

FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUMS (SINGAPORE)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

October 2022 to September 2023 (for 20th AGM, 6 Dec 2023)

Introduction

Friends of the Museums, Singapore (or FOM) began in 1978 and was registered as a society in 2004 to support Singapore museums with guiding services. We also offer volunteer and learning opportunities for FOM members and the community at large, with a focus on the history, art and culture of Asia. FOM also organises events, activities and training programmes towards this.

FOM has over the years become a multicultural and diverse community. Our membership as of 30 Sept 2023 was 1,627, with members from over 40 countries.

Museum Programmes

At the heart of FOM's mission is service to the museums, heritage institutions and walking trails. This year, we continued to guide for the following, in alphabetical order:

1. Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM)
2. Changi Chapel and Museum (CCM)
3. Gillman Barracks (GB), now under the oversight of the Singapore Land Authority (SLA)
4. Indian Heritage Centre (IHC)
5. Malay Heritage Centre (MHC) – (currently closed for a revamp).
6. MHC-Kampong Gelam Heritage Trails (now run in partnership with MHC)
7. National Museum of Singapore (NMS) – Level 2 galleries are currently closed for a staged renovation).
8. Singapore Art Museum (or SAM) at its Tanjong Pagar Distripark location, where we started guiding again in June this year.
9. STPI Creative Workshop & Gallery (STPI)
10. Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall (SYSNMH)
11. We have also begun guiding again at The Peranakan Museum, which reopened on 17 Feb this year. And,
12. URA-FOM Chinatown walking tours in four precincts

This financial year, FOM docents, including the Japanese docents, conducted **3,767** tours for **31,078** visitors. In addition, FOM docents also guided special exhibitions, such as:

1. Now Boarding (Experiencing Singapore Through Travel 1800s – 2000s), at NMS
2. Batik Kita, Body & Spirit, and Andrew Gn's Fashioning Singapore and the World at ACM. (Manila Galleons just opened in mid-November.)
3. The 2022 Singapore Biennale Natasha at SAM
4. Connections Across Oceans (Early Chinese Mutual Aid Organisations) at SYSNMH
5. The Japanese docents also guided Doraemon at NMS

6. Our docents across museums also got together to research and help guide the Yip Yew Chong Exhibition entitled “I Paint My Singapore” now on at the Raffles City Convention Centre.

Docent Training

This year, we had a total of 124 new docents freshly minted at the ACM, NMS, CCM, IHC, Chinatown Heritage Trails, TPM and Gilman Barracks, including new Japanese docents. This is double last year’s numbers.

Currently, we have 99 trainee docents attending training at ACM, NMS, STPI, Kg Gelam Heritage Trails and Japanese docent training.

Member Activities – MML & Open Morning

The new season of Monday Morning Lectures (or MML) opened on the 4th of September this year. Together with a vibrant and busy Open Morning, we celebrated FOM’s 45th anniversary with a VIP speaker, Prof Tommy Koh, Ambassador-at-Large with our Foreign Ministry. Prof Koh made a speech and helped us cut a lovely two-tier birthday cake – for FOM’s 45th and PASSAGE’s 15th year.

Communications & Tech Refresh

In our outreach to members, we continue to send out the weekly electronic Newsletters refreshed with more activities covered and a Note from the President. The FOM website, FOM’s Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts also keep members and the public informed about our activities.

In 2023, FOM had a successful social media presence, engaging members and the public with social media campaigns on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube celebrating the invaluable contributions of our volunteers.

The #FacesOfFOM series, which was done in the lead-up to our annual Open Morning event in September, showcased our volunteers across our activities and museums, highlighting the breadth of knowledge and talents that FOM volunteers bring, and the collaboration that helps our unique FOM community thrive.

Another notable social media campaign featured our recent docent trainees who shared their docent training experiences and motivations. The campaign was done as a teaser to our annual Public Information Meeting and helped to generate interest for our docent training.

Looking ahead, FOM is embarking on a tech refresh project to upgrade the tech stack of our FOM website and back-end system to ensure the security of our systems. The project is expected to be completed in early 2024. Some minor enhancements are also in the works, including PayNow instant credit notification, and a digital membership card.

Accounting Refresh

FOM has appointed Singapore Corporate Services to provide our Book Keeping functions as at October 2023. We have also migrated to a new accounting system. The appointment and new accounting software will help FOM streamline and automate operational tasks, and ensure accurate depository of documents to support the annual audit process and professional continuity.

Marketing & PASSAGE

Due to our active marketing efforts, FOM welcomed 348 new members this financial year, bringing the total membership to 1,627. Several new advertisers have also been signed for PASSAGE magazine, which we continue to produce for members. We also sponsored copies for guests at the grand re-opening of TPM.

Volunteer Recognition and Appreciation

This year, we had a VAN instead of a VAM. We held our annual Volunteer Appreciation at night instead of in the morning. This was a welcome change and we had a smashing night of dancing to the theme of FOM Studio 45, complete with disco balls, at the rooftop of the Scarlet Hotel in Chinatown. 365 volunteers were invited to attend. 99 members were also awarded service pins: 40 for the 3-year pin, 19 for the 5-year pin, 22 for the 10-year pin, 11 for the 15-year pin, 4 for the 20-year pin and 3 for an incredible 25 years.

The Salome De Decker Award for this year's outstanding FOM volunteer was presented to Hilary White for her enthusiasm, energy, good humour and 11 years of dedicated service to FOM.

Philanthropy

FOM continued its commitment through the FOM-National Heritage Board Heritage Grant, which gives our museums' education and programme staff members the opportunity to gain valuable experience at the world's leading museums. This year, the grant, which is matched by NHB, went to Stella Chan, Senior Manager (Engagement), Heritage Policy and Research, and MHC Assistant Curator Muhammad Zinnurain Bin Mohd Nasir.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we find FOM at the end of FY23 active and in good shape, not just financially but also in the myriad activities we continue to organise for our members, and at the same time contributing in no small way to the vibrant arts, history and heritage scene in Singapore.

Thank you.



Millie Phuah
President
Friends of the Museums (Singapore), Nov 2023