

THE YEAR IN REFLECTION

Leading Minds

“Today’s *ASEAN Museum Directors’ Symposium* provides a particularly auspicious occasion to forge partnerships as we determine together how we can ensure access to the heritage between and among colleagues for that which we hold for the benefit of all.”

– Ms Alissandra Cummins, *President of International Council of Museums*, 3 July 2007



Regional and global museum leaders at the first ASEAN Museum Directors' Symposium organised by the Heritage Conservation Centre.

Showcasing its thought leadership regionally and locally, NHB institutions created opportunities for intellectual discourse amongst members of the museum and heritage fraternity.



SPEARHEADING REGIONAL AND LOCAL SCHOLARSHIP

The inaugural *ASEAN Museum Directors' Symposium* saw some 100 ASEAN museum leaders exchanging ideas and experiences while fostering ties with their learned counterparts. Held in conjunction with ASEAN's 40th anniversary and Singapore's chairing of the group, its theme *Making Museums Matter* invited discussions on wide ranging issues and challenges faced by museums today. The meeting was so successful that a second run of the symposium was proposed for 2009, with Singapore once again taking on the organising role.

The Singapore Art Museum (SAM) organised the second *Asian Art Museum Directors' Forum* focusing on issues facing Asian visual arts and art museum development. Art museum directors and

professionals from 28 institutions across Asia met in Singapore for this event held in November 2007. The forum helped to forge a comprehensive network among Asian museums, art faculties and cultural institutions. In November, SAM also hosted a well-received dialogue session with Nobel laureate and artist Gao Xingjian, following his first Asian retrospective exhibition at the museum in 2005.

The National Museum and Asia Research Institute organised the forum *The Past in the Present: Histories in the Making* which brought together museum professionals, historians and novelists. Issues and challenges involved in researching and presenting the past were shared and the audience learnt how history has been presented through different channels and methods.

NHB's annual seminar *Heritage in Education* was attended by about 530 school and MOE representatives. During the two-day dialogue session, NHB presented on its key highlights and school programmes while teachers and students shared their learning experiences in heritage-related projects. NHB also launched an online *Heritage Activities Calendar* specially for educators.

PIONEERING MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Showcasing Singapore's pioneering political minds, the National Archives of Singapore (NAS) chronicled the achievements of our first Cabinet in a roving exhibition *10 Years that Shaped a Nation*. The exhibition has travelled to 21 venues since its launch in July 2007. Up to March 2008, close to 195,000 people visited the exhibition. Interest has been so overwhelming that the exhibition is booked until November 2008.

NAS further proved its mettle when its critical research helped the International Court of Justice in The Hague reach a decision over the disputed island of Pedra Branca.





With a generous donation from Mrs Julia Oh, a dedicated museum volunteer of more than 25 years, NHB developed the *Julia Oh - NHB International Continuing Education Grant*. The first of its kind grant aims to enhance the expertise of young professionals in the areas of museum archival or conservation-related work, through attachments with top institutions overseas. The grant of S\$10,000 a year is matched dollar for dollar by NHB.

DRIVING DIGITAL MINDSHARE

NHB won the *20th Annual CIO 100 Award* by leading magazine CIO for its innovative suite of e-services applications targeted at the heritage sector. This suite, collectively named Integrated Museum and Archival System, encompassed the Integrated Museum Collection Management System as well as public-facing portals including the *Singapore Family Tree*, *Eventshub* and *Singapore Collections Online (SGCOOL)*.

Eventshub is the preferred e-calendar in use by 23 government agencies and two private companies. It surpassed the 950,000 page views mark and over two million hits per month. NHB's management of the popular *Culture-Recreation-Sports eTown* has also anchored the website firmly in the public's mind with monthly page views exceeding 200,000.

SGCOOL, Singapore's first online museum collection management system, was launched in May 2007. This virtual repository provides easy public access to NHB's collection. Our heritage and museums blogsite *yesterday.sg* helped to promote the site by launching a blogging competition *New Kids On The Blog* which was well received by teenagers and young adults.

Yesterday.sg increased its share of online interest by recording more than 300,000 page views and 150,000 unique visitors in FY2007. NHB also launched the *MyStory* portal at the *Singapore HeritageFest* in 2007 to encourage IT-savvy young Singaporeans to share their memories and stories, making heritage more relevant for them.

DEVELOPING REGIONAL CAPABILITIES

To heighten professionalism in the industry, NAS hosted an ASEAN Committee On Culture and Information (COCI) workshop to raise expertise in records preservation. Archivists, librarians and curators from the region as well as several Chinese archivists from Wuxi Municipal Archives Bureau learnt about NAS's experience in building an efficient archival repository, its "green features" as well as its operations at other training courses and workshops.

Maintaining its cutting edge lead in conservation, the Heritage Conservation Centre (HCC) organised in-house workshops and lectures by world-renowned conservators. They included Dr Robert Barclay from the Canadian Conservation Institute, University of Melbourne's Nicole Tse, and Mike Wheeler of the Victoria and Albert Museum in the United Kingdom.

To share its best practices with Indonesian conservators, HCC conducted a month-long painting conservation workshop in Jakarta, Indonesia. This was done in collaboration with the TropenMuseum of Netherlands, Seni Rupa and the Jakarta History Museum.

