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A New Chapter
for SHM

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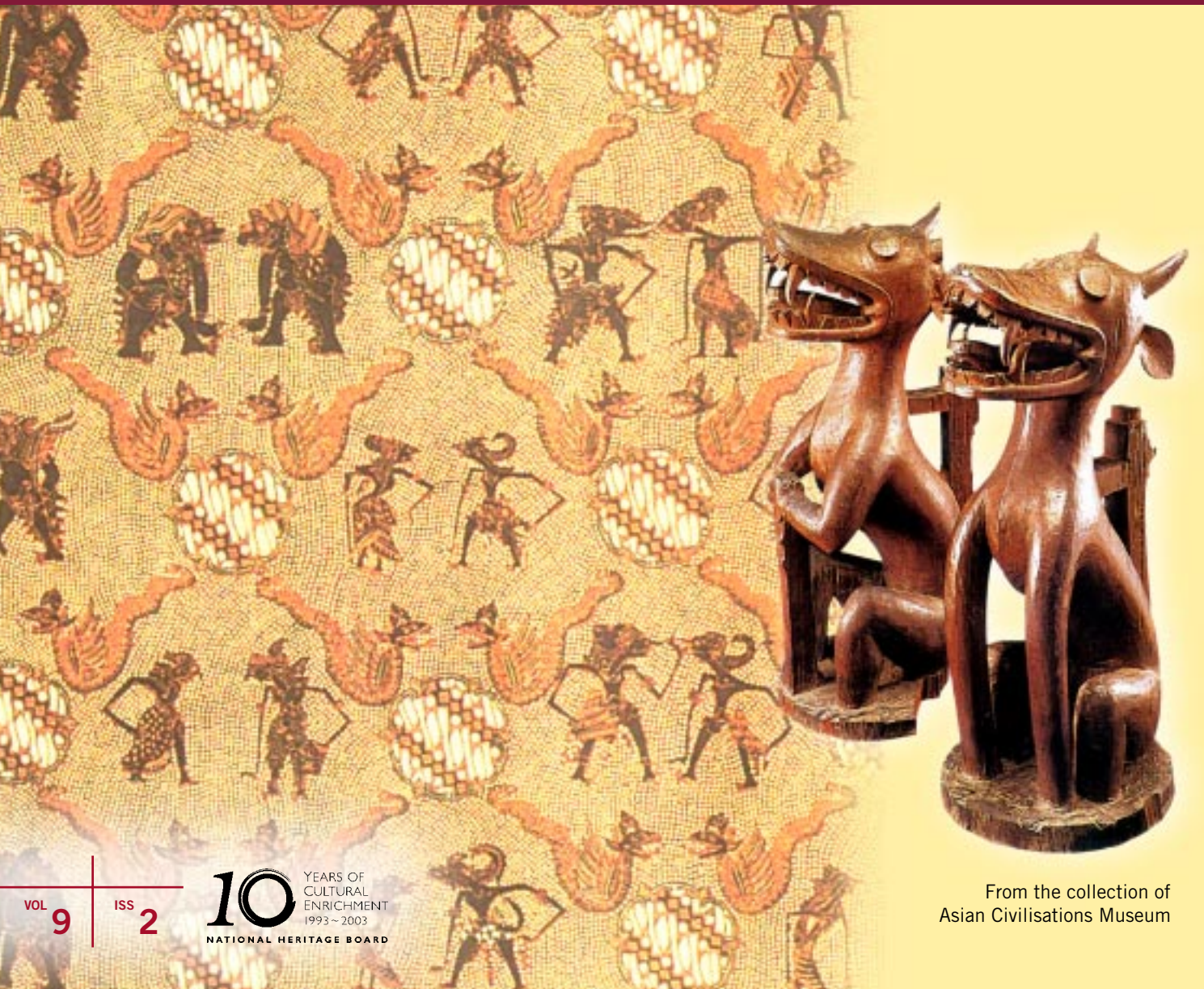
Exploring
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The Conservation
of a Guardian God

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ROOTS!
RHYTHM! BLEND!



Life has never been the same since mid-March 2003. We constantly hear about two wars; the Iraq War and the "war" against Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome or Sars. Now more than ever before, Singaporeans have begun to stock up on food, Vitamin C, thermometers, eat more dark coloured vegetables.

Whatever the case, the lesson we have to learn from these two incidents is that life must go on despite any kind of crisis. Our children must be taught to embrace any challenge and rise to the occasion rather than cower and say that everything is lost.

The Iraq war and even the 911 incident have taught us something. In both countries, mass destruction to property and life was experienced but life still goes on, in even the most adverse situations. And this is also seen in impoverished Third World countries. This attitude of saying that life must go on despite any adversity is a mindset we need to adopt now amidst the current economic, social and political scenario.

And this is why public places like our national museums are still open and our activities are still on going. If you have yet to visit the new Asian Civilisations Museum, Empress Place or had wanted to take in an art exhibition at the Singapore Art Museum or just simply wanted to walk a heritage trail, do it now. Become a local tourist and rediscover Singapore for yourself!

We hope that our exhibitions and activities will help you to not only become more aware of our unique cultural diversity but also teach you about the challenges that our forefathers underwent to build the Singapore we now know. Let their stories inspire you to overcome the current situation and meet any new challenges that threaten our social, economic and political stability. Together, we can tackle any challenge.

Calendar of Events (Apr - Jun 2003)

SHM

Singapore History Museum
93 Stamford Road
(S) 178897
T 6332 3659

PERMANENT EXHIBITIONS

Till 27 Apr 2003 ~

- ObjecTHINK!
- The Dioramas: A Visual History of Singapore
- Rumah Baba: Life in a Peranakan House
- William Farquhar: His Collection of Natural History Drawings and His Public Life
- The Jade House: The Haw Par Collection
- Singapore: 700 Years

TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

Till 27 Apr 2003 ~

- The Teochew Experience: An Exhibition on the Teochew Community in Singapore
- I Do, I Do: An Exhibition on Weddings and Marriages in Singapore

The Singapore History Museum at Stamford Road will be officially closed from 28 April 2003 for extensive redevelopment before opening again in 2006. There will be open house days on 25, 26, 27 April 2003, opening hours extended till 9pm.

CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY GALLERY

Till 27 Apr 2003 ~

- When I Was Born!

30 Merchant Road #03-09/17 Riverside Point
(S) 058282
T 6332 5642

TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

Till Aug 2003 ~

- Rivertales
- The Singapore Story: Overcoming the Odds (3D Show)

SAM

Singapore Art Museum
71 Bras Basah Road
(S) 189555
T 6332 3222

TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

Till 27 Apr 2003 ~

- 20th Century Chinese Paintings in Singapore Collections

Till 18 May 2003 ~

- The President's Young Talents Exhibition 2003

Till 13 Jul 2003 ~

- Art Figures: Mathematics in Art @ Art Exhibition Gallery (AEG)

From 24 Apr 2003 ~ 29 Feb 2004

- Highlights from the Singapore Art Museum Permanent Collection

From 15 May 2003 ~ 10 Aug 2003

- 4 Stories

ACM

Asian Civilisations Museum
39 Armenian St
(S) 179941
T 6332 3015

PERMANENT EXHIBITION

- The Peranakan Legacy

TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

Till May 2003 ~

- Chinese Paintings from the Dr Tan Tsze Chor Collection

Till 1 Jun 2003 ~

- Spirit of a Community: Mosques In Singapore

1 Empress Place
(S) 179555
T 6332 7798

PERMANENT EXHIBITIONS

- Singapore River Interpretative Gallery
- Southeast Asia Galleries
- Kwek Hong Png China Gallery
- West Asia/Islamic Galleries
- South Asia Galleries

NAS

National Archives of Singapore
1 Canning Rise
(S) 179868
T 6332 7911

FOYER EXHIBITION

From 15 Apr 2003 ~

- Orchardscape: From Spice Gardens to Shoppers' Paradise

TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS

- Family
- Five Footway Traders
- From Cradle to Grave: Indian Rites and Rituals
- From The Picture Press: The SPH Collection 1950-1965
- Guardians of Heritage
- Heritage In Photos 1950s-2000
- Helping Hands: Singapore's Social Service Past, Present, Future
- Kampong Days
- Pictorial History of Nee Soon
- Singapore National Monuments: Religious Buildings
- Singapore National Monuments: Civic and Commercial Buildings
- World War 2
- Singapore River
- Youth of Yesteryears

Free Admission to Singapore History Museum, Singapore Art Museum, Asian Civilisations Museum and Singapore Philatelic Museum on Open House Days.

** All information is correct at the time of printing. The National Heritage Board reserves the right to make changes without prior notice.*



NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD

Making Heritage An Enriching Part of Everyone's Life

140 Hill Street #03-02 MITA Building Singapore 179369

Website www.nhb.gov.sg

a NEW CHAPTER *for* SHM

Stephanie Ho, Manager (Educational Services)/ Singapore History Museum



The grand old dame at Stamford Road will be closed for redevelopment in late April 2003.

The Singapore History Museum (SHM) like the National Library, is a familiar landmark at Stamford Road. Many recognise the familiar dome and the "Living World" sculpture and know it as "the National Museum". But come 28 April 2003, the museum at Stamford Road will be closed. So what is going to happen to our grand dame?

The National Museum building which houses SHM will be preserved as it is a gazetted national monument. However, the interior will be renovated and a major extension block built behind it. This will increase the size of the museum by two and a half times. The renovation work will start in late April 2003.

The new SHM, scheduled to open in 2006, promises to be an exciting one-stop resource on Singapore history and heritage. You can expect a comprehensive core exhibition on Singapore's history, fascinating thematic exhibitions on Singapore social history, a resource centre, new shows and more. Modern facilities such as lifts, escalators, cafes and even a restaurant, will also make the museum more accessible and visitor-friendly.



The Living World Sculpture by Ju Ming.

SHM AT RIVERSIDE POINT FROM AUGUST 2003

Although the museum building at Stamford Road will be closed from April, SHM will continue to fulfil its role in National Education and will present Singapore history at a new location - Riverside Point. In August 2003, a new exhibition, *Rivertales* will open together with familiar favourites like the Children's Discovery Gallery and the 3-D Show, *The Singapore Story: Overcoming the Odds*.

Rivertales explores the history of Singapore through stories revolving around the Singapore River. It promises to be both an exhibition and a game. Specially designed for students aged 10 to 15 years, the basic idea behind the game is that children and teenagers will learn more when they enjoy and get involved. At the start, players will be briefed by a detective (on video) that a skull has been found in the Singapore River. They have to solve a mystery by looking for clues which are scattered throughout the interactive exhibition. They have to look carefully and read between the lines for the clues. Players can only solve the mystery by learning and thinking a great deal about the history of Singapore and its famous River.

So with these changes, SHM is writing a new and exciting chapter in her history. We invite you to visit our exhibitions, join in our activities and be a vital part of our history.

For more details about SHM's Redevelopment Project and our upcoming activities, please visit our website at <http://www.nhb.gov.sg/SHM/shm.shtml> X

FREE ADMISSION TO SHM
Open House Days: 25,26,27 April 2003 (3 days before closure)
Extended opening hours till 9pm



Riverside Point will be SHM's temporary home till 2006.



Exploring New Expressions

By Jean Wee, Manager (Education)/ Singapore Art Museum

Art, is all about changing ideas. Where it was once defined as “the art of imitating solid objects upon a flat surface by means of pigments”, it has evolved with time to include newer expressions and ideas. These include new and relatively new art forms such as installations, site-specific installations, new media and cyber art and conceptual art and dream (psychoanalytic) art. Conceptual art refers to the art resulting from a concept or an idea. Quite often, the artwork itself is the residue of the thought process and exists as documentation.

Installation art is a general term that applies to 3-dimensional artworks composed or assembled by a variety of materials (mixed media) to convey the artist's message. There are site-specific installation works, architectural installation as well as environmental installation works that span hillsides, buildings, bridges, etc.

Video art captures life and reality in motion. Sometimes, it documents an artist's struggles, soul searching, or perception and interaction of society, cultures and traditions.

If you think about it, art is just one of the many changes in everyday life.

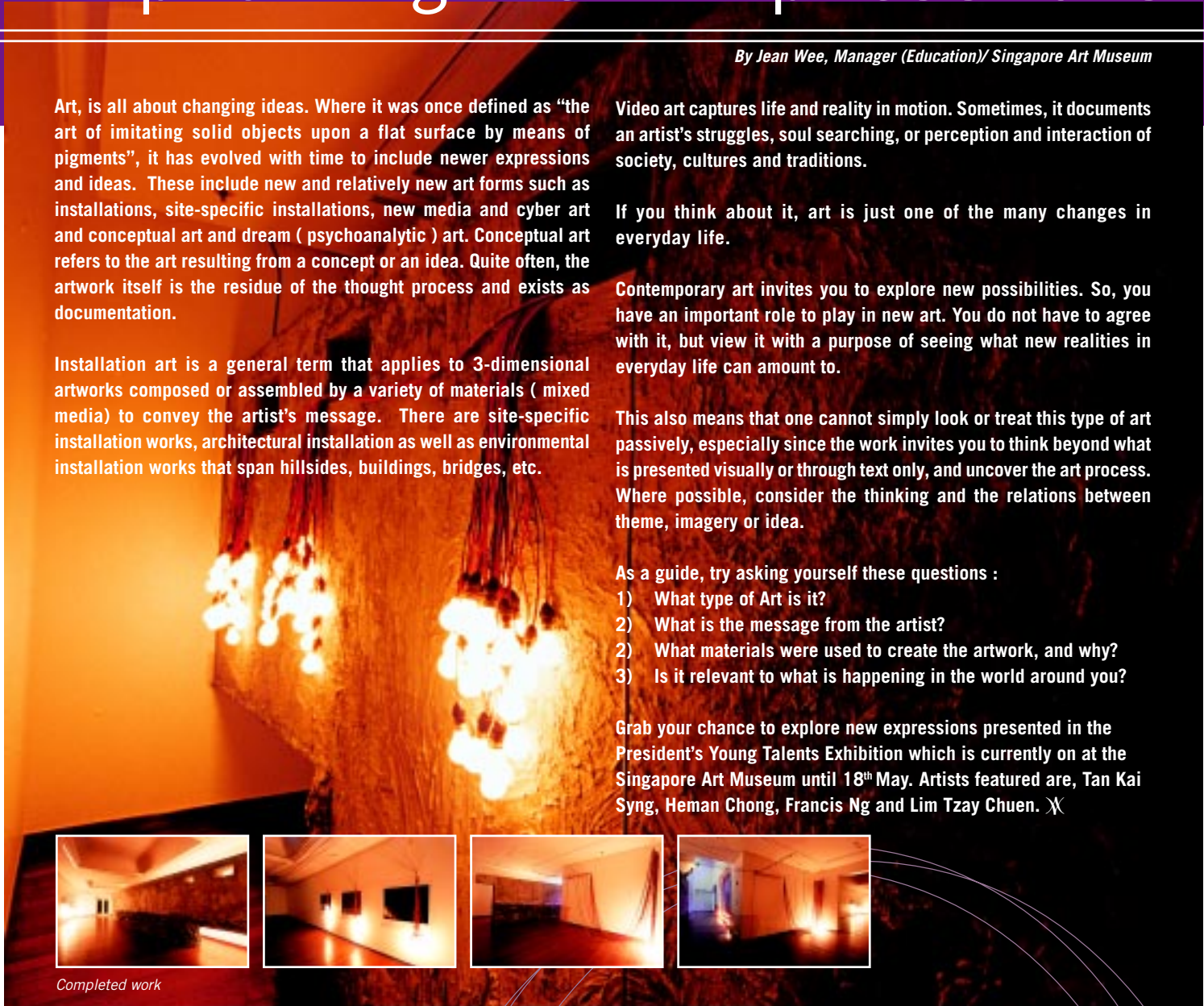
Contemporary art invites you to explore new possibilities. So, you have an important role to play in new art. You do not have to agree with it, but view it with a purpose of seeing what new realities in everyday life can amount to.

This also means that one cannot simply look or treat this type of art passively, especially since the work invites you to think beyond what is presented visually or through text only, and uncover the art process. Where possible, consider the thinking and the relations between theme, imagery or idea.

As a guide, try asking yourself these questions :

- 1) What type of Art is it?
- 2) What is the message from the artist?
- 2) What materials were used to create the artwork, and why?
- 3) Is it relevant to what is happening in the world around you?

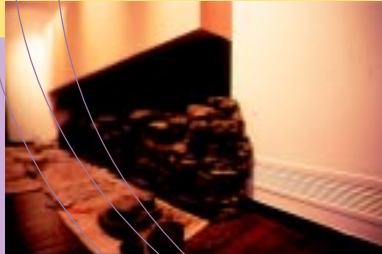
Grab your chance to explore new expressions presented in the President's Young Talents Exhibition which is currently on at the Singapore Art Museum until 18th May. Artists featured are, Tan Kai Syng, Heman Chong, Francis Ng and Lim Tzay Chuen. ✕



Completed work



Artist Francis and friends at work.
"Can you identify the materials used?"



Work in progress in gallery

Memories of War

Chio Shu Yu, Archives Officer and Wendy Chan, Education Services Executive/ National Archives of Singapore

***“Every Chinese New Year,
People are happy but I’m sad.
That’s when I’d say prayers for my parents.”
~ Mr Chia Chew Soo***

For 9 year old Chia Chew Soo living in Simpang Village during the 1940s, Chinese New Year had always been a time for family reunion and celebrations. However, one evening on 14 February 1942, a tragedy happened that forever changed the meaning of Chinese New Year for Mr Chia. His whole life was changed.

When Mr Chia and his family were settling down for their Chinese New Year reunion dinner that fateful evening, volleys of gunshots and peals of frightening screams rang out from across the fields. The villagers had heard of Japanese troops fighting in other parts of Singapore but never thought they would be caught in the middle of a live-fire. Out of fear, some of them quickly ran into a makeshift air-raid shelter while others hid in a dark shed. For 40 hours, they endured without light, food or water, only hearing screaming, bombing and fighting all through the night.

The Japanese soldiers raided the village thoroughly and to the misfortune of Mr Chia’s family, they were eventually found. Everyone was pulled out to an open compound. Routinely and continuously, they were bayoneted – Mr Chia’s father, his uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters, one by one. Mr Chia, who had witnessed the killing of his family but had survived to recount his tragedy, received multiple injuries to prove the horror of the Japanese invasion during World War II.

Till this day, Mr Chia in his early 70s, still remembers his family’s tragedy vividly. His memories of war were captured in five watercolor sketches, which he donated to the National Archives of Singapore in 2001. Currently, they are on display at Reflections at Bukit Chandu, a World War II Interpretative Centre housed in a restored black and white colonial bungalow at Pepys Road.

Among Mr Chia’s sketches and narratives, are war memories of other people who have been through the war. It is not easy for Mr Chia to recount these memories as they always remind him of the pain of losing his loved ones. However, it is his hope that people upon hearing his story would know that the peace and stability that Singapore now enjoys should never be taken for granted. ✕

General Information on Reflections at Bukit Chandu (RBC)

Address: 31-K Pepys Road, S(118458)
Admission Fee: Adults - \$2.00, Senior Citizens/ Students - \$1.00
 (Reflections at Bukit Chandu is not covered under NHB School Membership)
Opening Hours: 9 am to 5 pm, Tuesdays to Sundays
 (Closed on Mondays)
Contact Persons: Yeo Seow Ling (Archives Officer) at 6332 7922
 Wendy Chan (Education Services Executive) at 6332 7900
URL: http://www.s1942.org.sg/bukit_chand_u/homepage.htm



General view of the village in which Mr Chia Chew Soo lived in before Second World War and the path of the invading Japanese army in 1942.



Mr Chia Chew Soo and his family were about to be executed by Japanese soldiers.



Murder of Mr Chia Chew Soo’s father by the Japanese soldiers.



Mr Chia Chew Soo’s neighbours were tied to trees by Japanese soldiers as punishment for stealing fabric materials from the Japanese army. However, the materials were stolen by someone and given to the father of the family to tailor.



An execution by Japanese soldiers.

THE CONSERVATION

Alvin Tee, Conservation Officer and Timothy Hayes, Senior Conservator (Objects)/ Heritage Conservation Centre



Seated figure of Guangong displayed at the new Asian Civilisations Museum

This seated figure of *Guangong* forms part of an impressive display of Chinese sculpture of the new Asian Civilisations Museum, Empress Place. The artefact was one of over 1,500 artefacts which were conserved in preparation for the museum's inaugural opening on 1st March 2003.

The personification of *Guangong* probably became a common image during the *Yuan* (1271-1368) and *Ming* (1368-1644) dynasties, when *Guangong* was officially accepted as the Guardian God of northern Buddhist temples in northern China, *Shanxi*.

Do you know that this majestic-looking *Guangong* is composed of seven detachable parts (e.g. arms, body, and legs) and many non-detachable loose components supported by wooden pegs? Its structure is carved and joined from a Chinese softwood species, with its external surface covered with a thick layer of paper. Areas of finely patterned decoration are cast and modelled in plaster, which is also covered with a layer of paper. Pigment and gold leaf adorn its surface.

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

Conservation work commenced with a preliminary visual examination of *Guangong*



Detail of surface decoration

to evaluate its structural condition which revealed evidence of shrinkage to several of its wooden components, particularly, the central body section. There was also evidence of structural deterioration on both knee joints and minor areas of loss from the head adornments and hands.

The surface decoration had suffered considerable loss of pigment and gilding, notably the chest section. Approximately 70% of the artefact's surface on the rear side and legs were covered with a deposit of soil. There was also extensive evidence of surface disfigurement that included abrasions, minor indentations, numerous scratches, and staining caused by an adhesive from a previous restoration treatment.

A significant cause of surface disfigurement was the deteriorated condition of the paper, which was flaking and partly detached from the wooden base in several areas. The pigments were loosely bound and easily dislodged from the surface. Efforts at cleaning and keeping the artefact intact were therefore extremely challenging.

Before the conservation programme, several important factors related to the material composition of the artefact and their agents of deterioration were carefully considered and evaluated. One important factor is the selection of suitable conservation materials to repair and preserve the artefact. They should not produce a glossy appearance on the matted surface decoration and should be chemically stable. The adhesive/consolidant used should provide sufficient adhesive strength at the paper and wood interface. This should bind any loose pigment to the paper surface without causing any significant changes to the artefact's visual appearance.

CONSERVATION WORK

After a series of experiments, a diluted solution of adhesive was selected to consolidate (stick down) areas of unstable surface pigment and loose sections of paper. If the paper was too dry and/or brittle, a small amount of purified water was applied to soften and expand the fibres. This will help to prevent the paper from cracking before the application of the adhesive. The adhesive exhibited good bonding properties between paper and wood, without leaving a glossy residue.



Detail of deteriorated paper coating

OF A GUARDIAN GOD



Right Arm (before conservation). Detail of lifting paper coating



Right Arm (after conservation). Detail of consolidated paper coating.

The layer of soil/mud was carefully brushed from the surface, revealing the pigmented decoration beneath. A controlled application of chemical solvent or scalpel blade was used to remove adhesive residues from the previous areas of restoration.

The project took approximately 120 conservation hours to complete, including a structural assessment, treatment and documentation. The project posed numerous technical challenges in terms of the artefact's inherent structural fragility, particularly during handling and treatment. A specially-designed plinth mount was also manufactured for the artefact to be safely displayed. ✕

Visit ACM, Empress Place to admire and better appreciate this piece of beautifully restored Guangong and many other artefacts which have been painstakingly restored by our conservators behind the scene!



Conservation in progress. Surface cleaning the painted and gilded decoration

ROOTS! RHYTHM! BLENDS!

Heritage Festival 2003 (15 - 23 March 2003)

Kay Pungkothai, Project Officer/ Heritage Development Services

If you had wanted to have a first-hand experience of Singapore's diverse cultures, there was no better place to have started than the Heritage Festival 2003! Making a comeback for a third time, Heritage Festival 2003 hit town during the March school holidays. With the theme "Roots! Rhythm! Blends!", the Festival provided an explosion of sights, smells, sounds and tastes of Singapore! This year's Festival focused on the subtle evolution of cultures, lifestyle, traditions, music, food and dance of our various ethnic communities.

Over nine days, Heritage Festival 2003 offered a wide range of entertaining and interactive programmes and some of the highlights are featured here.

OPENING NIGHT OF HERITAGE FESTIVAL 2003

The Festival was officially launched by Dr Tony Tan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence at Far East Square on 15th March. The evening came alive with the A capella "Vocaluptuous" performance and other fringe performances like Sri Warisan's dance performance and 'E-Tree' – a talented group which used ethnic instruments to play contemporary tunes.

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DPM and Minister for Defence, Dr Tony Tan officially launching Heritage Festival 2003

ROOTS! RHYTHM! BLENDS!

Heritage Festival 2003 (15 - 23 March 2003)

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FRINGE ACTIVITIES

Over 100 events ranging from heritage trails, talks and demonstrations, music and dance performances, open houses by various ethnic or clan associations and public forums were held island-wide as in all Heritage Festivals. Museums, regional libraries, Community Development Councils and community centres also hosted many programmes to bring the Festival celebrations to the heartlands. At the official fringe venue – Suntec City, there was a line-up of exciting performances which included music and dance performances, fashion shows on Malay and Peranakan weddings and school performances.

HERITAGE COMPETITIONS

Several exciting competitions were organised. School competitions included the popular “Heritage On-line Quiz”, “Give-It-A-Twist” Music Competition, inter-school Kampong Games Competition and the Heritage-in-Colour Art Competition where many young budding history buffs, artists and musicians participated. Public competitions included the Creative Recipe Competition, the Amazing Heritage Race for bicycle enthusiasts and a walking trail along the Singapore River.

HERITAGE FOOD HUNT

Participating teams of the Heritage Food Hunt led by Makansutra host, K F Seetoh had great fun unlocking the secrets of local delicacies and heritage-related eateries around the island.

PICNIC AND CARNIVAL BY THE RIVER

To end the Festival on a high note, a colourful heritage fiesta was held by the Singapore River where an authentic flea mart and a mini heritage food pavilion were organised. There were also other activities such as stage performances, roving heritage performances, fashion shows, *teh tarik* competition, the Singapore River Legacy Trail and the “Give it a Twist” grand finals. All in all, it was a one-stop heritage experience for everyone.



An energetic Bhangra performance at the Picnic and Carnival By the River



Tourists and locals heartily tucking into local delicacies at the Picnic By the River

CONCERT BY THE PARK

A 3-hour mini-Womad style concert was held at the Merlion Park which showcased the evolution of local music and its increasing fusion with mainstream music. Hosted by Perfect 10 DJs, Jean Danker and Daniel Ong, there were performances by leading local artistes like Mark Chan, Wendy Koh and the popular percussion players “Storm Troopers”. The evening ended with popular DJs from ‘Centro’ disco spinning ethnic-influenced dance music and a live music jamming session with ever popular *tabla* player - Maniam.

The Heritage Festival, an event organised by the National Heritage Board aims to promote the celebration of heritage as a living history. It provides a platform for a meeting of minds between the young and the old and also serves as a time to bring families and friends together to treasure their shared heritage. ✕

A grand Malay wedding and Kompang procession along Cavenagh Bridge

Local artistes showcasing their works at Concert by the Park.

