NUS Centre for the Arts

NUS Arts Festival 2014
Consume or Be Consumed
Interviews with
Edith Podesta (Australia) & Akiko Kitamura (Japan)

Frontier Danceland
Tan Ean Kiam
Arts Awards 2013

New Museum Exhibitions
Thanks for picking up the 20th issue of artzone! It is a milestone moment.

This issue, we spotlight the 9th NUS Arts Festival and its quality new works that bring together arts professionals and student talents. Themed “Consumed”, the Festival will feature Singapore talents Oon Shu An, Tim Nga, T.H.E Second Company, Albert Tiong and Re:Dance Theatre, Brian Gothong Tan, Adrian Tan among others. International talents include Edith Podesta (Australia), Akiko Kitamura (Japan), Idan Cohen (Israel) and Nassim Soleimanpour (Iran/Singapore). Look out for them in Festival commissions and highlights exploring whether it is possible to consume without being consumed.

Check out our back cover to win tickets to the Fast highlight, Traces.

Our free admission ExxonMobil Campus Concerts series returns with performances by Frontier Danceland and student talents from King Edward VII Hall Chinese Drama, NUS Dance Blast! (hip hop group) as well as a contemporary and Malay dance collaboration between NUS Dance Synergy and NUS Ila Tari.

We continue to cover the thriving arts scene on campus. Take a peek at the artistic talents and activities of Eusoff Hall and the College of Alice & Peter Tan.

From batiks to lighthouses, NUS Museum is full of new exhibitions this semester. Find out more on pages 21 – 23.

We’d love to hear your feedback and suggestions. Do drop us a line at cfamarketing@nus.edu.sg.

Editorial Team
Advisor
Christine Khor
Editors
Dinah Ng
Adeline Tan
Contributors
Chang Yueh Siang
Charlene Tan
Cindy Lin Kaiying
Fiona Tan
Lalwani Poonam

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Special 20% Off Picnic Tickets for All Students!
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About CFA
Established in 1993, NUS Centre For the Arts (CFA) is a multifaceted arts organization that nurtures triple arts—performing, visual and literary—on campus and beyond.

CFA’s Vision
For the NUS community to be informed participants in global society, through engagement with the arts and an understanding of cultural diversity.

CFA’s Roles
• PROGRAMMING - CFA presents an active events calendar year-round that adds vibrancy to campus life.
• TALENT DEVELOPMENT - CFA manages and nurtures undergraduates and alumni groups in music, dance, drama, visual arts, film-making and production.
• VENUE HIRE - CFA manages venues and facilities suitable for world-class arts performances, exhibitions, academic and corporate conferences and other lifestyle activities.
• CONSULTANCY - CFA provides consultancy on arts and entertainment, as well as project management and curating expertise for the campus and beyond.

To join CFA Groups, contact Shaila at 6516.6114.
An All-Consuming Arts Festival

NUS Arts Festival (NAF) returns on 14 – 29 March to transform the University Cultural Centre (UCC) into an artistic treasure trove. Take your pick from a lively Fest calendar of 28 Fest offerings, more than half which are free admission.

Presented by NUS Centre For the Arts (CFA), this year’s NUS Arts Festival is intriguingly themed “Consumed,” and offers food for thought about what we consume and what consumes us. It promises a wild rollercoaster ride through our favourite preoccupations like shopping and eating and more metaphysical concerns about the nature of man. Can we consume without being consumed?

The Festival opens with Overdrive: A Triple Bill which presents NUS dancers working in tandem with T.H.E. Dance Company’s Second Company under the careful eye of award-winning choreographer Idan Cohen (Israel), Akiko Kitamura (Japan) with guest artists HORSE Dance Theatre 马蹄娇（Taiwan). Kitamura (a critically acclaimed leader of Japanese contemporary dance) working with leading Indonesian and Japanese artists is also featured in To Belong -cyclonicdream- a multidisciplinary evocation of how the old world and the present are connected in our human bodies.

NUS Dance Synergy’s first full length collaboration with Re:Dance Theatre and Albert Tiong for Traces is inspired by Chinese Literature Nobelist Gao Xing Jian’s The Other Shore 《彼岸》. NUS Indian Dance and NUS Indian Instrumental Ensemble’s inaugural collaboration fuses dance and music, featuring works by famous Indian flautist and composer B. V. Balasai and Cultural Medallion recipient and choreographer Santha Bhaskar.

Theatre fans are not left out. For the Festival Closing Show Con$umed, theatre practitioners like Edith Podesta (Australia), Brian Gothong Tan, Adrian Tan, Oon Shu An and Tim Nga will work with 16 NUS actor-playwrights to create a world where consumerism supersedes all moral codes. Described by the Fringe Review as “a stunning piece” of theatre, thought-provoking and unsettling. A wonderful testament to the power of words to transcend cultures and borders. “White Rabbit Red Rabbit by Nassim Soleimanpour (Iran/Singapore) is an intriguing play where the actors, Paula Sim, Shiv Tandan, Oliver Chong, Nora Samosir and Li Xie will see the script for the first time just before performance.

For more information, please visit www.nusartsfestival.com or find us on Facebook (nusartsfestival). Tickets available from SISTIC from 17 January 2014. Ticketing concessions are available.
Dramatically Con$umed

An interview with Edith Podesta

On 28 – 29 March, award-winning theatre director Edith Podesta, Young Artist Award recipient Brian Gothong Tan and Life! Theatre Award nominee Adrian Tan – together with professional actors and NUS talents – will create a world where consumerism supersedes all moral codes. arzone interviews Con$umed’s director and theatre faculty at LASALLE College of the Arts Edith Podesta about Con$umed, the NUS Arts Festival Closing Show.

1. As we are interviewing you, the auditions were just over. Could you share the process of selecting 16 actor-scriptwriters and 5 assistant directors from the auditions? Were there tough choices to be made?

There are always tough choices, especially this time round, because there were so many talented, intelligent, creative people auditioning for Con$umed. I was excited by the passionate discussions I had with the assistant directors, and by the raw talent of the actors. I was constantly surprised by the fact that the majority of people who wanted to be part of the creative process were undergoing Economics and Law degrees.

2. What do you hope they will take away from Con$umed?

I hope each individual encounters what they sought to experience by auditioning for Con$umed. Some members of the ensemble are seeking to continue their passion and education into theatre that started in co-curricular activities and amateur theatre groups. Other members have already worked in professional theatre and hope to discover new ways of devising through this process.

3. We understand the play’s topic of consumerism came to your mind quite quickly when you first learnt of the Festival’s “Con$umed” theme. How much of your own views do you think will come into this production versus the student playwrights’ view? Do you anticipate any conflicts of opinion and how would Con$umed’s creative process resolve this?

I don’t have all the answers, nor do I wish to advocate absolutes when it comes to a production’s subject matter. Working with a large ensemble is refreshing because the actors open up the production’s thesis to multiple points of view. One idea is not excluded at the expense of others during the devising process. I believe that the actors will be entering the process with their own opinions, education and desires, and that these multiple perspectives will resonate with disparate audience members, “to hold as ’twere the mirror up to nature”. I see myself as editor, patching together the final script, and steering the general direction of the rehearsal process, but the meat of the script will be written by the actors.

The topic came to mind during a holiday in June 2013 in the northernmost province of the Philippines. Batanes. Batanes for me was a pleasant culture shock. There is no unemployment, 75% of the population is employed in agriculture and fishing, the rest of the working population are mainly employed by the government. In some circumstances the barter system is still in use. No one is without a home and on weekends, neighbours get together to build a dwelling if need be, in exchange for food from the families’ farm or bags of rice. Credit cards are not accepted, there is no crime and tourism is kept to a minimum. The island is circumnavigated by one road, and when a child is born, the family will invest in a cow to pay for the child’s college education.

Seeing how people lived, I started to question the difference between my needs and my wants. I was so taken aback on my return from the Philippines by the overconsumption and the daily paradox of choice that I started to research into consumerism, and what I found shocked me.

4. You are a founder of the theatre group A Group of People which based its training and working philosophy on the Suzuki Method of Actor Training and Anne Bogart’s Viewpoints, exploring training methodologies and collaborative approaches to the creation of performance. How much do you anticipate two methodologies will influence your direction in Con$umed?

Viewpoints and Composition will be used as tools of creation throughout the rehearsal process of Con$umed. The Viewpoints are a set of names adapted by theatre directors Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, used to describe what happens on stage. Composition is a way of creating and arranging work into a cohesive performance.

I am also influenced by the devising and directing methods of theatre and opera director Barrie Kosky, Artistic Director of opera company Komische Oper Berlin, and writer and director for film and theatre Jim Shirey (The Rocky Horror Picture Show). The ways in which I work with text is influenced by the work of several poets such as Kenneth Goldsmith, William S. Burroughs and Robert Desnos, and the writing process and style of Leigh Fondakowski, Head Writer of the Emmy nominated The Laramie Project.

5. Could you share with us Eugene’s Tan’s dual contributions to this play? We’ve seen a most intriguing photo of Eugene putting some Good Morning! towels to very creative use.

Performance artist Eugene Tan will transform into Becca D’Bus at various times during this performance, donning several outrageous costumes, and embodying different characters.

6. What can we look forward to in this unique theatrical collaboration between yourself, Brian Gothong Tan and Adrian Tan?

It is always exciting to collaborate with artists from a different discipline than your own. I have collaborated with both Adrian and Brian before, but this is the first production where I’ll be working with them both at the same time, and it is set to be a visual feast. Both designers will be creating as the rehearsal process progresses, so that the design becomes integral to the final mise-en-scène. Lights, video, costume and sound, for me, are of the same importance as text, bodies in space, and voice. ■

For the full version of this interview, please visit our blog at www.cfa.nus.edu.sg or find us on Facebook.

Con$umed
Theatrical collaboration between Multimedia Designer Brian Gothong Tan, Lighting Designer Adrian Tan and Theatre Director Edith Podesta with NUS Talents
Fri & Sat, 28 & 29 Mar, 8pm, UCC Theatre, $29 & $23

Ticket prices exclude SISTIC booking fee and will be available at SISTIC from 17 Jan 2014. For more information, please visit www.nusartsfestival.com.

The text will be generated by both the actors and myself. Each week the actors will be assigned a writing exercise that considers a particular viewpoint of consumer culture or examine a more personal account of consumerism through writing, improvisation and composition. The writing the actors do will then lead me to my next set of questions and avenues for investigation.

Other theatre offerings at NUS Arts Festival 2014

White Rabbit Red Rabbit
Nassim Soleimanpour
An Aurora Nova Production
Fri – Sun, 21 – 23 Mar, 8pm
UCC Dance Studio, $20
Additional 3pm performances on Sat & Sun, 22 – 23 Mar, $15

Drawing from real life accounts, NUS Chinese Drama’s forum theatre aims to raise greater awareness about violence against women and to provide a fresh perspective to both women and men about how to take personal action against this.

Don’t miss this unique play that requires no director, no set, no rehearsals and a different actor reading the script cold for the first time at each performance. White Rabbit Red Rabbit will be performed by Oliver Chong, Nona Samonet, Li Xie (Mandarin) and NUS Students.

Please refer to www.nusartsfestival.com for cast schedule.

Play Out: A Double Bill
NUS Stage with Julius Foo, Gerald Chew & Lok Meng Chua
Sat & Sun, 22 & 23 Mar, 8pm
UCC Theatre, $23 & $19
Additional 3pm performance on Sun 23 Mar

Candilightly by Joanna Hoie and Ways by Judy Au involve the expression of nostalgic retrospection and poignancy about the human condition when change is the only constant.
Chopin: Passion & Death
Victor Yeh, Loke Hoe Kit & Jonathan Shin
Thu 20 Mar, 8pm, Conservatory Concert Hall, Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, $19

Maestro
NUS Piano Ensemble
Tue 25 Mar, 8pm, UCC Theatre, $19 & $16

Highly Strung
T’ang Quartet
Fri 28 Mar, 8pm, UCC Dance Studio, $20

Ticket prices exclude SISTIC booking fee and will be available at SISTIC from 17 Jan 2014.

Chopin fans, rejoice! For the first time in Singapore, Chopin: Passion & Death brings together the three great mature sonatas of Frédéric Chopin. Consumed and wracked by the ravages of tuberculosis, Chopin overcame his frail health by creating great music of high passion. This amazing concert will be brought to life by exceptional young musical talents like pianists Jonathan Shin, Victor Yeh, and cellist Loke Hoe Kit (pictured above).

In the fourth installment of Highly Strung, the acclaimed T’ang Quartet (pictured above) brings an hour of musical fusion powered by young talents and seasoned professionals. This programme is also a part of T’ang Quartet’s The Ensemble Dimension Project, where young musicians undergo radical and refreshed artistic growth under the Quartet’s nurturing guidance. For the featured musicians in this installment, please visit the Fest site at www.nusartsfestival.com.

NUS Piano Ensemble takes on a potent brew of four-hand and eight-hand piano performance with theatrical storytelling in Maestro (pictured above), a Faustian tale of a composer’s struggle to make a living. As his publisher and patrons lose interest in his works, and a musical rival threatens his livelihood, Maestro grows increasingly bitter and resentful. In his darkest, weakest hour, he is tempted by his alter ego, a musical prodigy and maniac, to exchange his sanity for brilliance. This is an exciting sequel.

Enjoy classical music in ways you’ve never heard it before. For more on the musicians and concerts, please visit www.nusartsfestival.com.
3 FRONTIER GEMS

Frontier Danceland kicks off the new ExxonMobil Campus Concerts (EMCC) season with a triple bill of dance gems. Catch White, Bufo Alvarius and Compose, premiered during the company’s 2012/2013 season.

Led by Artistic Director Low Mei Yoke, Frontier Danceland’s numerous works blend the strength and beauty of Asian expression with Western contemporary dance. Since the company was founded in 1991, it has been committed to developing and presenting original works, weaving a rich tapestry of ideas from young dancers and choreographers.

White (pictured above), choreographed by Low, explores a dystopian world of living in the absence of dreams. A White, performed by young Taiwanese choreographer Chang Chien-Kuei combines the art of a musician with the craft of a dancer, looking at how a dancer might play his body like an instrument, presenting movement as music through costumes and props. This experimental piece was created during a two-week residency with Frontier Danceland in May 2013, and premiered at their flagship annual production, Sides.

In Compose, young Taiwanese choreographer Marco Hsu’s Brief History of Malayan Art: Between Here and Nanyang: NUS Baba House Kebon Indah: Mintio & Kabul, Kelompok Batik Tulis Sido Luhur, Collaboration Between Here and Nanyang: Marco Hsu’s Brief History of Malayan Art

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Catch these diverse performances as they return to the stage on 22 Jan 2014, 8pm at the University Cultural Centre Theatre. For more free admission dance performances this season, check out our calendar on the next page.

For more on Frontier Danceland, please visit www.frontierdanceland.com.

Triple Bill: White, Bufo Alvarius and Compose is free admission. Tickets are available at the door (on a first-come-first-served basis) 1 hour before showtime. Limited to two tickets per patron. The audience capacity for UCC Theatre is 400.

Bufo Alvarius is a new work from Christina Chae (above, in white), winner of SPROUTS 2011, Singapore’s first national choreography competition. Chae has been lauded by Singapore media and critics for her innovative choreography. Her recent works include, Fat Room (pictured below) and Bufo Alvarius, which premiered as a guest item at the SPROUTS 2014 finals in January 2014. EMCC audiences will enjoy full and extended work premiere of this piece.

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Wanderlust
NUS Guitar Ensemble (GENUS)
8pm
Conservatory Concert Hall, YSTCM

Chopin: Passion & Death
Loke Hoe Kit, Jonathan Shin & Victor Yeh
8pm
Conservatory Concert Hall, YSTCM
Super Women
7.20pm
Ngaa Ann Kongsi Auditorium, Education Resource Centre, UTown

Super Women
7.30pm
Ngaa Ann Kongsi Auditorium, Education Resource Centre, UTown

In Search of Raffles’ Light: An Art Project with Charles Lim, NUS Museum

Information is accurate at the point of print. Programme may be subject to change without notice.
Visit www.nusartsfestival.com for updates, ticket prices, film ratings and other details.

* Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music.
ARTS & CULTURE
bring Spark to Hall Life

With six performing arts groups and a hall full of talented individuals, it’s no wonder Eusoff is reputed for its dynamic culture. Led by their Cultural Events Management Committee, Eusoffians can choose from A Cappella, Band, Choir, Dance, Drama and Elixer, a percussion troupe.

One of the Hall’s major platforms to nurture artistic talents is the annual Dance Production (pictured above and below). Integrating dance and drama, the show is meticulously crafted to capture the hearts of its audience. Each year, as many as 160 students contribute to this stunning showcase of talents and production capabilities.

Eusoff Hall also contributes to some of the biggest cultural events on campus, partnering five other NUS Halls to produce popular concert series for bands (Rockfest), theatre buffs (Dramafest), vocal groups (Amplitude) and dance talents (Dance Uncensored). The Hall is also involved in NUS’ first combined Hall ensemble concert, Encores, which will debut in January 2014. Eusoffians have their own Talent Night and Cultural Night where budding artists are encouraged to reveal their hidden talents. While Talent Night features an exciting performing arts competition among all five Eusoff Hall blocks, Cultural Night offers a mini-concert where the Hall’s performing arts groups present their works. Both shows are highly anticipated evenings when Eusoffians take a study break for a night of music, fun and laughter.

This lively culture enhances interaction among Hall residents and forges lifelong friendships.

First established as the only all-women Eusoff College in 1958 at Evans Road, its Kent Ridge Campus branch was set up in 1988 as Eusoff Hall. When the College was closed in 2001, Eusoff Hall became its sole successor. The Hall’s 55th anniversary celebrations last year saw a nostalgic gathering of senior Eusoffians alums celebrating Alumni Day at NUS’ Bukit Timah campus. They included Mrs Mary Tan, wife of Singapore President, Dr Tony Tan.

Each year, Eusoff Hall continues to be delighted by the amount of talent it has. With a burning passion and always striving for excellence, Eusoffians are proud of their legacy.

Look out for Eusoff Hall’s annual Dance Production this February 2014! For more details, please visit www.eusoff.nus.edu.sg.

Pamela Yau & Amanda Chia
Junior Common Room Committee Performance Arts Directors at Eusoff Hall.

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MAKING MUSIC FOR ROYALTY

NUS Symphony Orchestra (NUSSO) was part of a joyful 20th anniversary celebration by Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) in Batu Pahat, Johor on 21 September 2013. Invited by the university, NUSSO had the privilege of performing for many notable guests, including Guest-of-Honour, Her Royal Highness, Raja Zarith Sofiah binti Sultan Iskandar Shah, the wife of the Sultan of Johor.

Over 75 NUSSO members, led by Music Director and Resident Conductor Mr Lim Soon Lee (pictured below), throng themselves into dedicated preparations for a delightful programme featuring classical works alongside Asian pieces and Malaysian favourites like Ajaib Aku and Ketukusan Hatu sung by Anuar Zain.

Highlights included a collaboration with Malaysia’s foremost Music Director Datuk Johari Salih, who led NUSSO for his composition, Simfonietta Compaktasi, and NUSSO’s performance with popular singers Anuar Zain and Alyah.

Enjoy more music from NUSSO this 15 January at their next installment of Miniatures, part of the free admission EveryMobiCampusConcerts. See page 11 for more or visit www.cfa.nus.edu.sg.

Photo by Kah Swee Jin

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Though only just over a year old, the College of Alice & Peter Tan is establishing a remarkable and vibrant cultural environment! Within the first 3 semesters, several interest groups have sprung up to cater to a variety of artsy interests including singing, dancing, arts & crafts as well as a host of other spontaneous creative initiatives.

The College’s focus on community engagement also holds true for the direction of all interest groups in the College. In October 2013, CAPTions, a hip hop dance group, taught a group of girls from Beyond Social Services a hip hop dance choreographed by our very own CAPTain, Geraldine Wong!

Looking ahead, CAPT is in the midst of putting up Beauty World, an original Singaporean musical by Michael Chiang with music by Dick Lee. CAPT’s current Artist-in-Residence Caleb Goh is mentoring students in the production that is slated for performance on 8 February! So do look out for tickets and hope to see you there!

Grace Ann Chua
Year 2
College of Alice & Peter Tan

For more on the College of Alice & Peter Tan, please visit capt.nus.edu.sg

One such interest group is Guitarpella, CAPT’s pioneer music group, which combines guitar playing and singing. With superb skill level, Guitarpella plays all kinds of songs ranging from oldies to evergreen, indie, pop, and ballads with the aim of giving its members the opportunity for musical exchange and to showcase the many talents CAPT has to offer. They have performed at many internal and external events and have most recently been invited to perform at the NUS/SS Club Appreciation Dinner. (Check out their hit performance of Mirrors by Justin Timberlake on YouTube!)

CAPTure serves as an opportunity for new and budding photographers and videographers alike to go on photography trails together to explore new places. Last semester they were mentored by Samantha Tio, our Artist-in-Residence (AiR). CAPTure also organized a CAPT Photography Competition at the start of the academic year.

While Han(DI)craft is the main arts and crafts club of the College, a uniquely CAPT quirk has developed which is the decoration of the lift! Enter the CAPTains! lift at anytime throughout the year and decoration of the lifts! Enter the CAPTcrafts club of the College, a uniquely While the academic year.

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For more on the College of Alice & Peter Tan, please visit capt.nus.edu.sg

One such interest group is Guitarpella, CAPT’s pioneer music group, which combines guitar playing and singing. With superb skill level, Guitarpella plays all kinds of songs ranging from oldies to evergreen, indie, pop, and ballads with the aim of giving its members the opportunity for musical exchange and to showcase the many talents CAPT has to offer. They have performed at many internal and external events and have most recently been invited to perform at the NUS/SS Club Appreciation Dinner. (Check out their hit performance of Mirrors by Justin Timberlake on YouTube!)

CAPTure serves as an opportunity for new and budding photographers and videographers alike to go on photography trails together to explore new places. Last semester they were mentored by Samantha Tio, our Artist-in-Residence (AiR). CAPTure also organized a CAPT Photography Competition at the start of the academic year.

While Han(DI)craft is the main arts and crafts club of the College, a uniquely CAPT quirk has developed which is the decoration of the lift! Enter the CAPTains! lift at anytime throughout the year and decoration of the lifts! Enter the CAPTcrafts club of the College, a uniquely While the academic year.

Photography Competition at the start of (AiR). CAPTure also organized a CAPT
Student of the Year

Gu Shimin
Faculty of Engineering
(2013)
NUS Piano Ensemble

Lim Min
Faculty of Engineering,
Year 3
NUS Chinese Dance

Koh Swee Jin
School of Design and
Environment, Year 4
NUS Symphony Orchestra

Alumni of the Year

Goh Sufen Gillian
Class of 2004
Faculty of Science
NUS Dance Synergy

He Xiao
Class of 2011
Faculty of Engineering
NUS Chinese Drama

Sum Yin Ngai
Class of 2011
Faculty of Science
NUS Piano Ensemble

Group of the Year

NUS Symphony Orchestra

Event of the Year

Mirror.Moon《镜水月》by NUS Chinese Dance

Photo by SQ Photography
NUS Baba House Celebrates its 5th Anniversary

Throughout September 2013, visitors were treated to some of very best attributes of the NUS Baba House. It was the heritage house's 5th Anniversary, and staff looked into its past and legacy to organise memorable events. Guests were treated to Special Weekend Tours which offered an opportunity to experience the antique artefacts and furniture of the House followed by tea.

A new exhibition Kebon Indah featuring artworks that combine photographic and batik techniques was launched on 26 September 2013. The artworks are the result of a collaboration between two contemporary artists, Samantha Tio (Mintio) and Budi Agung Kuswara (Kabul), and batik makers of the Sido Luhur group from the central Javanese village of Kebon Indah.

An International Conference titled “Peranakan Chinese Communities in the Era of Decolonization and Globalization” was held as part of the 5th Anniversary events. It was the second international conference co-organised by the NUS Baba House, Chinese Heritage Centre (CHC) and the National Library Board (NLB). The inaugural conference Peranakan Chinese in a Globalizing Southeast Asia: The cases of Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia in May 2009 discussed the recent developments in the study of Peranakan Chinese in three countries.

Attracting more than 100 delegates, the conference examined the progress in research on the Peranakan Chinese in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. The four panels focused on how the communities have evolved or changed in response to decolonization and globalization. Each panel ended off with zealous discussions by participants with the speakers and with discussants putting their perspectives forward to the delegates.

The 5th Anniversary events offered an opportunity for everyone to reflect on the many special moments that make up the NUS Baba House’s rich timeline.

Visits to NUS Baba House are by appointment only.

For more information, please visit www.nus.edu.sg/museum/baba, call (65) 6227 5731 or email babahouse@nus.edu.sg.
In Search of Raffles’ Light

Inspired by an encounter with a shell collector in 2009 and especially by a romantically framed solitary Raffles Lighthouse against the vast ocean taken in the 1950s, the idea for an exhibition on this little-known lighthouse was born. In 2010, Raffles Lighthouse was selected as a thematic focus in the inaugural prep-room: things that may or may not happen. Three years later, we are still in search of Raffles’ Light in this exhibition at the NUS Museum.

The search for Raffles’ Light took the research and curating team through the usual repositories and sources of history, including historic maps, newspaper archives and standard accounts of Singaporean histories. However, as time passed and the textual material accumulated, the increasingly disembodied mass of research demanded both a contemporaneous intervention and a broader artefactual basis.

We were fortunate to have come onboard, acclaimed visual artist Charles Lim, who shared with the team a passionate appreciation for maritime heritage, but who sees things in contemporaneous terms, being a sailor with a strong affinity with Singapore’s waters. Through his lines of inquiry, the search for Raffles’ Light continued, and in many ways went beyond the confines of this lighthouse which has guided ships entering the Singapore Straits from the western entrance for more than 150 years. We were never simply in search of the lighthouse, but what was missing from the exhibition were the broader contexts to make this legacy of colonialism relevant to a populace who has all but forgotten about this southernmost tip of Singapore’s territory.

We searched out custodians of Singapore’s maritime heritage, both past and present, and from there artefacts relating to both the lighthouse and Singapore’s maritime legacy were amassed. Together with the films made by Charles, which literally involved him going out in sea on a boat in search of the lighthouse, our search was finally presentable in an exhibition.

In some sense, the search for Raffles’ Light will never be conclusively completed. What is on display is an explication of this search, a search which encourages a radical reconsideration of Singapore’s relation to the sea, through the focal point of this lighthouse which in spite of its name, has faded out of the public’s collective memory. The day that this search is completed, will be a woeful day when we truly cut off ties with our maritime surroundings.

Writings and artefacts have been mobilised from the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research (NUS), Singapore Press Holdings, National Archives of Singapore, Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, Navy Museum and selected private collections. In Search of Raffles’ Light at the NUS Museum will run till April 2014.

Fiona Tan is currently working at the National Archives of Singapore. Since her internship at the NUS Museum in 2010, when she researched for Camping and Tramping Through the Colonial Archive: The Museum in Malaya (2010 – 2013), she has been working on various late 19th century and early 20th century colonial sources for both academic and exhibition purposes. She continues to revel in the open-ended possibilities of the colonial archives in generating unconventional histories and exhibits, such as the Raffles Light project, which she worked on as a Curatorial Researcher.

CAPTURING IDEAS AND CHANGE ON PAPER

Recent Gifts: Works and Documents of Lim Mu Hue and Jimmy Ong

The exhibition features works acquired from the estate of the late Lim Mu Hue (1936 – 2008) and Jimmy Ong (b. 1964). The works by Lim are diverse – ranging from drawings, paintings to woodblocks completed from the 1950s and after. The sketches and drawings by Ong were completed between mid 1980s to early 1990s. These collections, although distinct by range and depth, facilitate ways of understanding the practices of the two artists.

Jimmy Ong’s Chinatown Suite sketches (a purchase made possible through a donation by Ms Ann Mui Ling) appear to be conditioned by a certain ‘journalistic’ urge: providing us an insight into the artist’s thoughts and inspirations as he sketches on the move. Often overlooked in favour of his woodblock prints, Lim Mu Hue had developed an artistic style in the 1960s of rendering landscape drawings from a bird’s-eye perspective. Drawing was likely favoured as the medium of choice as it allowed for the quick capturing of rapid landscape changes.

Together, the drawings and accompanying personal and journalistic materials of both artists reveal their meticulous observations of details in the spaces around them, be it Ong’s domestic or other interior spaces, or Lim’s panoramic landscapes. Their body of works collected and displayed here gives us an indication of the artists attitudes towards their local environment and to the events that occurred in their lives.

– Chang Yueh Siang, NUS Museum Curator

The exhibition runs till 31 July 2014.
Five pairs of tickets are up for grabs to Traces!
Featuring NUS Dance Synergy and Re:Dance Theatre with choreographer Albert Tiong

It seems harder to survive today especially when modern life seems to revolve around the pursuit of success and wealth. Traces compels us to re-think what makes life meaningful.

Drawing inspiration from Nobel Prizewinner Gao Xing Jian’s script The Other Shore 《彼岸》, dancers from NUS Dance Synergy and Re:Dance Theatre under direction of well-known choreographer Albert Tiong invite you to examine the tensions and contradictions in human character, interpersonal relationships and societal values. While human beings value living in a community, most conflicts arise out of human contact. Life is brief, like a candle flickers and extinguishes quickly. How then should we live?

Stand to win a pair of tickets by answering the question below.
Traces is inspired by the script The Other Shore 《彼岸》. Who wrote this work?

Send your answer along with your name, NRIC and mobile number to cfamarketing@nus.edu.sg by 1 March 2014. Winners will be notified by email and phone.

About NUS Arts Festival 2014
Happening over three weeks from 14 to 29 March 2014, the Festival returns for its 9th year, bringing over 25 shows, many of which are free.

Ticket sales for the Festival start on 17 January 2014. Tickets are available at SISTIC.

Find out more at www.nusartsfestival.com or find us on (nusartsfestival).