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**Headline:** Filling the gaps on fading memories

# Filling the gaps on fading memories

Share stories of your favourite places on video at Digital Homelands Singapore

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**H**OME is where the heart and, hopefully, the camera, is. The National Museum of Singapore is asking Singaporeans to share their memories and stories in digital video. Digital Homelands Singapore is a nation-wide project launched on Tuesday to encourage Singaporeans to document their favourite spaces and places in the form of a five- to eight-minute video.

There are no restrictions on genre, shooting format or video equipment used. All videos submitted will be vetted for content before being placed online for all to access.

Mr Tan Boon Hui, 36, acting deputy director of programmes at the museum, says: "When we re-opened, we said we were going to be the people's museum. This initiative evolved out of that."

"The project is not about film-making. We're trying to get as many Singaporeans to document for the museum their own memories and stories."

Kicking off the project are six videos commissioned by the museum and shot by three film-makers and three others, each of whom received \$3,000 to make their videos.

The three film-makers are Boo Junfeng, who won the Special Jury Award at the 20th Singapore International Film Festival for his short film *Katong Fugue*, television producer and director Sanif Olek and K. Rajagopal, who bagged the Singapore International Film Festival's Silver Screen Awards three years in a row from 1995 to 1997.

The other three were drawn from friends of staff or volunteers at the museum. They are Hong Kong-born, Singapore-based press editor Ina Chang, student Darren Ong and poet and playwright Robert Yeo.

The films include tributes to public areas such as Boon Lay and Bedok Jetty.

Rajagopal made a 13-minute short film about a boy growing up in 1960s Singapore, whose life parallels the fortunes of the now-defunct New World Amusement Park.

Calling the short film semi-autobiographical, the 43-year-old film and television director says: "I've a personal attachment to New World. I wanted to make a film about growing up and falling in love with film stars."

"My father couldn't afford to take me and my five siblings to watch films at New World when we were growing up. One day when I was 11, he took me there and told me not to tell the others. He waited for me outside while I watched a film inside. I realised later that he could afford to pay for only one ticket."

Members of the public will be able to watch these six films online or as part of a video installation at the museum in August.

Mr Tan says: "It's not a national education exercise. It's not a competition to win a prize. We hope to encourage people who have never made a film to become motivated to record their own stories."

One such person is Yeo, 68, who was one of the six commissioned to make a video. The poet and playwright made a five-minute video using a digital video camera about his former childhood home at 5 Valley Road in Hougang, where he lived for 29 years.

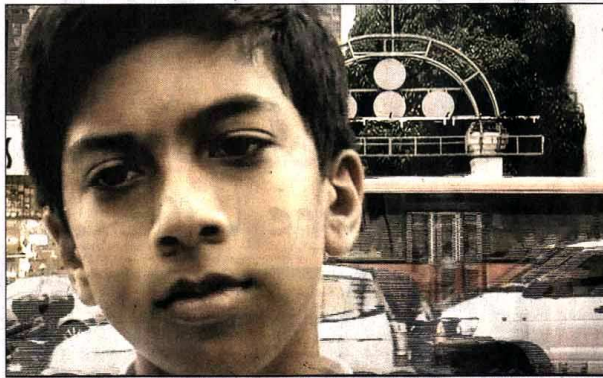
The family moved to Upper Thomson Road in the 1970s when the house was demolished.

He says of the one-day shoot: "All my memories are there. It was a kampung where everyone knew everyone and three generations of my family lived together."

"I'm sad that the past is gone. Practically every house in the area except a bakery was demolished."

That collective sense of loss is the reason Digital Homelands Singapore hopes to fill in the gaps on decimated pasts and fading memories.

Mr Tan says: "There's been a surge of interest in blogs and e-mail lists on the loss of certain places. The project is an attempt to make invisible memories visible and permanent."



PHOTOS: NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE  
MAKING MEMORIES VISIBLE:  
K. Rajagopal's (far left) film, *The New World* (above), is about a boy growing up in 1960s Singapore, while 5 Valley Rd, Owkang (right), is a film by Robert Yeo (left) on his childhood home in a kampung in Hougang.



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> Submission for Digital Homelands Singapore will close on April 30. Participants can either submit their videos online at [www.digitalhomelands.sg](http://www.digitalhomelands.sg) or via post to 93 Stamford Road.