

THE YEAR IN REFLECTION

Mindful of the World

“The Singapore Art Museum showcases the fine skills of artists in Singapore and other ASEAN countries. The museum is also a place to display the history and invaluable fine arts of all ASEAN countries.”

– His Excellency Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister of the Lao PDR, 18 February 2008



*Sometimes, to appreciate art, one only needs to sit back and bask in its beauty.
(The Big Picture Show, Singapore Art Museum)*

Over the past year, NHB has expanded the horizons of visitors by going beyond Singapore's heritage to explore the rich diversity of art and cultures from around the globe.

GLOBAL BLOCKBUSTERS

NHB hosted a range of world-class exhibitions with rare cultural offerings in 2007. Visitors to the National Museum of Singapore were treated to the much-acclaimed *Greek Masterpieces from the Louvre* exhibition which featured 130 priceless artefacts from the Classical Greek and Hellenistic periods. The exhibition received rave reviews and garnered a healthy visitorship of almost 90,000 over 100 days.

The Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) organised its first comprehensive exhibition on Buddhism with *On the Nalanda Trail: Buddhism in India, China and Southeast Asia*. Featuring exceptional paintings from the Dunhuang grottoes, rare sculptures from India and Indonesia and the bone relics of Buddha (with special permission from the Indian government), the exhibition captured the imagination of nearly 70,000 people. During a private viewing hosted for political leaders attending the *East Asia Summit*, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong thanked his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh for the Indian government's strong support of the show.

In an earlier collaboration with the Louvre Museum, the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) presented *Engraving the World* which chronicled the development of copper engraving. The museum also featured exhibitions by acclaimed Chinese contemporary artists Zeng Fanzhi and Feng Zhengjie, Indonesian artists Widayat and Affandi, as well as local fashion designer Benny Ong's Laotian-inspired contemporary art in *Re-Woven: Featuring the Works of Benny Ong*.

EXPORTING OUR CULTURAL CAPITAL

Expanding our cultural influence, NHB museums worked with established counterparts to showcase our art and heritage internationally. At the National Art Museum of China, SAM exhibited the works of three local artists in *Encounters and Journeys 2* as part of the *Singapore Season*, during which a Memorandum of Understanding between the two museums was inked.

SAM also strengthened ties with South Korea, promoting cultural exchange with various Korean art institutions. It participated in *City_net Asia 2007* in Seoul, making Singapore the first Southeast



Asian country to curate and present an exhibition in this major arts show. The museum also travelled its exhibition – *From the Everyday to the Imagined: An Exhibition of Indian Art* to the Museum of Art, Seoul National University.

CULTIVATING INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIPS

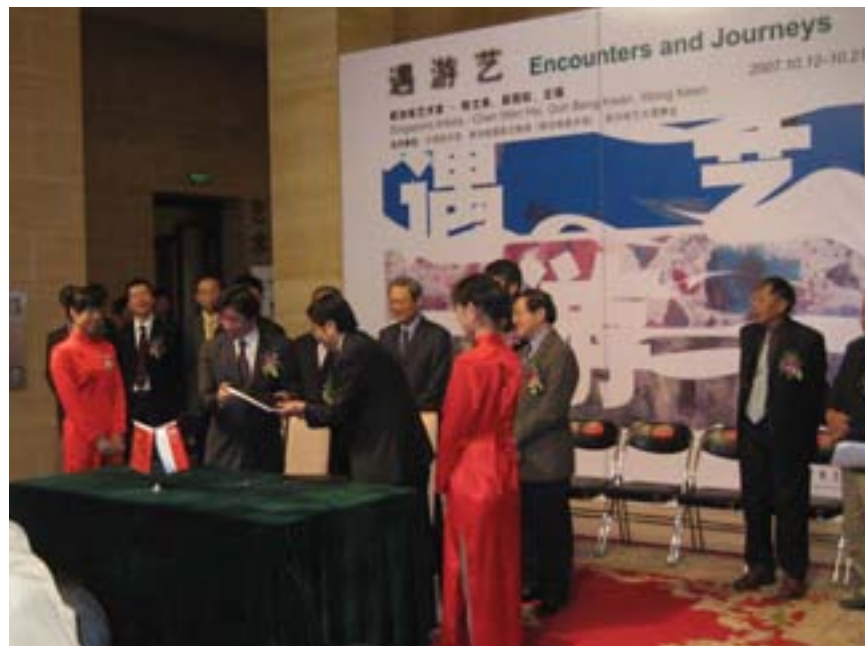
NHB paid tribute to museum volunteers worldwide when it hosted 49 global museum volunteers in the *World Federation of Friends of Museums General Assembly and Council Meeting*, which was organised by the Friends of the Museums (Singapore) and supported by NHB. Held for the first time in Asia, the meeting provided an invaluable opportunity for Singapore to exchange ideas on cultural volunteerism with friends around the globe.

In an ongoing effort to strengthen regional cultural ties, NHB Chairman Professor Tommy Koh led a 21-member delegation on a study trip to Myanmar. The trip paved the way for artefact loans to Singapore and the staging of a festival on Myanmar civilisations to be held here in 2011.

Celebrate ASEAN! was a thematic festival held in conjunction with the regional grouping's 40th anniversary. It featured ASEAN-focused events and exhibitions, including *ASEAN: What we have in common* staged by the Singapore Philatelic Museum (SPM) and *Many Traditions, One Strand – Textiles of the ASEAN Countries* at ACM.

SPM and the ASEAN Committee On Culture and Information (COCI) jointly organised the inaugural *Youth ASEAN Stamp Exhibition* which promoted knowledge and friendship among youths from all 10 ASEAN countries. A total of 68 stamp frames, together with nine guest exhibits from Cambodia, Vietnam and Australia, were displayed.

To promote Singapore and Southeast Asian art while furthering international research and scholarship, SAM partnered Yayasan YDY Nusantara of Indonesia to set up the New Contemporary





Art Centre. This is located in Songzhuang, the hub of Chinese contemporary art in Beijing.

WHERE GREAT MINDS MEET

Singapore museums hosted their share of VIPs. At the National Museum, His Excellency Celso Amorim, Minister of Foreign Relations of the Federative Republic of Brazil, had an exclusive tour of the *Greek Masterpieces from the Louvre* exhibition while Mr Tsang Tak-Sing, Hong Kong's Secretary of Home Affairs, toured the museum's Singapore History Gallery.

Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited ACM, including its Islamic galleries. Heads of state from the European Union and Korea as well as heads of government from several Southeast Asian countries, India and New Zealand also gathered to view the *On the Nalanda Trail* exhibition during the *East Asia Summit*. Other visitors to ACM included Prince Philipp of Liechtenstein and the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of London.



Prominent visitors to SAM included His Excellency Thongloun Sisoulith, Lao Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister, Professor Yuli Tamir, Education Minister of Israel, Mr Alain Seban, Chairman of the Centre Pompidou in France, and Mr Robert Sirman, Director of the Canadian Arts Council.

The National Archives of Singapore played host to overseas visitors and counterparts such as Mr Mohammad Al-Romy, Director of Research and Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kuwait, a team of archives building consultants from Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, delegates from Ministry of Interior Czech Republic and representatives from Thailand's Buddhadasa Archives.

