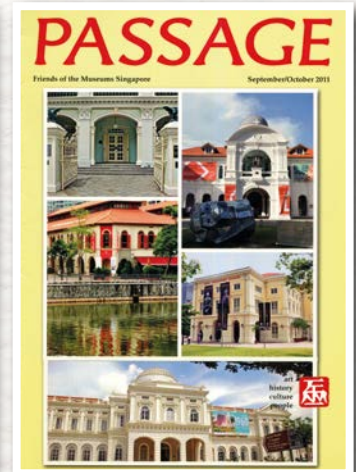
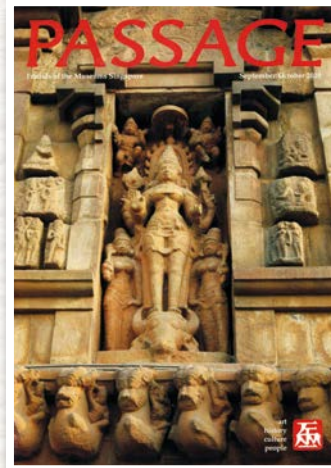
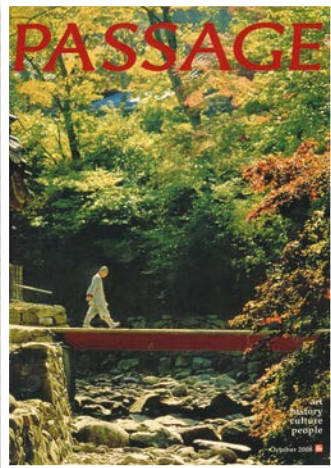


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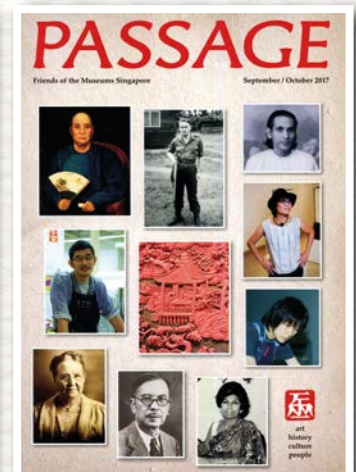
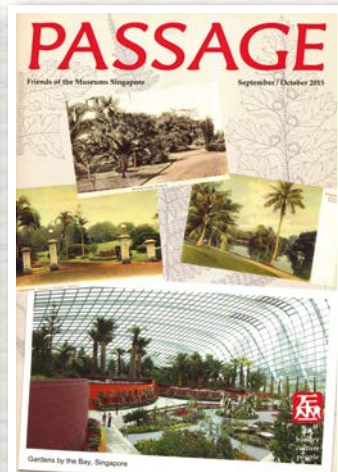
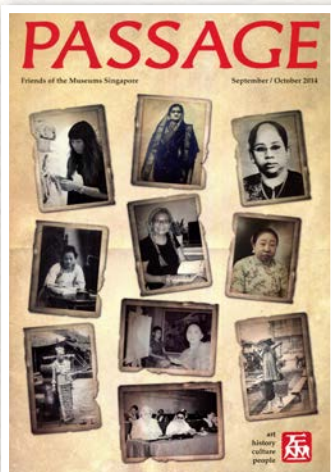
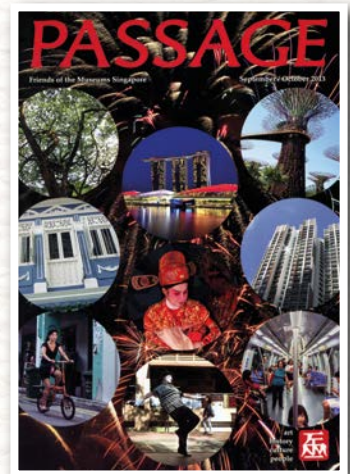
September / October 2018



40TH
Anniversary
— 1978-2018 —



Friends
of the Museums
Singapore



A Passage Through Time ...

FOM CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF SERVICE & 10 YEARS IN PRINT

*Join us for a Special Open Morning & Monday Morning Lecture by
Kennie Ting, Group Director of the Asian Civilisations Museum*

ASIAN PORT CITIES &
THE ASIAN CIVILISATIONS
MUSEUM

Monday, 1 October 2018

10:00am – 12:30pm

The Asian Civilisations Museum

Ngee Ann Auditorium

1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555



The Jakarta History Museum

Friends of the Museums (Singapore) is a volunteer, non-profit society devoted to offering guiding services and financial support to Singapore's museums. It also arranges and delivers a broad range of programmes that provide members as well as the community at large with information about Asia's history, culture and art.

FOM programmes include:

Asian Book Groups • Asian Film Group • Curio • Docent Training
• Explore Singapore! • Field Studies Singapore • Friday with
Friends • Monday Morning Lectures • Study Group • Study
Tours • Textile Enthusiasts

For more information contact us at:

Tel/Fax: 6337 3685 or Email: office@fom.sg

www.fom.sg

40TH
Anniversary
— 1978-2018 —



Friends
of the Museums
Singapore

Dear Friends,

I am happy to share the news that all local and international schools in Singapore will be receiving complimentary copies of *PASSAGE* to mark the magazine's 10th anniversary. This has been made possible with funding support from the National Heritage Board and Our Singapore Fund. Since we started our docent programmes, we have been providing schools with guided tours and conducting guiding skills workshops for students. I am glad that we now have another avenue through which to reach out to schools and share our informative publication with them. I hope that they will learn more about what we do and enjoy the articles in the magazine just as we do.

From a no-frills newsletter to the full-colour magazine you see today, *PASSAGE* has grown into a publication packed with articles on heritage, the arts and our community. In this special anniversary edition, *PASSAGE* managing editor Andra Leo, shares the story of the magazine's beginnings as well as her own journey with the magazine. FOM's immediate past president Elaine Cheong and other long-time volunteers also reminisce about their experiences with FOM. Eight of our docents wrote about artefacts from their respective museums, chosen because they have some connection with FOM's legacy. This bumper issue is definitely a keeper.



On 20 October 1978, the Friends of the National Museum was formed. This informal group was the precursor to Friends of the Museums. Its objectives then were very simple: to assist the citizens of Singapore to better fully appreciate the treasures of the National Museum and to stimulate community interest in the museum's activities. Today, at 40 years old, FOM continues to pursue these objectives and more. The museums that we serve have since grown to include eight others and also art and heritage institutions. More recently, we reached out to the wider community through our heritage walks programme in Chinatown and very soon, also Kampong Gelam.

We would not have come this far without the strong support of our volunteers. Whether writers who contributed generously to *PASSAGE*, docents who conduct regular tours at our museums, or activity volunteers who organise interesting programmes for our members, they are the backbone of our society. Best-selling inspirational author, H Jackson Brown Jr once said that the happiest people are not those getting more, but those giving more. Our volunteers must truly be the happiest people around.

The celebration for our 40th anniversary and *PASSAGE*'s 10th anniversary will kick off with a Monday Morning Lecture on 1 October at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM). Mr Kennie Ting, group director of the ACM, will be our guest speaker at the lecture. As an avid traveller, he will share with us his love for Asian port cities and how he translated his journey through them into the narratives of the galleries in the ACM. In conjunction with this celebration, our activity and museum groups will also be showcasing the programmes that they have lined up for the new season. After the talk, members will be invited to a tea reception to mark our 40 years in service. We welcome you to join us at this birthday bash. I look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the new batch of docent trainees who will be commencing their training on 11 September. I wish them all an enriching learning journey.



Clara Chan
FOM President 2018



PASSAGE

A publication of
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On the Cover: A collage of various *PASSAGE* covers, from the very first one to the one published in September/October 2017

Friends in FOM

By Elaine Cheong



2018 marks FOM Singapore's 40th anniversary and my 20th anniversary as a member of FOM. It is therefore an invaluable opportunity for me to provide a brief narrative of personal encounters before and during my three-year tenure as president (2013-2015), encounters that define the spirit of FOM. The first was in 1998, when I signed up for the Docent Training Programme. Singaporean volunteers were then a minority and to be frank, it was a culture shock to find myself a minority yet again, having just returned home from New York. Serendipitously, those nascent years in the arts and culture scene were boosted by Singapore's seminal 1989 Renaissance Plan to position itself as a global city of the arts. Bonded by a common passion, FOM docents of all nationalities answered the burgeoning demand for museum guides. I also discerned a gradual shift in the FOM demographic with more Singaporeans coming forward to volunteer.

The departure of two FOM presidents, Carmen Frings and Ingeborg Hartgerink-Grandia, in 2012, opened the door for me to inherit the heavy mantle of FOM president. Carmen had had several conversations with me regarding the importance of Singaporeans making a larger commitment to FOM. Today, when browsing through a recent copy of *PASSAGE*, I have the immense satisfaction of seeing a diverse group of leaders helming the society.

To me, the term 'president' is something of a misnomer. As I have often emphasised to would-be office-holders, this position is not the organisation's holy grail nor is it the ultimate 'promotion' in FOM. It is yet another volunteer position, albeit a much more involved one. As president I set myself the challenge of being not just FOM's custodian but also of venturing beyond the hallowed halls of the museums to narrate social memories of Singapore and to guide independent art spaces. I am grateful to those who believed in my vision, trudged the streets and burrowed into research to crystallise these ideas and give FOM members more guiding choices.

My sensibilities throughout my FOM years were shaped by the generosity of spirit of fellow members, too many to name, so here are a few highlights. I am fortunate to have met spritely Pat Weisel who at 90 was FOM's oldest member



Elaine at a Volunteer Appreciation event in 2014

and who told me that one of her secrets for longevity was gratitude. When Pat relocated to the USA she personally thanked me for my work. Indeed, we are ever mindful of thanking our volunteers with many volunteer appreciation events. However, when knuckling down to make necessary but unpopular decisions, I had then vice-president Maren Kraemer-Dreyer to thank for being my 'conscience' and my pillar of strength.

Another selfless volunteer, whose responsibilities were to ensure FOM's accounts at year-end were given a clean bill by the auditors, was Rita Lee. At a crucial period in 2014, Rita told me she had to go for surgery, but said, "not to worry" as she already had everything in place. I should have been the one saying, "not to worry"! Yet another was the charismatic Pauline Ong who contributed much to the success of FOM's 35th anniversary public seminar. She rallied the troops on the eve of the event to ensure everything was ship-shape for the big day. But she shooed me home saying, "... the president must be at her best on the big day."

In conclusion, the survivability of FOM does not depend on its increasingly sophisticated infrastructure, but on qualities such as gratitude, friendship and an openness to different ways of looking. During my tenure, I had the satisfaction of contributing to the society's diversity – propagating the FOM message within Singapore's cultural milieu and providing the impetus for a diverse team. All this would not have come about without the support of many people, so I thank you all for the opportunity to have been the face of FOM from 2013 to 2015.

Elaine Cheong acquired a Master of Arts in Asian Art Histories in 2016 and is catching up on her travelling while continuing with volunteer guiding.



Elaine Cheong in 2015



L to R: Maren Kraemer-Dreyer, Elaine, Pauline Ong and Clara Chan

All photos by Gisella Harrold

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

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

FOM member privileges include free admission to NHB museums (excluding special exhibitions); access to FOM programmes including docent training, lectures, study tours, volunteer opportunities; a subscription to the FOM magazine, *PASSAGE*, and discounts at selected retail outlets, theatres and restaurants. Membership in FOM ranges from \$25 (senior) - \$100 (family) depending on category of membership.

For more information about FOM, visit our website www.fom.sg or contact the FOM office.

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Unless otherwise stated, the abbreviation FOM used in this newsletter refers to Friends of the Museums Singapore.

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

How a Ceramic Society's Exhibition Inspired the Founding of Friends of the Museums (Singapore) in 1978

By Patricia Bjaaland Welch

"An American woman from Portland, Oregon, Wynne Spiegel, active in a Friends of the Museum in Portland, was in Singapore for six months in 1978 with her husband. She happened to read about the Southeast Asian Ceramic Society's special Blue & White Ceramics Exhibition (held in April/May 1978) at the National Museum and decided to take it in. She enjoyed the exhibition very much and the tour, which was given by a Ceramic Society member. However, after the tour she was surprised to learn that the guide wasn't affiliated with the museum, but rather with the Ceramic Society. No, she was told, Singapore had no 'friends of the museum' type of society. The following day she read in a newspaper review of the exhibition that a Mrs Anne Tofield (who was on the SEACS Council) was in charge of the exhibition's tours. She went to the museum and asked for Anne's phone number, then called her to say that she was amazed that the museum did not have an FOM group and would Anne be interested in finding out if it would be possible to organise one. She was."¹



Anne Tofield at a lunch held in her honour in November 2011

Former SEACS member Anne Tofield continues the story: "We arranged to meet at the museum, each agreeing to bring a friend. I brought Sally Housemen, an English woman, and Wynne, knowing no one in Singapore, told an American woman, Fran Hamlin, whom she met while waiting for a bus, of the plan, and asked if she would be interested in going with her. She was."²

This is how four ladies, Anne Tofield, Wynne Spiegel, Sally Houseman and Fran Hamlin agreed to present a proposal to the museum's director. It was readily accepted. Initially, the museum gave them the use, once a week, of one of the big rooms upstairs. The first event they organised was a study group. Soon there were four study groups going at the same time, one in each corner of the room. The Friends of the National Museum was officially founded in October 1978. Wynne had left by then, but she left a lasting legacy.

The story was shared with me by Maura Rinaldi and Anne Tofield, both active FOM members and council members during FOM's early years.

Patricia Bjaaland Welch has been a member of FOM for 24 years and has served on the council, as Study Tours Coordinator (and has led over a dozen tours), as well serving as Overall Co-head of Training (2016-18), Webmaster (2011-2014), ACM Docent Ongoing Training Coordinator (2014-2017) and on the *PASSAGE* team. She remains an active ACM docent.

¹ Personal correspondence with Maura Rinaldi, now a resident of Rome, 27 May, 2018.

² Personal correspondence with Anne Tofield, now living in Florida, USA, 29 May 2018.

FOM and Me in Earlier Times

By Tara Dhar Hasnain

When I moved to Singapore in 2004, after hearing of my interest in museums, history, cultural travel and volunteering, a friend recommended that I join FOM. During earlier visits here, I had already witnessed the exciting and expanding museum scene, compared to the 80s. Many new ones were opening, among them the Asian Civilisations Museum, the Singapore Art Museum and the Peranakan Museum. FOM nourished my many interests and provided a wonderful social network of like-minded people.

I was soon immersed in FOM's Monday Morning Lecture series, its study groups, study tours, and Explore Singapore! tours, learning more about the city's many hidden gems and intriguing multi-cultural festivals. Because of work, I cannot commit the time needed to be a docent, but I help train docents through talks, museum-walkthroughs and by compiling background reading materials, all of which have brought me joy and a sense of giving back. I have also enjoyed being in book groups.



Tara in Kashmir

Over the years, I saw FOM's newsletter morph into *PASSAGE*, a beautiful bi-monthly magazine, with interesting and informative articles and lovely photos. Today, the publication goes well beyond conveying basic information about special exhibitions and is one I enjoy writing for.

The Monday Morning Lectures are a weekly highlight. Whether I am giving a lecture myself, or attending one, it is a lovely way to start the week and learn something new, preceded by a half-hour of meeting friends, socialising over a cuppa and boning up on forthcoming events and trips.

Over time, technology brought changes. For my earlier talks on Vajrayana Buddhism, Kashmir's multi-cultural legacy and other topics, I printed copies of reading lists/bibliographies for the audience. Now all such ancillary materials go online. As PowerPoint became popular, our presentations changed to include many more slides and pictures. For speakers not familiar with such programmes, coaching sessions were organised in a friendly, collaborative, non-judgemental environment, along with lots of eats and drinks, as with all our activities.

Over the years, as I have laid down roots here, FOM and its many activities, plus its wonderful members from all parts of the globe, have become my family. The relationships formed during study tours and study groups have created lasting bonds. I love the sharing of knowledge and skills. Cheers to many more decades of bonhomie and nourishing friendships formed this way!

Tara Dhar Hasnain is an editor at Marshall Cavendish and writes on heritage-related subjects. She was a university lecturer for many years.

My FOM Journey

By Durriya Dohadwala



The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, a clichéd and often quoted proverb, but one that really does describe my journey into the arts and with FOM over the last 12 years.

In 2006, with my daughter starting primary school, I signed up to be a parent volunteer with an arts appreciation organisation called Art Outreach. The not-for-profit charity brought art portfolios into local schoolrooms and guided children into ways of looking at and appreciating art. With my background in finance and analysis, this was a completely new area for me and I learned not only about art but also about society, history, politics and geography through the stories that we shared.

Hoping to learn more, I joined the Singapore Art Museum's (SAM) docent training programme in 2010. That made me so interested in contemporary Asian art that I signed up for the MA in Asian Art Histories programme at the LASALLE College of the Arts. Going back to school after 20 years was a challenging but amazing experience, compounded by my other role at SAM as co-head of docent training in 2011-12. To my delight, I discovered that a lot of the art and artists that we discussed in the lecture rooms were those that I had personally encountered at SAM.

Through my docent role, I also discovered that I enjoyed researching and writing about the arts. Although I now write for a wide variety of magazines and journals, my very first article was published in *PASSAGE* in 2012, which also led me to my current role on the magazine's editorial team.

Earlier this year, during a SAM docent outing at STPI, I heard of their upcoming docent training and just before summer I earned my docent badge there. Each of these steps has immeasurably widened my understanding of Singapore and the region, but what I value most is the friendships that have evolved with the incredible individuals who all call themselves Friends of the Museums.



Durriya Dohadwala

Durriya Dohadwala is a docent at SAM and STPI. She is also an independent arts writer on South and Southeast Asian contemporary art.

An Orchid Extravaganza

By Andra Leo



Singapore's successful Orchid Show of 2016 has been reborn as the Singapore Garden Festival Orchid Show and was held from 21 to 29 April in the Botanic Gardens. Over 700 of Asia's best orchid plants were on display, with many incorporated into gorgeous landscape exhibits and also as entries in competitions among individual orchid varieties. Orchids are closely linked to the national identity, so the 2018 Orchid Show provided an opportunity for the public to have a greater appreciation of these fascinating flowers. Significantly, the show coincided with the 125th anniversary of Singapore's national flower, the Vanda Miss Joaquim.



The orchid family includes around 26,000 species, along with over 70,000 hybrids. In fact, it is the largest family of angiosperms, flowering plants, in the world. Amazingly, new species are still being discovered, providing orchid hunters with the motivation to continue searching for yet another species and thus earn naming rights.

The festival was an event not to be missed, so one evening, camera in hand, I headed to the gardens fully expecting to be impressed by the displays and the extraordinary variety of colours and shapes that orchids come in. I was not disappointed – always a treat to visit, the Orchid Garden was even more stunning than usual; it was an orchid fairyland. Here are some of the photos I took.



The Volkenkunde Museum, Leiden

By Anne Pinto-Rodrigues

In the ancient Dutch town of Leiden, an imposing eight-metre-tall *Kwakwaka'wakw* totem pole guards the Volkenkunde Museum. While it may seem out of place in the Leiden landscape, it is interesting to note that the totem pole was hand-carved specially for the museum by *Kwakwaka'wakw* artisans from British Columbia, Canada. And as the only totem pole in the Netherlands, it couldn't have been placed in a better location than the Volkenkunde, the National Museum of Ethnology.

The Volkenkunde has its roots in the extensive Japanese collection of Philipp Franz Balthasar von Siebold, a German doctor based at the Dutch embassy on the island of Dejima (off Nagasaki), between 1823 and 1829. This was the time of Japan's strict, self-imposed seclusion from the world – Dejima being the only exception to this policy. Following Siebold's expulsion from Japan in 1829, he returned to Europe with a collection of over 5,000 Japanese objects and made Leiden his home. The Museum Japonicum was born from this collection in 1837 and over time evolved into the Volkenkunde Museum. As the first ethnographic museum in Europe, it paved the way for a better understanding of Japanese culture and later, other world cultures as well. In 1935, the Volkenkunde moved into its existing premises on the scenic Singel Canal, a striking 19th century building that once served as an academic hospital.

The Volkenkunde's already stellar collection received a tremendous boost in 2010 when renowned Dutch collector and furniture curator, Frits Liefkes, bequeathed his entire collection of nearly 1,000 Indonesian objects to the museum. This fascinating collection was based around a few key themes: 'man as art' and 'the cycle of life', among others. Yet it covered a wide range of Indonesian material culture, including some exceptional pieces of batik textiles, intricate gold jewellery and furniture. Exquisite ceremonial and ritual textiles, numbering over 400 pieces, formed the majority of the donation. Over a period of 40 years, Liefkes had purchased almost all of the objects in the Netherlands from private sales, art dealers, exhibitions and auctions.

The pieces in the Liefkes collection demonstrate a very high level of artistry and were made by craftsmen from all over the Indonesian archipelago, from the western islands of Sumatra and Java, to as far as Papua province in the east. However, several of these objects also exhibit cultural influences from foreign lands. Given Indonesia's location on the ancient maritime trade route connecting China in the east to the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East and



The imposing Kwakwaka'wakw totem pole in the garden of the Volkenkunde Museum

Europe in the west, this is hardly surprising. The Liefkes donation forms only a small part of the 60,000 strong Indonesian objects collection at the Volkenkunde, but it filled some important gaps in the museum's portfolio.

Today, the Volkenkunde's collection from eight different cultural regions of the world tells stories of our shared humanity. Together with the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, the Africa Museum on the outskirts of Nijmegen, and the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam, it forms an integral part of the Dutch initiative, *Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen* (National Museum of World Cultures [NMvW]), which focuses on cultural diversity around universal themes. The belief that our commonalities transcend our differences no matter where people are in the world, embodies the spirit of the Volkenkunde and the NMvW.

Heartfelt thanks to Ms Francine Brinkgreve, Curator Insular Southeast Asia, at the Volkenkunde Museum, for sharing her expertise and time.



A book on the highlights of the Frits Liefkes Collection, featuring a 20th century gold crown from South Nias (Sumatra) on the cover



The peaceful environs of the Buddha Room at the Volkenkunde. Centuries-old, bronze Buddha statues from Japan are on display here

Anne Pinto-Rodrigues, an Amsterdam-based writer and photographer, recently visited the Volkenkunde Museum. She chronicles her experiences of interesting people and places on her blog *No Roads Barred* at <https://noroadbarred.wordpress.com>

All photos by the author

A Passion for Sketching

By Siobhán Cool

“Painting is the silence of thought and the music of sight.” Orhan Pamuk, *My Name is Red*.

Although I have drawn since early childhood, it wasn't until I moved to Asia in 2003 that I started my painting sketchbooks. I cannot remember if it was to help me pass the time whilst companions scuba-dived or whether it was an inherent need to “scratch the itch” to paint, but a holiday to Malaysian Borneo rejuvenated my artistic spirit and ensured I would never travel without a pad, pen and paint-brush again. Initially, my sketches were made on holidays, when I had more time and wanted to catch the obviously new scenes around me. As a working lawyer, I always wished for more time to devote to my art, but living in Singapore, I soon considered that time is what you make it and even an 'average' street scene has more than meets the glancing eye. My mind remained inquisitive, composing montages as I went about my daily work and tasks. Many a street corner, park, shophouse or cul-de-sac would I 'bookmark' in my memory, to return at the weekend to recreate the fleeting



Geckos amongst morning remains of Hungry Ghosts' feast, Toh Yi footpath, Bukit Timah



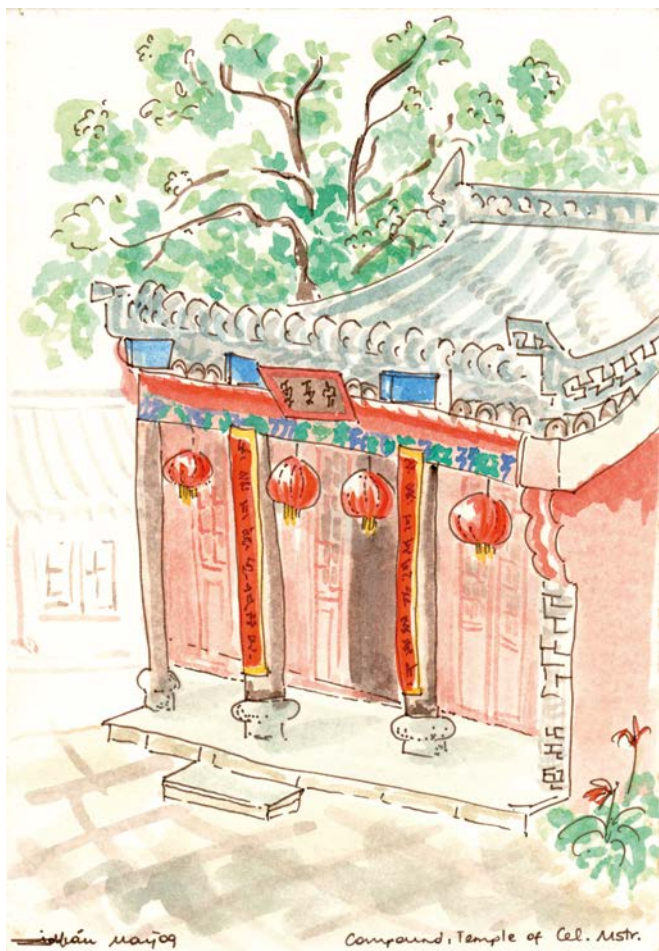
A Black and White terrace house in Singapore, where drain cats sat at Siobhán's feet



Siobhán sketching the divers' hut on Sipidan Island, photo courtesy of Larisa Haupt



The divers' hut on Sipidan Island that Siobhán was sketching



The small Daoist temple in Changqing Village, China, that Siobhán was sketching while her FOM friends waited



Siobhán and Margaret White, sketching at Changqing Village in 2009, photo by Andra Leo

moment that made me pause and realise the eclectic beauty and quiet adventure that Singapore's cityscape had to offer.

After my boys arrived, my sketching became a mission to record snapshots of their first home and its idiosyncrasies because I worried that memories of the quirky details and unique scenes would fade once we left and none of us would be guaranteed the chance to find them again in the future, since the city, almost like no other, is constantly evolving and redesigning itself.

The obvious distinction between a photograph and a travel sketch is the speed of capture. One might compose the scene well before clicking the shutter, but during the same expedition an avid photographer can take dozens of photographs to an artist's one or two sketches. The photographer can move freely, pass by in a flash and be gone from a place in a matter of moments, whereas a sketch artist is rooted in the place and bound to the scene, which evolves as you sketch.

Sketching allows me solitude, time for contemplation and distractions from the worries of the world. Picasso understood that "art washes from the soul the dust of everyday life" hence I steal away whenever I can, to sit to one side, out of view, watching and drawing the scenes of my world. As others pass by, they may only glance at a girl tending a stall. While I am sketching, I notice much more: I see her nonchalantly tidying the displays; plaiting flowers into her hair; gossiping with a neighbour in the opposite stall; laughing at the antics of a stray dog. Even in the absence of humans, animals and birds bring sound and mirth to the scene. When not another moving soul is present, then the wind in the trees and the scent of the grass add richness, which makes me cherish the moment in time as well as the sights I sketch.



Young girl selling her wares of temple offerings, Mumbai

These impressions wend their way into the imagery I make and are permanent visual notes of this place in time that I otherwise would miss during this modern, harried lifestyle. And so I keep sketching since "to be an artist, is to believe in life". (Henry Moore).

Siobhán Cool is a senior corporate counsel who has lived in Singapore for 15 years and still revels in the sights and sounds of Southeast Asia.

The Evolution of a Magazine

By Andra Leo

Members of FOM are now accustomed to receiving a bi-monthly issue of *PASSAGE*, but it was not always so. What was the publication's background story? How, when and why did it come into existence and who were the people behind its inception?

Although I joined the editorial team in January 2009, I didn't know the story either. So I set out to discover how it had all come about by contacting four of the ladies involved in the birth of the publication, among them the 2008 FOM president, Marie-Caroline Dallery. It was during her tenure that the council mooted the idea of replacing the mostly black and white newsletter with a full-colour magazine. There was resistance to the change because of the extra cost and a reluctance to abandon what had been tried and tested. In fact, Marie-Caroline wrote that when the first issue appeared, there were quite a few vociferously negative reactions to it. This part of the magazine's history came as a surprise.



The first cover was created from this photo, image courtesy of MC Dallery

To test the waters and gain some experience, in May 2008 the council published a special colour issue of the newsletter, focused on the Peranakan community. Many of the photos for this issue were taken by Susanne Paulli, the then photo editor and later also for *PASSAGE*. Gaining confidence from this newsletter, the council decided to go ahead with the full-colour, glossy magazine. However, it needed a name and a cover image. The council chose a striking one, that of a solitary monk crossing a bridge. This photograph, *Land of Morning Calm* by David Sparrow, was the third-place winner in the Asian Open Category of the 2007 FOM Photography Competition.



The Peranakan issue of the May 2008 newsletter

As for the name, Marie-Caroline felt *The*

Bridge would be apt – she saw FOM as forming a bridge between cultures, languages and traditions. Ultimately, members were asked to decide and *PASSAGE* was selected. In the October 2008 president's letter, Marie-Caroline wrote, "Most of us are in Singapore just for a while, we are passengers. Passage means movement, like the monk on the cover who needs to cross the bridge to go from his place to the forest. This word encompasses a journey, something new to see or to learn, an experience as in a 'rite of passage', a move forward."

But why was the singular form chosen? Susan Hunter, an editor with the newsletter who later took on the role of Features Editor with *PASSAGE*, thought that the decision had to do with the many possible passages that we each experience in our personal passage along life's journey. However, there was a less exotic and more mundane reason for choosing the name without the 's'. According to the first managing editor, Kathryn Burns, it was because there was an existing boating magazine called *Passages*.

All four of my informants wrote that the magazine's beginnings had been a whirlwind of activity and decision-making: choosing the cover design and the name; hiring a graphic designer to create the format; selecting a printing company and finally choosing the staff. Considering the task they'd undertaken, the editorial team was a very small one, just four women. Next they had to find writers for articles on the art, history, culture and people of Asia. Kathryn paid particular tribute to Patricia Bjaaland Welch, whose articles were her favourite monthly feature. Patricia's scholarly



The invitation to FOM's 30th anniversary celebration in the September 2008 newsletter



Marie-Caroline Dallery with Dr Kenson Kwok, then director of both the ACM and TPM, at the anniversary party, image courtesy of MC Dallery



The PASSAGE steering committee in the Singapore Management University's meeting room, image courtesy of MC Dallery

articles on symbolism in Chinese art and a variety of other subjects continue to appear in *PASSAGE*.

The first issue of *PASSAGE* was published in October 2008, on FOM's 30th anniversary. The invitation to this this event appeared in the September 2008 issue of the newsletter, the last one. To celebrate the birth of *PASSAGE* and FOM's 30th anniversary, a big party was held for all FOM members, as well as numerous representatives of the National Heritage Board and the museums.

From the beginning, *PASSAGE* has published articles about all things Asian, write-ups of study tours and provided coverage of FOM activities, as well as what's on at the museums that FOM docents guide in. As the years went by and different managing editors took the helm, other features were added, as was coverage of more and more museums. From the original five (ACM, NMS, TPM, SAM and STPI), today our docents guide in nine museums. That is quite an achievement for an organisation that began with a handful of volunteers and now has over 1,500 members.

My 10-year-long journey with *PASSAGE* began when Kathryn Burns was the managing editor, a position she held for the first five issues of the magazine. When she had to leave Singapore rather suddenly, Laura Bales, who'd joined the team at the same time as I did, took over. Laura did an extraordinary job, managing a heavy workload as well as caring for two very small children. She resigned when she was offered a full-time, paid job. Before Laura handed the reins over to Shalinee Chatterjee, she persuaded the council to cut back on the number of issues, from 10 to six, to be published bi-monthly. This change was necessary – the entire team was suffering from overload. We spent even our holidays poring over the magazine's proofs rather than enjoying a break, which never seemed to come. The magazine had taken over our lives.



The 2011 May/June issue of *PASSAGE*, the first one I was fully responsible for

Shalinee didn't stay in the job for long – family matters led to her resigning after just six months. Her resignation coincided with that of almost every other member of the team. I was in Sydney in January 2011 when I received this news, along with a plea for me to take over. I agreed on condition that a new managing editor be found as soon as possible. That didn't work out and so eight years later, I am still managing *PASSAGE*.

When I took over, council members pitched in to help me, finding writers and giving me proof-reading support. Without them I couldn't have done it. We also brainstormed new content and our first series pages were born, *ArteFact* and *Museum Watch*. The same year, for the September/October issue, I began the tradition of choosing a theme for an article from each of the museums FOM docents guide in. For the September/October 2011 edition, the theme was the history of five museum buildings, each one of which had been used for other purposes before it became a museum. For the cover of this 40th anniversary issue, I have used images of all the September/October covers since 2008.

Other changes were made as the years went by. The much-loved *Sketchbook* series began in 2011 after a meeting with Siobhán Cool, when she showed me her portfolio of sketches and asked if I could use them. Siobhán's last regular contribution was in the March/April 2018 issue, when her workload made it difficult for her to continue. However, I persuaded her to provide one final article for this special issue.



The May/June 2017 Malay-themed issue

The *Habitat* series was initially titled *Communities*, and made its appearance when a new team member called Heather Clark submitted an article relating to an unusual business, teaching children to ride bicycles. It appeared in the September/October 2012 issue. The first Malay-themed issue was the July/August 2014 magazine and resulted from meeting and getting to know Khir Johari during an FOM study tour. I persuaded him to collaborate with me to celebrate Malay culture and traditions. A Malay-themed issue now appears every year, during the month of Ramadan. Khir has a comprehensive network of contacts and commissions articles relating to the Malay world.

Although the magazine dominates my life to a degree that is often difficult to handle, it also enriches it. The articles are always interesting and I learn a great deal from them. I am grateful to excellent writers such as Liisa Wihman, Anne Pinto-Rodrigues and Seema Shah, who continue to contribute articles despite now living overseas. Through *PASSAGE* I stay in touch with the wider world and connect with people I might otherwise not meet. It has been and continues to be a fascinating trip through Asian history and culture.

Andra Leo was a lecturer at the National University of Singapore before making a career change and entering the publishing world. She founded a magazine for the Malacca state government and was its managing editor, writer and photographer.

FOM Study Tours Continue to Inspire

By Abha Dayal Kaul

As Friends of the Museums (FOM) celebrates its 40th anniversary, it is gratifying to note how well we are faring with one of our member activities – Study Tours. Carefully designed and capably run by dedicated volunteers for FOM members, tours to diverse parts of Asia have made deep, lasting impressions in the minds and hearts of our travellers. Tours, leaders and participants may change over the years, but FOM continues to mix it up with short and long itineraries, to destinations near Singapore and farther afield, for travel in small groups or larger ones, providing variety for all tastes.

A common thread weaves through the tours – FOM members value and fully enjoy their travel experiences, finding them both inspiring and memorable. *PASSAGE* readers may enjoy hearing about these learning journeys from those freshly smitten by their allure, as well as from others who have been sold on them for years.

“A study tour doesn’t just impact oneself, but also causes ripples or cascades of cultural, political, geographical and historical information to wash over a host of others one subsequently comes into contact with, sparking their curiosity and desire to do the same, like the flutter of a butterfly’s wings vibrating across the world, unleashing tiny to mighty arcs of curiosity.” This poetic reflection comes from Seema Nambiar after her very first FOM study tour, to Buddhist pilgrimage sites in North India in February 2018.

After participating in many trips and also leading numerous tours, Gisella Harrold said, “I love FOM Study Tours because they add personal insights and special in-depth knowledge to the trips. We get to see countries or areas ordinarily not on travel itineraries. My first trip, to Uzbekistan, is definitely on my list of favourites and was my first contact with the area and culture.”

“Bodh Gaya and Varanasi made the biggest impression on me, and the best overall tour was to Khajuraho – it was just



Taktsang, the Tiger's Nest Monastery in Paro, Bhutan

great!” said Nimmi Weeks, who travelled to India for the first time ever in 2014 and since then has been on five tours.

As a tour leader, I have thoroughly enjoyed curating and leading themed tours to specific geographical locations in India, while introducing international and even Indian friends to the countless archaeological, artistic and historical treasures of my country. Using my own knowledge, social networks and contacts, I like to show FOM members unique and special spots in India not easily accessed by tourists and casual visitors travelling on their own. It is satisfying to keep discovering and digging deeper into Indian history myself and to share the richness of my heritage with those who are keen to do the same.

Khatiza van Savage, who is planning a Bhutan journey this December says, “As an Indian born in the north-eastern Indian town of Shillong, Meghalaya, and educated in Darjeeling, West Bengal, I have had the privilege of learning from many interesting people. Leading FOM Study Tours gave me the opportunity to share this region’s diversity of cultures and history and also create opportunities for the



Study tour group in Bodh Gaya in February 2018, photo courtesy of Abha Kaul



Thiksey Monastery, in Ladakh, visited during the 2007 FOM study tour



FOM's ceramic cities tour group in Jingdezhen, China, in 2017

region's people to share their stories with pride."

Frequent study tour participant and occasional leader, Andra Leo tells us, "In July 2007 I went on an FOM study tour to Ladakh, organised by Helen Cannon-Brookes and Sue Ellen Kelso. Thus began my love affair with this starkly beautiful Himalayan region known as "Little Tibet". I doubt if Helen and Sue Ellen could have imagined their introductory tour would ignite this traveller's passion to keep visiting her mountain haven."

China has also been a regular draw over the years. China expert and frequent tour leader, Patricia Welch, sums up her experience thus, "Last autumn, I led my 13th FOM Study Tour and have participated in at least seven others. I would do them all over again. Our travellers are so diverse – some read everything they can beforehand, while others take it more leisurely. Some jump off the bus to get the best photo vantage point, others stroll off to capture a site's sounds and smells. Some have the latest travel gear; others arrive in what they wear at home. But at the end of each day, there's a coming together to share the wonderful exchange of experiences and laughter that every FOM Study Tour engenders."

Experienced tour leaders have mentored, encouraged and facilitated new leaders such as Rashmi Panchal and Sarah Lev to organise trips; Rashmi to her native Gujarat in India and Sarah to Israel. Leaders have also tapped into the knowledge of peers such as Pia Rampal, for Tamil Nadu's Coromandel Coast and Khir Johari for Jakarta, then coaxed them along on tours as expert advisers.

Rashmi's feedback is, "Being a tour leader gives you the opportunity to discover hidden strengths within yourself. Organising a tour presents unique situations and one is forced to think on one's feet and emerge a more confident person. I have been on three tours led by Abha and have enjoyed them because they gave me an opportunity to visit places that would have been difficult to go to on my own."



The study tour group in Khajuraho in February 2014

We all feel a connection to a place we visit together and learn a lot by travelling with people who are passionate about history and culture. Abha's tours are always a mix of learning about the history of the place and fun experiences."

Tour members cherish the fun and camaraderie that learning and travelling together brings. In Sheila Lim's words, "We're like-minded and want to see the same things; we become like brothers and sisters". Lynn Baker wrote, "After I did one study tour, I was hooked and through the 19 or so that I've now been on, the Asian world opened up to me in terms of knowledge, understanding and very special friendships. They are truly 'awesome' experiences that have immeasurably enhanced my life."

Susan Sim, who has been on 10 study tours, shared her thoughts. "I love going on FOM tours, but can't fathom why anyone would volunteer to lead them. It's such hard work. Tour leaders have to do all the heavy lifting, not just the travel logistics but sometimes literally in hotels without lifts, while staying enthused even when energy levels flag and people seem about to mutiny (not get on the bus at 6:00 am the next day). I suppose they do it because they hear how joyfully we talk about the highlights at the end of each trip."



Study tour to Gujarat in 2016, photo courtesy of Coleen Singer

Much is gained by embarking on an FOM Study Tour, when we share so much with fellow FOM members – experiences not to be had on commercial tours. As first-timer Vicki Nagtegal-Langley wrote, "Travel trips with FOM are not like a regular holiday. They are in-depth journeys to a specific destination with their roots in culture and history. The pre-trip meetings help to prepare one not only physically for the actual travel, but also mentally. Owing to the preparations, I was better able to focus on the location visited and not be too distracted by all the activity in that area. The meetings provide an opportunity to meet the other participants and to bond with them so as to make the trip a success. These trips are highly recommended."

And finally, Harman Deol said, "FOM study tours have been absolutely life-changing for me. I have thoroughly enjoyed them and cherish my experiences. Kudos to all the tour leaders who go out of their way to volunteer their time, effort and most importantly, their knowledge."

Wouldn't you sign up for one of FOM's study tours?

Abha Dayal Kaul is an FOM docent at the ACM, MHC and IHC. She has been organising and leading FOM study tours for several years, is currently FOM's Coordinator for Study Tours and hopes new tour leaders will volunteer.

Unless otherwise noted, photos by Andra Leo

FOM Docent Training

The Making of a Professional Volunteer Docent

By Millie Phuah

It all began when Wynne Spiegel visited the National Museum of Singapore (NMS) in 1978 and discovered there were no no guided museum tours for the public. In the space of a few months, she had put together a core group and Friends of the National Museum was born, (later renamed Friends of the Museums). On 14 March 1979, the ladies conducted the very first tours at NMS and the rest is history.

In the days before the Internet, research was laborious and FOM study group members were naturally the main source of docents. In 1981, we conducted the first structured six-month training programme for NMS, the only museum then.

Susan Sadler, who trained at NMS in 2000 and was one of the ACM's inaugural docents says, "In the early days of training, everything was snail mail and hard copy. It was weekly lectures and a HUGE binder of reading and gallery talks."

2008 ACM trainee, Jo Wright remembers that "It was hilarious looking back. We used to carry shopping bags full of notes. One day I happened to pass the docent room and saw a group of evaluators huddled together discussing and marking our papers with red pens. And then Susan came in one day and held up a USB drive saying – all your papers are here!"

But the online revolution came slowly according to Susan. "Some docents hadn't yet joined the online revolution and we didn't want to lose them, so the process was time-consuming to say the least. We even had sessions on how to use Google search!"

As a back-up, docents could consult the 1,770 books that FOM had amassed over the years. This library had been moved from someone's house to a cramped upstairs room at the museum, before spending ten years in a container sitting in the carpark. The container, which also housed our first office, was known to leak every time it rained and whenever it did, everyone would panic. It was a great relief when in 2003 FOM got an office in Armenian Street. We moved to Stamford Court in 2008.

Training kept evolving according to Susan, who served on the NMS and ACM training teams. "We wanted to make it a little more interactive and creative, while keeping a structure/framework. It was a slow process – shifting the focus/emphasis more to 'in the gallery'... we started to add more about guiding skills, how to give feedback to trainees."

Up until 2003, all aspiring docents first trained at NMS. It was only after this "foundation course" in Singapore and



The audience at the May 2018 Public Information Meeting (PIM), photo by the author

regional history and culture that docents were given the choice to move on to either SAM (opened in 1996) or the ACM (1997, in Armenian Street).

From 2003 when NMS closed for a revamp, each museum went its own way. Foundation courses were reintroduced to streamline training by 2008 Co-Overall Head of Training, Carla Forbes-Kelly, who realised there was much overlap in themes, but the same need for local historical context in the various museums. "There were six foundation days then, focusing on the history of Singapore, China and Southeast Asia, the major religions of the region, guiding and storytelling skills, and the context of the museums within the larger museum system."

Foundations also set standardised training standards across museums. More importantly, new docents were inducted into the larger FOM community and saw first-hand the enthusiastic involvement of many docents in the training process.

As more and more museums began opening or reopening (STPI – 2004, TPM - 2008, SYSNMH - 2011, MHC - 2012, IHC - 2015), each training team developed its own customised programme, building on the knowledge, know-how and best practises acquired over the decades and passed down from team to team. We still have gallery talks and papers, and "weekly words" have become "words of the week", better known as WOWs.

In 40 years, FOM has gained a reputation for running one of the best docent training programmes anywhere in the world. Today, we have over 400 'professional' volunteer docents guiding at nine museums and leading three heritage walking trails. Hundreds more have gone through our training, served admirably and gone on to other postings. Yet many more have stayed to continue guiding, which has become very much part and parcel of their lives!



NMS presentation during the 2018 PIM, photo by Michelle Lim

Millie Phuah guides at NMS, the IHC, SYSNMH and MHC. She is currently Co-Overall Head of Training together with Karen Houtman.

The Highs and Lows of Guiding at the ACM

By Soumya Ayer, Carolyn Pottinger, Jo Wright

Guiding at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) can be challenging, but very rewarding. Docents could be involved in highlight tours, student tours, gallery tours, Gallery-in-Focus tours, special exhibitions, children's seasons, study tours, Monday Morning Lectures and new gallery openings. In short, there is plenty to keep ACM docents on their toes. Sometimes it can seem overwhelming; however, it is very satisfying when visitors appreciate what you do and discover that history can be exciting. In this article three experienced docents share the highs and lows of guiding at the ACM.

Soumya Ayer: The highlight for me was the opening weekend of the first-ever children's season in 2014, when Story Whisperer Tours were created. Having just graduated from the training programme I had the opportunity to work with a team of experienced docents.



Story Whisperers group

Of course I was a bag of nerves by the time opening weekend arrived. Telling stories to a packed room of children and parents under the Tree of Life was incredible. We guided 1,000 visitors that weekend, but that was not all, we met Singapore's then president Tony Tan and had our picture taken with him. There have been other rewarding experiences. Having the opportunity to be Co-head of Training was a challenging responsibility, but one that allowed me to make many lasting friendships. I particularly enjoy the special exhibitions when I get the opportunity to be in the company of some amazing artefacts, learn from others and share what I learn with visitors. The ACM has been truly transformative for me and joining the docent group is one of the best decisions I have made.



Stone Carving of Shiva Nataraja

Carolyn Pottinger: As a newly minted docent, I had a seven-year-old looking me in the eye and crisply informing me that he didn't want to be there and that he much preferred Greek myths. On the other hand, a moment of heavenly satisfaction comes when you have the perfect artefact before you. I guided a group of physicists in Singapore for a seminar. Looking jet-lagged and as if they had not come by choice,

I knew that engaging them might prove challenging, but Shiva Nataraja sprang to my rescue. The metaphor of this Hindu god's cosmic dance, in which he sets out to destroy the entire universe so life can be regenerated, carries so much resonance with the work at the Hadron Collider in Switzerland, that the Indian government presented the research facility with a large bronze Nataraja statue. With our wonderful art and ancient Asian mythology assuming a surprising relevance to my visitors, we went on to spend a happy hour together.

Jo Wright: "Oooh, is that an underglaze design on these bowls?" asked the VIP guest, eagerly leaning forward for a closer look. He then dropped to his knees to examine their undersides, declaring excitedly that you can learn as much from the footings (the rim at the bottom of the bowl) as you can from the decoration.



Jo Wright and her mug

His excitement was infectious and soon we were all kneeling on the floor, gazing up at the artefacts from an entirely new viewpoint. We were in the ACM's Tang Shipwreck gallery and the VIP was Gavin Williamson, the UK Secretary of State for Defence, in town on business. How did he know about the ACM? At a meeting in London earlier this year, Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister, Teo Chee Hean, had recommended that he visit. Mr Williamson's interest in ceramics comes from his many years working in the UK bone china industry. He certainly gave me a new perspective on the gallery's 1,200-year-old pieces. Later, I was thrilled to be presented with a bone china mug made in the UK, ideal for sipping my afternoon tea.

One of the joys of guiding is that you can never really tell how your audience will react to what you show them. Government ministers, visiting physicists or seven-year-old children, each brings his/her own viewpoint. It's an absolute privilege to be able to make this happen and we are indeed fortunate to be FOM docents and guiding at the ACM.

Soumya Ayer, Jo Wright and Carolyn Pottinger have been docents for between four and nine years at the ACM where between them they have guided well over 1,000 tours and around 12,000 visitors. They all agree that the joy of being museum docents comes from the guiding itself and from being part of a warm and fascinating community of FOM docents.

Photos courtesy of the authors

The Man with a Vision of an Inclusive Singapore

By Tang Siew Ngoh

In the Indian Heritage Centre's Hall of Fame, among photographs of personalities who made Singapore proud, you will find this one of a loving couple, Ron Chandran-Dudley and his wife Regina (Rena). Their 1962 marriage was a union across the divide of race and religion – he, a Ceylonese Tamil, was born in Singapore to a Methodist Christian family while she was born in the UK to a Jewish family with Polish roots.

Having come to terms with gradually losing his eyesight from the age of 17 after a rugby accident in 1951 at his school (Raffles Institution), Ron switched from pursuing his dream to be a neurosurgeon to graduate instead with a BA in Social Anthropology from the London School of Economics in 1964. Then with a Fulbright Scholarship and Rena's support, Ron achieved the rare distinction of graduating within two years from the State University of New York with an MA in the Sociology of Medicine and Industry as well as an MSc in Education on Vocational Rehabilitation Counselling and Psychotherapy in 1971.



Ron with Rena, his "rod and staff"

Ron was a visionary. He envisaged Singapore becoming a regional beacon, bringing to the forefront public discussions on disability issues. This vision was realised in 1981, the International Year of Disabled Persons, when he became the founding chairman of the Disabled People's International (DPI). DPI remains the only international cross-disability organisation comprised entirely of people with disabilities, advocating for the full participation of disabled people in society. DPI, with its slogan "Nothing About Us, Without Us", now has local chapters in over 130 countries, in addition to a special consultative status with various United Nations (UN) agencies. Ron went on to play a significant role in lobbying for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which Singapore is a signatory.

On the local front, the beginnings of inclusion for people with disabilities can be traced to Ron's untiring efforts as their advocate. In 1986, he spearheaded the setting up of the Disabled People's Association (DPA) as DPI's local chapter and served as its president till 2005. Prior to and between his academic pursuits, Ron pioneered many new initiatives in Singapore, from providing visually-handicapped children with a holistic education and rehabilitation, to collective fund-raising that came under the ambit of the Community Chest. From the UK and USA, he brought in the best practices in open education and open employment and models of client-centred rehabilitation of people with

disabilities. Equipped with his training and work experience, Ron helmed many a local voluntary welfare organisation that catered to people with visual handicaps, mental health issues and also drug abusers. He also set up his own private consultant counsellor practice (1978-2015) with the tagline "Listen to and really hear".

Despite his privileged pedigree, Ron had a great heart for the marginalised. Like his father, Benjamin Dudley, an exceptional educator who became Singapore's first Asian Examination Secretary, Ron argued that "no child should be left standing at the school gate" when he objected to the exclusion of children with special needs from the ambit of compulsory education when it was first introduced in Singapore. His inclusiveness was reflected in the physical design of his residence, equipped with a hydraulic lift for wheelchair users and accessible washrooms, as well as in the stories and plays he wrote. In the play *Trace the Rainbow through the Rain*, staged by the Experimental Theatre Club in 1972, he featured the struggles of a blind lawyer. In another drama serial for the British Broadcasting Corporation in 2004, Ron created the character of a blind Singaporean Chinese physiotherapist, Zoe Chan Li Fen, in memory of his daughter Viva (Li Fen) who died at the age of 27.

It was my singular privilege to have worked alongside Ron from 1993, as the DPA's honorary secretary/vice-president when he was DPA's president and to know Rena, whom he fondly described as his "rod and staff". It was Rena who helped to finish writing the book *The Man with a Mission: A Life Well-Lived*. Four chapters were written by Ron before his sudden death on 30 Dec 2015. His favourite hymn, *O Love that will not let me go*, written by a blind lyricist, had resonated with him when finally told that he had to function as a blind person and was the hymn sung during his farewell service.



Benjamin and Harriet Dudley

Ron's life was indeed "a life well-lived" and one that touched many other lives. The significant advances towards making Singapore a more inclusive society where persons with disabilities have access to the same rights and opportunities as everyone else, owe much to the trail-blazing advocacy of Ron Chandran-Dudley.

Tang Siew Ngoh is a docent who guides at five museums, including the Indian Heritage Centre, the Malay Heritage Centre and the Peranakan Museum.

Images courtesy of the Indian Heritage Centre, National Heritage Board

Lights, Camera, Action!

By Khong Swee Lin

From the latter half of the 19th century onwards, Kampong Gelam was known primarily as a printing and publishing hub. This changed in the 1930s when, in addition to the print medium, mass entertainment in the form of film production developed here. The Shaw brothers set up Malay film production facilities around 1937. Post-war film production continued this trend when the rival Cathay Organisation, led by Ho Ah Loke and Dato Loke Wan Tho, formed the Cathay-Keris Studio in 1953. The stage had been set for the golden age of the Malay silver screen.

It is in the *kolong* (lower level) of the Malay Heritage Centre that visitors can get a sense of this golden age, which lasted some 20 years. There they can view a selection of black and white cinema snippets – the adventures of the 15th century Melakan warrior Hang Tuah, the eyebrow-raising *Chinta* (Love), *Pontianak* (Vampire), and *Mogok*, (Strike).

Who were the stars?

The first name that immediately comes to mind is that of the extraordinarily talented, Penang-born P Ramlee, actor, singer, comedian, songwriter, who acted in 66 films, directed 35, and composed around 250 songs. His films, for example, *Penarek Becha* (The Trishaw Puller), *Bujang Lapok* (Worn-out Bachelors), and *Hang Tuah*, are legendary. His efforts earned him awards both



P Ramlee on the cover of Hiboran Issue No. 483 1956, Singapore



Maria Menado on the cover of Hiboran Filem, a weekly Malay film magazine published by the Royal Press 1955, Singapore

at home and abroad, including that of Best Male Actor in *Anak-ku Sazali* (My Son, Sazali), in 1957, at the Fourth Asian Film Festival, Tokyo, and in 1963 at the Tenth Asian Film Festival.

Not many can claim to have attained instant fame, but Siput Sarawak did, in her 1947 hit *Singapura di-waktu malam*, (Singapore at Night). Born Ramlah bte Mohamed Sulaiman, in Sarawak, she adopted the stage name of Siput Sarawak. Her long career,

which included the plum, vampy role in *Chinta* in 1948, came to an end when she died in 1999 after making her last film, *Layar Lara* (Lara's Movie) in 1997. She was the mother of Anita Sarawak, Singapore's top international entertainer.

Can, or rather, should a vampire be labelled "Malaya's most beautiful woman", which TIME magazine did in 1957? Why not, if your name happened to be Maria Menado. Formerly Liesbet Dotulong of Manado, North Sulawesi, Maria's climb to fame

reached its apogee when in 1957 she took on the role of the *pontianak* (female vampire), in the first Malay horror film of the same name. The rest, as they say, is history. The film, shown at the Cathay cinema in Singapore, was the first Malay film to be screened there and was even shown in Hong Kong, albeit dubbed into Cantonese.

Music was an integral part of the Malay film scene and song content was influenced not only by Malay, but also Hokkien, the predominant local Chinese dialect, Tamil, English and even Hindustani, a real melding of Malaya's languages. Eventually, film music began to include western elements such as Latin American rhythms and crooning.

The spinoff from the film industry extended to other entertainment forms and to the print media. *Fesyen* (Fashion) magazine, published weekly by Harmacy Press, targeted fashion-conscious Malay women. The kebaya became extremely popular as it was worn in rather daring styles by Malay film actresses, celebrities and singers, one of whom was shapely Saloma who boasted a 21-inch waist. Saloma, who married P Ramlee in 1961, was for good reason dubbed the "Marilyn Monroe of Malaya".

The Malay films of yesteryear showcased local wit, drama and the talents of our very own *bingtangs*, or stars, while the themes of a number of these films addressed the need to progress at a time when society was on the brink of change.

Khong Swee Lin is a docent at the Malay Heritage Centre and loves Singapore's classic films of yesteryear.



Siput Sarawak on the cover of Berita Filem Issue No. 11, 1961, Singapore

All images from the Malay Heritage Centre Collection, National Heritage Board

An Ancient Mystery – The Singapore Stone

By Alison Kennedy-Cooke

The National Museum of Singapore is historically where the first FOM docents began their guiding careers. This 40th Anniversary coincides with another special date – 100 years since a fragment of the mysterious sandstone boulder known as the “Singapore Stone” was returned to Singapore’s National Museum. It is now one of its most treasured artefacts and certainly one of the most mysterious.

History lessons for Singapore schoolchildren begin with stories of this amazing boulder, which is also the first artefact that NMS docents study. We can link it to nearby locations and many other pieces in the museum’s collection, making it an essential part of everyone’s tour.

Another important artefact, the *Sejarah Melayu*, tells of legendary figures important in the history of Singapore and Melaka.

One particular story talks of a slave called Badang who was granted a wish and given great strength. A local rajah heard of Badang and wished to test his strength. One of his tasks was to throw a large sandstone boulder, which he hurled from the top of a hill. It landed at the mouth of the river. Was this our famous stone? Did he throw it from Bukit Larangan to the Singapore River? The legend says Badang was eventually buried at the mouth of the river and his grave covered with a large engraved boulder.

When the British East India company arrived in 1819, workers clearing jungle uncovered a large sandstone boulder at the mouth of the river, in an area known as Rocky Point. This large 3m x 3m stone was covered in many lines of text. No one, including many experts, has been able to decipher the script. The Bengali workers who first saw it were said to be terrified and could not continue their work. What did the text say? Young visitors to our museum have many opinions – perhaps it says “Welcome” or maybe “Keep Out”?

By 1843, as construction in the settlement progressed, the East India Company widened the mouth of the river and blew up the rock. Various methods of making casts of the stone so as to decipher the words, were unsuccessful. Thinking it may be an ancient Indian language, three fragments were sent to the Asiatic Society of Bengal to be studied. Some of the remains were turned to gravel for road building, whilst one piece was seen being used as a seat by sepoys outside the Treasury Building. Only one piece was returned to Singapore – 100 years ago. The others are assumed to be missing. The stone itself is thought to date from around the 13th century. Excavations at Fort Canning Hill have uncovered similar sandstone blocks from a Royal



The Singapore Stone

Palace and burial grounds site. Was this the source of our famous stone? Does it maybe talk of people who lived there?

Tamil, Jawi, Old Javanese or Sanskrit have been suggested as origins of the text. An ancient Indo-Aryan language called Pali is also a possibility. It is found in Hindu and Theravada Buddhist texts dating from the fifth and sixth centuries. Pali is thought to have originated from Sanskrit, which has many derivatives and dialects. The earliest Sanskrit dates from around the fifth century and old Tamil from the second century. These old texts and languages have altered dramatically over time, so deciphering a language that has probably died out seems impossible.

The world today has many mysteries hiding in stones. Popular literature and movies such as *Lord of the Rings* and *Game of Thrones* feature similar ancient fantasies. Today, 21st century computer technologies are being used to try and decode ancient linguistic mysteries. By connecting these historical stories to modern tales, our younger audiences will perhaps be persuaded to take up these puzzle-solving challenges.

Alison Kennedy-Cooke has been an NMS docent for four years. Her favourite area of the history gallery is the ancient sections where many secrets await discovery.

Image courtesy of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

Happy Anniversary FOM

By Belinda Boey

Congratulations to the Friends of the Museums (FOM) on the society's 40th anniversary. Who would have thought that today FOM would have 1,500 members from 52 countries, speaking 30 different languages? And what a sea change in Singapore's museum landscape! With 400 active docents, FOM guides in nine museums in addition to training and managing volunteers. When FOM (Singapore) was founded by Wynne Spiegel, Anne Tofield, Sally Houseman and Fran Hamlin, the Peranakan Museum (TPM) did not exist. In its previous life, it was merely a gallery in the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM). Luckily, there was enough interest in Peranakan culture, that when the ACM moved to the Empress Place site, TPM came into its own and became a small boutique museum that showcases the life and rituals of a Peranakan family. The museum is housed in a beautiful building, on Armenian Street, at one time the home of the Tao Nan School. Incidentally, the school was founded by Peranakans, so this was very fitting indeed.

Not to blow TPM's own trumpet, but this may be the first museum in the world to explore Peranakan culture to such a comprehensive degree. The museum has one of the largest and most intricate pieces of Peranakan beadwork in existence. The motifs are an interesting collection of birds, insects and flowers, which can be viewed from all angles. There is hardly any repetition and interestingly, most of the birds and flowers are not indigenous to Southeast Asia. The flowers look as if they are European and some of the birds look like those of South America. Large beadwork pieces of



A beadwork tablecloth with bird and floral motifs. Collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum. Restoration sponsored by the BNP Paribas Foundation and BNP Paribas Singapore Branch

this scale and of this style have been found only in Penang, Malaysia. It was most likely commissioned from professional Chinese bead-workers and later used in a wedding chamber.

However, my favourite artefact in the museum is the Catholic Altar. This to me summarises the psyche of the Peranakans. The sideboard used to be the domestic altar of a Peranakan family.

The Chinese Peranakan family that owned the sideboard adapted it when they converted from Daoism to Roman Catholicism. The top of the gilded teak sideboard features carvings of Daoism's three Star Gods: Hock (God of Happiness), Lock (God of Wealth) and Siew (God of Longevity).

The pillars have auspicious carvings of the dragon, the mythical *qilin* and the phoenix, while for the centre, the family commissioned a painting of Catholicism's Holy Family. In the early 20th century, some Peranakan families converted to Roman Catholic or Protestant Christianity, most likely as the result of an English-language education in the mission schools that were founded after Singapore became a British colony. This mental flexibility and pragmatic approach to religion is remarkable. It is not inconceivable that within such a Peranakan household, there existed a family altar for Daoist deities as well as an ancestral altar, while at weekends, the whole family would merrily go off to church.

FOM came into existence in 1978, at a time when Singapore was but a teenager, preoccupied with nation-building and finding its place in a post-war, post-colonial world, when matters of cultural heritage and issues of ancestry took a back seat. Thank you for keeping the torch alight and burning. In fact, there is much to celebrate in 2018 – FOM is 40 years old, while both *PASSAGE* magazine and TPM are celebrating their 10th anniversary this year.



Altar sideboard. Collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum. Purchased with funds from the Friends of ACM through the Gala Dinner 2005

Belinda Boey guides exclusively at the Peranakan Museum. She is Singaporean and graduated from Oxford University with a degree in politics, philosophy and economics. Before retirement, she worked in the finance industry.

The Singapore Art Museum and FOM

By Tina Nixon

FOM was founded in October 1978. That same year, Singaporean artist, Ho Ho Ying completed his painting *The Survivor* – both he and FOM have not only survived but thrived since the mid-1970s. So has the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) since its founding in 1996; it has thrived and also taken huge steps forward.

It had taken Ho Ho Ying eight years to complete this painting, having returned to it over and over again. He began his artistic career in 1966 with his first solo exhibition at the former National Library. Since that first show he has held several solo exhibitions in both Singapore and China and participated in numerous group exhibitions, including the most recent, *Re:Collect*, at the National Gallery. That exhibition showed the public the development of state-sponsored art spaces in Singapore and gave us an indication of how crucial FOM was and still is, in generating a museum-going culture here. It was also a reminder of how the collection at SAM got its roots.

When Ho Ho Ying and other early pioneer artists began their careers and wished to display their works or even go and admire or seek inspiration from other artists' work, there was no public art gallery to go to. In fact, the national collection, which is now divided between SAM and the National Gallery, did not have any permanent space for the display of works until 1976.

At the entrance to the recent exhibition *Re:Collect* numerous examples were displayed from the collection of Dato Loke Wan Tho, the co-founder of the Cathay Organisation and an enthusiastic collector of Singapore art. He donated over 110 artworks to Singapore in 1960, but despite this large donation, a national art gallery remained unrealised until 1976, when the first state-run art museum known as the National Museum Art Gallery (N MAG) opened in what is now NMS.

The opening mission statement for N MAG was "to build and to develop on a strong permanent collection of contemporary Singapore and Southeast Asian art which, in years to come, will present a clear and continuous documentation of the development of Singapore and

Southeast Asia". However, the resources to achieve this high aspiration were scarce and led to a heavy dependence on artists or collectors donating their works out of goodwill.

Twenty years after the opening of N MAG, a brand-new art space was opened to the public as SAM completed its transition from a Catholic boys' school to the Singapore Art Museum.

SAM continued to showcase large-scale retrospectives of some of the pioneer artists, a series of which was first begun by the Ministry of Culture 1981. The retrospectives featured works by artists such as Liu Kang, Chen Wen Hsi, Cheong Soo Pieng, Chen Chong Swee and Georgette Chen. A further boost to the collection was the donation of 113 works by the renowned artist Wu Guangzhong in 2008.

For the past decade or so, and with the opening of the National Gallery, SAM changed its remit to become the regional front-runner for showcasing contemporary art from Southeast Asia and the wider area.

SAM is currently undergoing extensive renovations, but you can see a fine example of the types of works now under the SAM remit in a wonderful new exhibition, the *Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Signature Art Prize*, being shown back where it all began, at NMS! Throughout all the changes and movement of artworks from one institution to the other, FOM and more specifically, FOM docents, have been there to help the public gain a better understanding not just of the artworks but also of the artists and institutions that lie behind them too. Happy Anniversary FOM!



Chuah Thean Teng, Self-Portrait, circa 1950s. Batik. 31 x 21 cm. Gift of the Loke Wan Tho Collection. Collection of the National Gallery Singapore



Ho Ho Ying, *The Survivor*, 1978. Mixed media on canvas laid on board. Collection of the National Gallery Singapore

Carving a Unique Training Template

By *Virginie Labbe*, In conversation with *Sue Sismondo* and *Sabine Silberstein*

Carborundrum, squeegee, brayer, mezzotint, Hollander beater: this is a small sample of some of the technical terms that our 15 newly graduated STPI docents have become familiar with. Guiding at STPI is a unique experience owing to the special nature of the institution, a printmaking and paper workshop where artists come for a residency that culminates in a gallery exhibition. Unlike Singapore's heritage museums, there is no permanent collection on show; instead docents typically need to guide five or six new exhibitions a year. The tours also aim at developing visitors' understanding of the print and paper techniques used in creating the artworks and also include a visit to the workshop, where visitors can see presses, and artists and workshop staff at work. As FOM is celebrating its 40th birthday and STPI its 16th, I spoke to Sue Sismondo and Sabine Silberstein, two of STPI's longest serving docents who started guiding in 2004, about what training was like in the early days.

Whilst STPI docents could draw on FOM's longstanding experience in guiding art exhibitions, the complexities of the print and paper-making techniques were something new and required in-house training. The very first training, in the form of lectures, was provided in 2004 by STPI's education officer. Although it was helpful in understanding the history of printmaking, by the end of the training in December, most trainees felt they did not have a sufficient grasp of the techniques and did not feel confident enough to guide. Thankfully, one of the trainees (Mariann Johanssen-Ellis) was a printmaker and invited her fellow trainees to her studio where she demonstrated some of the key printmaking techniques. At their request, the trainees also spent an entire Saturday in the paper mill making paper under the guidance of STPI's master paper maker, Richard Hungerford. The 2004 batch then started guiding, supporting each other as best as they could with research and helping out with children's workshops from time to time, which provided more experience with the techniques.



2004 STPI trainees, with Sue and Sabine on the far right (inaugural training)

Conscious of the need to develop a curriculum tailored to fit STPI docents' needs, for the second training programme in 2006, Sue successfully designed a new model, featuring hands-on demonstrations and workshops with STPI

workshop staff, a model we continue to use today. This year's training included eight workshops conducted by STPI's senior staff. Mr Eng and Ms Chida, two of STPI's senior printmakers, also spent some extra time with our Mandarin



STPI docent training – hands-on workshops and demonstrations (various years)

and Japanese-speaking docents to help them familiarise themselves with the technical terms in their languages.

Over the years, STPI's education team has worked closely with the docent community to design tools to further enhance the visitor experience – an education wall was created with prints to illustrate the various techniques, now supplemented with text and tools, and more recently a toolkit for each technique. Being able to see and handle samples and tools enables visitors to gain a more hands-on understanding of how the artworks were created and provides insights into the multiple possibilities of print and papermaking.

Workshops for lesser known techniques, such as foiling, flocking and cyanotypes, are also regularly organised for docents to further develop their knowledge. FOM's relationship with STPI is now a true partnership of interests and support, which has strengthened over the years.

FOM's journey at STPI parallels that of the FOM's early years with the National Museum, with its focus on research and learning, the development of training methods and guiding skills. Today, the skills that FOM has honed to deliver tailored, high-quality guiding in public spaces has been used to broaden its collaborations with partners such as the National Library, the Economic Development Board (at Gillman Barracks) and the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

Virginie Labbe enjoys contemporary art and guides at STPI and Gillman Barracks.

Wan Qing Yuan Through the Years

By Karen Ng

Nestled within the hustle and bustle of the Balestier precinct sits a lovely two-storey colonial-style villa in discreet Tai Gin Road. The only surviving bungalow among many bungalows built during the late 19th and early 20th century in the sugar cane plantation known as the Balestier Plain, this lonely villa holds within it a treasure trove of history and stories.

Constructed in 1902 by local businessman Boey Chuan Poh, the house was specially constructed for tropical living. It had beautiful, ornate arched windows and doors, eaves decorated with floral patterns and movable louvred windows – all these features allowed for natural lighting and good ventilation.

The villa was bought by Singapore pioneer and rubber magnate, Teo Eng Hock in 1905. He named it *Wan Qing Yuan* (Serene Sunset Garden), a fitting name for the house his beloved mother retired to. Teo met Chinese revolutionary Dr Sun Yat Sen that year and in 1906 he offered the villa to Dr Sun to be used as the Singapore base for his revolutionary party (*Tong Meng Hui*). That sealed the villa's fate with regard to the role it played in the 1911 Chinese revolution.



Photo of the villa in its early years

The villa not only became the nerve centre of Dr Sun's revolutionary movement in Southeast Asia, it was also the place where Dr Sun stayed during four of the nine visits he paid to Singapore. It was in this very building that Dr Sun shared his revolutionary ideas with his Nanyang supporters. Of the ten uprisings in China planned by Dr Sun, three were secretly hatched right here.

In 1910, Teo sold *Wan Qing Yuan* and the villa changed ownership several times. In 1937, seeing how the structure had deteriorated into a ruinous state, six prominent local businessmen, council members of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce (now known as the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry [SCCCI]) bought the villa



The dilapidated villa with the six SCCCI council members in front

for \$5,200. They felt that they had to preserve such an important historical site. In 1938, they donated the building to the SCCCI.

With a donation of \$15,000 from the Chinese Nationalist Government, the villa was restored to its glory and became a Memorial Hall. Hundreds

of visitors who flocked here managed to view the bed Dr Sun had slept in when he was in Penang, a bust and portrait of Dr Sun and photos of Dr Sun with his many Nanyang supporters.

During World War II, the building was used by the Japanese army as a military communications centre. Sadly, the bed and many other artefacts were destroyed during this period. When the war ended, the Chinese Nationalist Government renovated the villa and it became the Kuomintang's Singapore branch headquarters. In 1951, after the Kuomintang ceased its activities in Singapore, the villa was passed back to the SCCCI. They renovated it and in 1966, in conjunction with Dr Sun's 100th birth anniversary, the villa became a museum and library and was renamed the Sun Yat Sen Villa. The villa was gazetted as a national monument on 28 October 1994 and renamed the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall in 1996.

In 1997, the villa was closed for restoration and extension works that cost \$7.5 million. It was reopened on 12 November 2001, to coincide with Dr Sun's birthday 135 years ago (in 1866). In 2010, the villa was closed once again for a \$5.6 million revamp.

It reopened in October 2011 to commemorate the centenary of the 1911 revolution (the Xinhai revolution), dedicated to the legacy of Dr Sun Yat Sen and the crucial role played by Dr Sun's Singapore and Nanyang supporters.



Sun Yat Sen Villa in the 1970s



The villa as it looks today, now in use as the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall

Karen Ng, a Malaysian, has been an FOM docent since 2016 and guides at the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall.

All images courtesy of the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall

Building Connections

By Sarah Teo



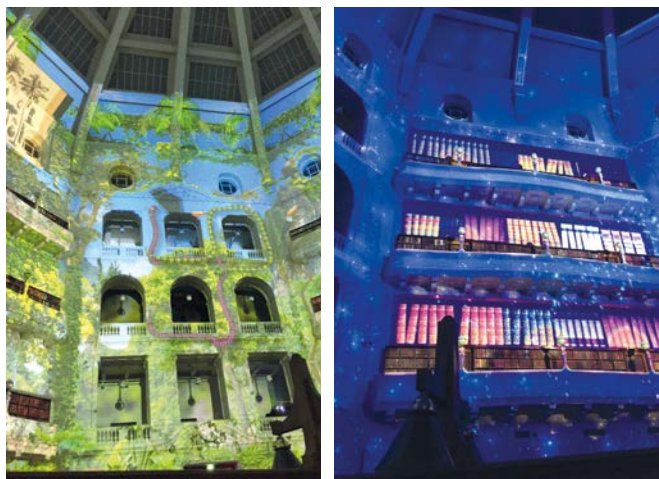
At the National Heritage Board, my department looks after Singapore's largest outdoor museum – its 72 National Monuments – and we're constantly thinking of how to share our love for these buildings with everyone else. Earlier this year, I went on a fortnight-long adventure to Melbourne sponsored by the Friends of the Museums to learn how Melbourne celebrates its built heritage. What I experienced did not disappoint.

State Library of Victoria

The original building was officially opened in 1856 yet the State Library of Victoria is very 'Instagrammable'. At more than 150,000 posts, the library and its La Trobe Reading Room in particular, grace many an Instagram feed. Established in 1853, it is Australia's oldest public library. It is also the original site of both the Melbourne Museum and the National Gallery.

The dome over the reading room is one of the most loved parts of the building, and perhaps the most written about – with its own microsite filled with details of the architecture and engineering behind the spaces, quotes, interviews, stories, photographs and creative pieces. Academic Mark Bilandzic says, "It's places like the dome that make libraries very exciting. Architecture affects your creativity, it affects your thinking, it affects your wellbeing."

But the library also taught me this, that stories and storeys can come together in magical ways. As part of *White Night Melbourne*, the library shone a projection, *The Secret Life of Books*, on all the walls of their famous reading room. The 45-minute outdoor queue to get into the room was well worth the wait.



The Secret Life of Books by DAE *White Night* & *The Electric Canvas*, at the State Library of Victoria, *White Night Melbourne* 2018

The projection begins with a security guard checking that there's no one left in the library after hours. As soon as he leaves, the books on the shelf spring to life, and open up to reveal new worlds – noisy jungles crawling with colourful snakes, the great wide ocean and the beautiful cosmos. The images in the projection were taken from and inspired by the library's collections. What a creative, respectful celebration of the library's collections and architecture!

Spotswood Sewage Pumping Station

I also had the opportunity to explore the Spotswood Sewage Pumping Station, which was completed in 1896 and was a key component of Melbourne's first centralised sewerage systems. The station complex contains the most intact collection of historical buildings and equipment of its kind in all of Australia. One of the stationary steam engines still works. It may not have a particularly appetising story, but its position as the building that saved Melbourne from its old nickname "Smellbourne" through engineering and improvement in sanitation, is unparalleled.



Spotswood Sewage Pumping Station at ScienceWorks

The pumping station is located away from the city centre, and is part of ScienceWorks, Melbourne's science centre. It has been described by *Atlas Obscura*, a guide to secret places around the world, as "an industrial triumph" hidden in a "youth-centric science centre". While the building has been preserved and there are interpretive storyboards and interactive displays, not many programmes are held here and there are few visitors. The Victoria Heritage Register asserts its architectural importance as "an extraordinary example of the Late French Empire Style employed in an industrial complex". The spaces, with their warm lights and unassuming objects, seemed to welcome me. As I explored, I was struck by how all the different preserved components came together to tell a story of industrialisation and public health.

Both buildings are beautiful in their own ways – though one is arguably more readable than the other (in more ways than one). One is unashamedly beautiful and confident, with colourful programmes; the other is quiet and unassuming (maybe even a little stinky, given its history) – but both have stayed true to their stories. And maybe that's all we really need – behind those storeys are stories.

Sarah Teo is the Manager (Policy and Education) of the Preservation of Sites and Monuments, National Heritage Board. She was a recipient of the 2017 FOM-NHB Grant.

All photos by the author

First Tentative Steps

By Heather Muirhead

It all started in September 2014. The Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore wanted to start running free, guided walking tours around Chinatown to promote the area's heritage, diversity and conservation and who did they approach to help them achieve this? The Friends of the Museums (FOM), of course.



First tentative steps

An open meeting was called for all FOM members who were interested in finding out more information and about 25 people turned up. Of these, 12 stepped forward under the leadership of Victoria Ford. It was decided to concentrate on the small, relatively unknown area of Bukit Pasoh. We decided to individually research one topic to be shared within the group. This could be architecture, clans, history, communities, personalities, etc. When we had gathered this information together we all set about planning our routes, doing more research, writing our scripts and walking the area over and over again. Finally, we presented our tours to the group and started on this fascinating journey of guiding heritage trails.



The first Bukit Pasoh trail conducted by URA/FOM

In 2016 we came under the aegis of FOM's Overall Heads of Training for the first time and a recognised FOM training programme was formulated, with in-house presentations, outside speakers and excursions. The areas guided were expanded to three, Bukit Pasoh, Telok Ayer and Kreta Ayer.



We were accompanied by lion dancers for our first ever heritage trail

Only two of the original group remained but with new, recently graduated docents, we were able to offer tours each Friday and Saturday.

In 2017 the final area, Tanjong Pagar, was added. Also, the number of tours guided and active docents was expanded by another training session. Currently we run tours every Friday and Saturday morning and if you haven't been on one yet, please do join us to visit these hidden places while listening to the engaging stories of this rich and vibrant part of Singapore.



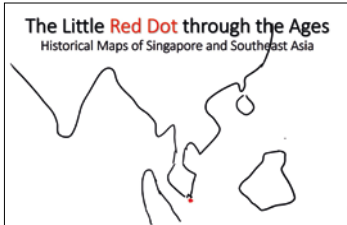
The very first tour of Telok Ayer

Heather Muirhead has been with URA/FOM Trails from the beginning and is the only one remaining from the original batch. She has been the Head of Training for the two programmes conducted so far and is also a coordinator. She guides in three of the four precincts and remains fascinated by the variety of stories and peoples to be found in this one small area of Singapore.

All photos courtesy of the author

Monday Morning Lectures

Starting **September 2018**, the lectures will be held in the Ngee Ann Auditorium (in the basement) or in the River Room (level 2), the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM), 1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555. They will begin promptly at 11:00 am. Refreshments will be provided. Latecomers are asked to enter via the rear door.



3 September: The Little Red Dot through the Ages

Speaker: Howesiang Tan

This talk is about old maps dating from the 1400s to the 1600s and

their connections to the early history of Singapore. When did the name 'Singapore' (or its earlier versions) first appear on maps? When did Singapore first become an island on maps? These and other questions will be explored in the talk. Howesiang will try to spice up his presentation with stories of piracy, espionage and romance.



10 September: Catherine of Braganza: Her Life and Her Legacy

Speaker: Mary Scott

In 1662 a young and innocent Portuguese princess, Catherine of Braganza, married Europe's most eligible and incorrigible bachelor, England's Charles II. Her dowry, the largest ever in Europe at the

time, helped expand the English East India Company, while Catherine herself fuelled a frenzy in England for the exotic trade goods she brought with her and launched the nation on its long love affair with tea.

17 September: NO LECTURE (Formula 1 event)



24 September: Tara, the Buddhist Saviouress

Speaker: Pia Rampal

Tara, the supreme saviouress of Buddhism, is deeply revered throughout the Indo-Himalayas. Her name derives from the verb *taar* meaning to cross, as a star crosses the night sky. Through beautiful art

created for her worship, we trace Tara's dramatic rise from her tentative start in India in the sixth century to becoming the "Mother of the Tibet" by the 14th century.



1 October 2018: Asian Port Cities and Asian Civilisations Museum

Speaker: Kennie Ting

Kennie will share his love for and interest in Asian port cities. He will

highlight his journeys through Asian port cities, what he has learnt from these journeys and how he has translated his learning into narratives for the galleries in the Asian Civilisations Museum.



8 October 2018: How Modern Painting Transitioned to Contemporary Art in Southeast Asia

Speaker: Iola Lenzi

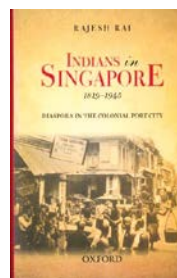
In this talk, Iola Lenzi explores the connection between social/political change in Southeast Asian nation-building and its artistic development from the 1970s onward. Through examples, she argues that social change experienced throughout the region informed new art methodologies and aesthetics such that regional artists expanded their practice beyond conventional representational painting.



15 October: The Art of Mughal Miniature Painting: From Folk to Contemporary

Speaker: Durriya Dohadwala

The illustrated memoirs of India's first Mughal emperor Babur, the *Baburnama*, is well-known for its exquisite miniature paintings. While this art form lost patronage and value in British India, it found a new life in Pakistan. The lecture traces the evolution of miniature painting from its traditional art form in India to its practice in Pakistan today and discusses how it has changed in terms of technique, medium, form and content.



22 October: Indians in Singapore: Diaspora in the Colonial Port City

Speaker: Rajesh Rai

Since the establishment of British colonial rule in Singapore, Indians have constituted a minority here. Focusing on this important component of Singapore's cultural mosaic, Rajesh Rai explores the formation and development of the Indian diaspora, from the establishment of colonial rule to the end of the Japanese Occupation, revealing the dynamism of diasporic identities in the port city's landscape.



29 October: Peranakans and Photography: Invention, Reinvention and the Camera's Role in Cultural Disorder

Speaker: Peter Lee

Images of people from the dawn of photography to the present expose the complex relationship between cameraman, camera and subject. The negotiations between these three elements produce diverse results, depending on variables such as the subject's mood. In the multicultural environments of port cities, posed studio photographs and amateur snapshots reveal this inconsistency and diversity of expression, also apparent in photographs of members of Peranakan communities across Southeast Asia.

Explore Singapore!

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



The Enchanting World of Chinese Opera

Thursday 6 September
10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Fee: \$25

Have you ever watched a Chinese opera performance and been mesmerised? Join us for a visit to a shop selling Chinese opera paraphernalia and learn about the introduction of Chinese opera to Singapore, the different types of

opera, the main roles, meanings and symbolism of the costumes and accessories, as well as the movements, gestures and painted faces of the performers.

To better appreciate this programme, before attending please watch some Chinese opera performances on the internet or live at one of the many Chinese temples during the Hungry Ghost month (11 August – 8 September).



The Koi in Chinese and Japanese Culture

Thursday 20 September
10:00 am – 12:30 pm
Fee: \$30

The *koi* (carp), has a special place in Chinese and Japanese culture and is the fish most depicted in their art as a symbol of good fortune, success, prosperity, longevity, courage and perseverance. Join ES! for a tour of Singapore's largest koi farm and learn about the koi's history

and its relevance in Chinese and Japanese culture. Our guide will also explain the different koi varieties and their symbolic meanings, the criteria for highly prized koi and the breeding methods.

We will also take you to an ornamental fish farm. You will see some of the most popular varieties and the amazing high-tech methods used in their breeding, feeding and maintenance. To round off the morning, you will be treated to a free fish spa session.



Haw Par Villa (Tiger Balm Gardens)

Thursday 4 October
10:30 am – 12:00 pm
Fee: \$25

In 1978, the year that FOM was founded, one of the "must sees" in Singapore was Haw Par

Villa (aka Tiger Balm Gardens). As more attractions were built, Haw Par Villa declined in popularity and faded from tourist itineraries and Singaporeans' memories. In recent years it has been revived and is now enjoying a come-back.

Haw Par Villa is a theme park, built in 1937 by Aw Boon Haw, aka the Tiger Balm King, to showcase Chinese folklore, legends, history and Confucian ideology. Come and experience a unique part of old Singapore, both bizarre and fascinating, and hear the intriguing stories behind the park and the illustrious Aw brothers.



Singapore River Sunset Cruise and Walk

Thursday 18 October
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Fee: \$40 (including boat trip)

Around the time FOM was formed, the government decided (in

1977) to clean up the Singapore River and transform it from a natural sewer to its present state – from a commercial lifeline to a waterside entertainment and recreation centre. The makeover took 10 years. As part of FOM's 40th anniversary commemoration, join us on this special tour to reminisce about the old river and contrast the new with the old. We will first take a history walk along the riverside, then board a bumboat at Clarke Quay for a 45-minute ride to Marina Bay amid imposing old civic buildings and skyscrapers.



Nostalgic Singapore – Life in Old Singapore and Things of the Past

Thursday 25 October
9:00 am – 12:30 pm
Fee: \$35 (including bus)

In urbanised Singapore, it is hard to imagine that

50 years ago people lived in *kampongs* (villages). By the time FOM was founded, most of the *kampongs* were already gone, but ES! will take you on a visit to the sole surviving one to give you a glimpse of a totally different way of life in Singapore. Our bus will take us around the area to look at other places which may soon disappear. To complete this nostalgic tour, we will see a private collection of items once used by Singaporeans in their daily lives. We end with refreshments in a Black and White house.

Textile Enthusiasts Group

Study Group



Programme: The Pen, the Block and the Loom

Speaker: Marina Thayil

Date: Friday 28 September

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

Location: Indian Heritage Centre

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

For centuries, India has been clothing the world through the export of cotton textiles. The popularity of the material was due to the fabulous colour fast dyes extracted from plants and minerals. The beautiful patterns were created by skilled craftsmen



An example of the pattern created using these techniques

through painting, block printing or weaving and advanced techniques of mordant and resist dyeing. This lecture looks at the history of the trade and some of the oldest textiles preserved in museums in Singapore and abroad.

About the speaker: Marina Thayil has been an FOM docent since 2008 at the Asian Civilisations Museum and after it opened, also at the Indian Heritage Centre. She has completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art from the School of Oriental and African Art, London.

Programme: *Kumihimo*: A talk and workshop on Japanese braiding

Speaker: Kim Arnold

Date: Friday 19 October

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

Location: TBA

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

Please join Kim Arnold for an informal talk on *Kumihimo*, its history, techniques and some current uses. These intricate braids have been used in Japan for centuries and are traditionally made with silk threads using specialised stands. Kim will explore their historical uses and discuss methods, materials, stands and shapes. After the talk, interested participants will have the opportunity to learn the *Edo Yatsu Gumi*, an eight-strand braided cord. Kim Arnold is a co-coordinator of both TEG and Asian Study Group.



An example of an eight-braided cord, from Creative Collection by Wende Beck

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. Every 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.



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 Museums 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?

Kuo Pao Kun, social-political playwright

From 1978 to now: Comparative statistics for Singapore and Asia

The Cambodian / Vietnamese War

Laying the Groundwork for Technological Innovation: Sony's amazing products



Chinatown and Kampong Gelam Heritage Trails

Register for the URA/FOM Chinatown Heritage Trails one week before the trails, on this website; www.eventbrite.sg/o/urban-redevelopment-authority-7497466443

New Heritage Trails around Kampong Gelam

FOM is also embarking on an exciting, new venture. After a successful training programme in May and June this year and in collaboration with the Malay Heritage Foundation we are conducting Heritage Trails around Kampong Gelam! These will be bimonthly, on Wednesday mornings and Saturday afternoons. Each trail will be one and a half hours long. Come with us to walk the streets and hear about the history, culture, architecture, food and trades of this fascinating area.

Registration for these trails will also be on the Eventbrite site;

www.eventbrite.sg/e/kampong-gelam-heritage-trail-tickets-48637961452



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Anniversaries - Older and Better

By Darly Furlong



When you have museums, you need docents to tell their stories in an engaging manner to a far-reaching audience, so Friends of the Museums (FOM) was launched in 1978 to fill a gap. Turning 40 this year, we partner with the National Heritage Board (NHB) to provide docent training and guiding services for nine different museums, run a lecture series and hold study groups.

Following a decision to upgrade the newsletter to a full-colour magazine, FOM launched *PASSAGE* magazine in 2008. It contains features and articles regarding permanent collections, special exhibitions, local history, art, travel etc. Join us in celebrating the significant anniversaries of both FOM and *PASSAGE* this year.



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



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Japanese Docents

As a proud and appreciative member of the FOM community, the Japanese docents (JDs) congratulate this wonderful organisation on its 40th anniversary!

The JDs started Japanese-language tours at NMS in October 1982, four years after the founding of FOM, with just two Japanese FOM members. Since then, the JD group has grown in the number of members and coverage of museums. We now have 69 members and guide at four museums (NMS, SAM, ACM and TPM).

Compared with most of the FOM groups, the JDs have perhaps a unique approach to our activities. For example, all our members are active docents; we are not allowed to take longer than three months off. Everyone has to guide in at least two museums (some docents guide all four of the museums).

Guiding schedules are assigned by a scheduler so that all the docents have an equal opportunity for guiding in each museum. All the translation works are also equally divided among the docents.

Our approach may sound strange to non-Japanese people. However, this system works well in Japanese groups as most Japanese people see the benefit of having a required minimum number of commitments and do not wish to stand



out too much. Finally, the biggest commitment in JD activities is, I believe, joining the committee. In order to share the burden, all the members have to take committee roles twice. In the photo are the JD committee members for the second half of this year. We look forward to contributing to FOM in the future as well.

Satoko Kira, JD Coordinator 2



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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.

Gillman Barracks

9 Lock Road, Singapore 108937
www.gillmanbarracks.com



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

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

FOM guided tours:
Sat 4:00 pm: Art & History Tour
Sat. 5:00 pm: History and Heritage Tour
To register please visit www.fom-gillman-barracks.eventbrite.com

DISINI (through 30 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.

Trees of Life – Knowledge in Material (through 30 September)

NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore embarks on an inquiry into natural materials, exploring the knowledge they embody as biological forms as well as within social, geopolitical, and historical contexts. *Trees of Life – Knowledge in Material* is part of the centre's long-term research cluster CLIMATES. HABITATS. ENVIRONMENTS. The exhibition features works by Manish Nai (India), Phi Phi Oanh (United States/Vietnam), Sopheap Pich (Cambodia), Liang Shaoji and Vivian Xu (both China) that serve as a starting point to uncover the biological processes and diverse usages of indigo, lacquer, rattan and mulberry silk, respectively.

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.

Chetti Melaka of the Straits – Rediscovering Peranakan Indian Communities (through May 2019)

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

Malay Heritage Centre

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



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

The Malay Heritage Centre (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

Museum Information and Exhibitions



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.

Rediscovering Forgotten Thai Masters of Photography (through 1 December)

An artist research project by Thai photographer Manit 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 February 2019)

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.

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*.

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



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