (through 30 September)

From the iconic dragon playgrounds of the 1970s to today's modern, inclusive and community-built versions, playgrounds have played a part in our collective experience of growing up in Singapore. Explore different playground surfaces, examine the original blueprints of the iconic mosaic playgrounds, and discover how we have defined our playgrounds, not only in terms of physical boundaries and equipment but also in terms of their place and meaning in society.

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.

Museum Information and Exhibitions

Rediscovering Forgotten Thai Masters of Photography (through 1 December)

An artist research project by Thai photographer Mani Sriwanichpoom, the exhibition features bodies of works by seven Thai photographers from the 50s to the 70s, for purposes of editorials, studio portraits and documentaries, as well as for illustrating koans.

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 31 August)

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

FOM guided tours (for Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Signature Art Prize only): Mon to Fri 11:30 am



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.

Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Signature Art Prize 2018 (through 2 September)

Inaugurated in 2008 by the Asia Pacific Breweries (APB) Foundation and the Singapore Art Museum, the triennial APB Foundation Signature Art Prize returns for its fourth edition. Recognising outstanding examples of contemporary art from both emerging and established artists over the previous three years, the prize puts the spotlight on the most compelling, cogent and complex works of art from the Asia-Pacific rim to the region of Central Asia. The exhibition is located at the National Museum of Singapore.

Imaginarium: Into the Space of Time (through 26 August)

Through immersive and interactive artworks by artists from the region and around the world, the 2018 edition of *Imaginarium* invites you to engage your senses and expand your horizons in this journey through time.

STPI

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.



STPI Annual Special Exhibition | Handmade Readymades: Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg & James Rosenquist (through 8 September)

STPI proudly presents four great modern icons who shocked the art world with their radical visions and depictions of modernity, commercialism, technology and the ordinary with readymade imagery. These masters explored printmaking with their bold and unapologetic approach, being drawn to print as a commercial medium for the masses driven by the revolutionary invention of print presses.

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



Beauty of Betta (through 23 September)

Betta splendens, more colloquially known as "bettas" or "fighting fish", are popular as aquarium fish for their breath-taking beauty, despite their famously aggressive nature. During the colonial period, these tropical fishes were considered exotic and Singapore, being an entrepot, would import and re-export bettas to countries all over the globe.

A collaboration between Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall and internationally renowned photographer Visarute Angkatavanich from Bangkok, Thailand, this exhibition showcases a selection of Visarute's stunning photographic works that perfectly capture the exuberant beauty of *Betta splendens*.

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