

Istoria: Celebrating Singapore's 40 Years

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It is that time of the year again when we bring out the national flags that have been hidden in our drawers and hang them out on the veranda of all HDB flats as a sign of our loyalty and love for the country...or more likely out of fear of being the odd one out or losing out if there are any benefits to be gained. Yet that "kiasu" character tells more about us as Singaporeans than any superficial singing of community songs or reciting of the pledge.

The magical concoction of loyalty and patriotism - if I had the formula for this potion, I would have bottled it up and made millions from it - especially in a place

like Singapore that places a premium on everything Singaporean (except of course our local English songs...).

Istoria is H-istoria without the "H" - it is the Greek equivalent of the word "History" but more than that, it carries with it additional meanings like story and tale.

Istoria is also an attempt then to tell the stories behind our past that make us who we are. It is the National Library Board's potpourri of programmes, events and exhibitions that allow us to get in touch with our own identity and to reconsider just what are our own stories and what make them ours.

So if you are still searching for your own identity or if you feel that being Singaporean means more than just Phua Chu Kang, the Merlion or char kway teow, then join us. We don't promise that you will find the answers but hopefully you will find your meaning in searching for them.

What's on Show at the New Library?

At the new National Library, we have a whole series of exhibitions lined up in the months of August to October that run the gamut from genealogy to urban planning to even national day parades. Run through this preview of the exhibitions and see which one catches your fancy.

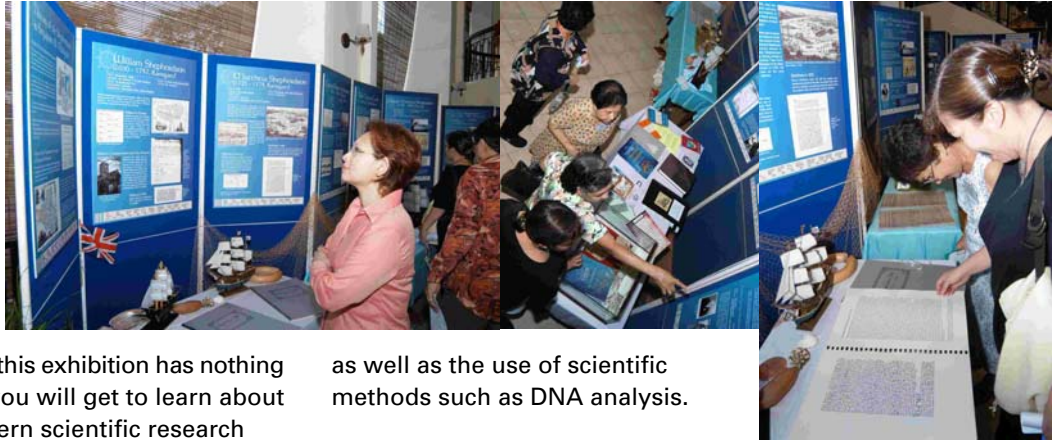
Starting in July, there is an exhibition called *Shaping Singapore - Aspirations and Achievements* that will attempt to deconstruct this beautiful city of ours and to explore the process of how it was shaped into the metropolis that it is today. Developed by the Urban Renewal Authority (URA), this exhibition promises to also provide a glimpse into the opportunities for business, good life and fun that may arise in Singapore over the next 30 years.



When : 22 July to 3 October 2005
Venue : Level 7 & 8 Promenade

Don't the shots shown here remind you of something? Yes! A definite must-see for those who love to go for condominium launches!

For the homely kind of people, the family always comes first but do you actually know anything about your own family history? Well wonder no more as you proceed up a floor to see an exhibition that provides you with everything you need to know to get started.



Entitled *Who Am I? The Joy of Discovering Your Family History* - this exhibition has nothing to do with Jackie Chan. Instead you will get to learn about the resources available, the modern scientific research methods and even a real-life case study into the process of tracing your own genealogy.

as well as the use of scientific methods such as DNA analysis.

When : 2 - 31 August 2005
 Venue : Level 9, Promenade

The Shepherdson family will prove an inspiration as you journey together with them into their 400-year family history to the times of Captain Francis Light and Sir Stamford Raffles. Learn about their research methods in uncovering the past using traditional research sources

Watch out for their collection of artefacts that include books dating back to the 1700s as well as an antique gramophone!

Confucius said, "Family harmony is the foundation of a peaceful nation", and if that is true, then the next exhibition is a natural progression from the previous ones. August will find the whole of Singapore in a festive mood as they wait to celebrate the nation's birthday and what's National Day without the National Day Parade?

the nation's biggest birthday party and what it means to be "Singaporean".

When : 3 August to October 2005
 Venue : Level 11, Promenade

Nation on Parade pays tribute to 40 years of the National Day Parade as well as nation building in Singapore. In this exhibition, you will discover what goes into the making of

For the patriots among us, this is like your greatest dream come true.

Photographs have been described as paintings of the soul and this travelling photo exhibition promises something for everyone. Simply termed *160 years of the Straits Times in Photos*, the highlights will obviously include the first Straits Times published in 1845 plus 160 of the most memorable pictures that have appeared in the paper, many capturing the milestones of the nation's history, including significant events.

While these official photos are important touchstones, what really make this exhibition interesting are the candid and unexpected shots that show up the lighter side of life. After a while you will begin to wonder what happened to the people in these photos and the stories will begin.

When : 10 - 31 August 2005
 Venue : Level 13 Promenade & Rare Book Gallery

The camera makes everyone a tourist in other people's reality, and eventually in one's own.
 - Susan Sontag



Singaporeans are avid cinema goers. How else would you explain that while the world is now turning to DVDs, movie attendances locally have been increasing by 4% annually for the last five years, reaching a peak of 15.8 million in 2004! That's a lot of popcorn consumed! If you are one of the statistics - and you have to be - then this exhibition is for you.

Tracing the birth, growth and decline of the local film industry since the 1900s to the renaissance of the scene in the last 15 years, the *Singapore Cinema in Retrospect* exhibition pays homage to the art of moving images. Understanding how the industry's development is closely intertwined with Singapore's history and the various impetuses for the new Cinema Experience is a must-do for all budding filmmakers.

When : September to October 2005
Venue : Level 9 Promenade

For all the talk about establishing a thriving movie industry in Singapore, how many actually know that we already had one in the late 1950s?

With all the coffee shop talk about raising transport costs and rumblings of a merger between SMRT and SBS still refusing to go away, perhaps Singaporeans have evidently taken the ease of land transport for granted. Worry not because help is on the way in the form of this exhibition called *History of Land Transportation in Singapore* by the Land Transport Authority.

If you were one of those who were fascinated by the vehicles of the future that were portrayed in the film *Minority Report*, then this is definitely your cup of tea. Curious to know what land transport of the future is like or how the stations and road interchanges will look like in the next decade? Well wonder no more!

When : 16 - 30 September 2005
Venue : Level 10 Promenade

See if you can spot the Bus Spotters at this exhibition. Apparently there is even a club here for those who love to take buses and track where each service actually goes!

The library is known as the great social leveller where people of all creeds and status are treated alike. In the same vein, we are proud to also be supporting the average Singaporeans by giving them the chance to put up their own personal exhibitions.

The first will be *My Journey*, an exhibition by Lee Hui Lian who presents paintings of her personal journey through four years of local education and her love for art. This should be an inspiration to those Singaporeans who refuse to believe that both subjects are mutually exclusive.

The other exhibition is *Brief Encounters - A Singaporean View of the World*. This exhibition is a result of a project that provides an opportunity to first-timers to create something. These Singaporeans express their own hopes, fears and motivations of the world around them and showcase their desire and wishes expressed through the simple analogy of Travel.



Finally the Library extends its hands not just to individuals but also to communities and one of the initial collaborative efforts is with ASAS' 50 - the Angkatan Sasterawan 50 - or more commonly known as the Malay Writers Association. The resulting exhibition, *On Malay Writers Association*, will trace their development and growth in the last 55 years.

My Journey will be held from 18 - 20 July followed by *On Malay Writers Association* from 23 July to 12 August before ending off with *Brief Encounters* from 15 - 26 August.

All will be held at Basement 1 within the Central Lending Library.

All in all, that's six different exhibitions and three smaller showcases that you can look forward to as you rumble around the new National Library. Explore one or more or all if you so wish - this buffet of visuals and artefacts aim to fill your senses and pique your sensibilities as you stray from one floor to another.