

# Message from Chairman and CEO



This year's annual report focuses on the theme *With You In Mind*. Over the years, NHB has sought to present exhibitions and programmes tailored to engaging various segments of our society and enriching the museum experience. Through these efforts, we have increased the mindshare of our museums and heritage.

## AWAKENING MINDS

We are happy to report that NHB continues to make good progress. Visitorship to all NHB museums made a 38.8% jump from 1.34 million in FY2006 to a new record of 1.86 million

in FY2007. Participation in our outreach activities, including travelling exhibitions, has exceeded the 4 million mark – a 48.7% increase over the previous FY. Total visitorship to the country's 46 member museums of the Museum Roundtable soared to 5.21 million, surpassing our initial estimate of 4.5 million.

## BROADENING MINDS

The staging of blockbuster exhibitions such as *On the Nalanda Trail* and *Greek Masterpieces from the Louvre* have helped us win over many new museum visitors. Other well curated exhibitions, using items from our national collection, such as, *The Big Picture Show* and *Empire of Nature*, were praised both by the viewing public and by critics. We also pushed the envelope with exhibitions such as *Beauty in Asia: 200 BCE to Today* and *10 Years that Shaped a Nation*.

Working with well-known television personalities to promote museum-going has helped some members of the public to overcome their psychological block that museums are only for the elite. Celebrities like Singapore Art Museum's (SAM) board member, Qi Yuwu, and comedian Mark Lee took on the role of museum guides. Their heartwarming approach allowed our museums to engage with people who had never been to museums before.

Our iconic *Singapore HeritageFest* drew 1.43 million visitors and has become a permanent feature of Singapore's cultural calendar. Other annual events such as *Explore Singapore!* have also become prominent items on our cultural calendar. In the coming year, we will take heritage to the heartlands to reach new audiences.

Adding vibrancy to the museum and heritage landscape, NHB further piloted the Heritage Industry Incentive Programme (Hi<sup>2</sup>P) to encourage private players in the industry to embark on new initiatives as well as develop innovative products and programmes.

### MEETING OF MINDS

Our Heritage Conservation Centre took the lead in organising the inaugural *ASEAN Museum Directors' Symposium* in which 100 museum leaders from the 10 ASEAN countries exchanged ideas and experiences in museum development and created a new ASEAN network. Following suit is SAM, which put together the second *Asian Art Museum Directors' Forum* after Beijing. This event strengthened collaboration amongst museums, art faculties and cultural institutions in Asia.

Within ASEAN, the National Archives of Singapore continues to help our regional partners to enhance their human capacity in records preservation through its ASEAN Committee On Culture and Information workshop. Together with Friends of the Museums, NHB also hosted 49 global museum volunteers at the *World Federation of Friends of Museums General Assembly and Council Meeting*, which was held for the first time in Asia.

### LIKE-MINDED GENEROSITY

NHB is playing an active role to nurture heritage philanthropy in Singapore. Last year, we launched the inaugural *Patron of Heritage Awards* – a national-level award to recognise donations and loans of artefacts. The award ceremony in 2008 recognised 51 individuals, organisations and corporations for their contributions amounting to more than \$11 million.

We are also grateful to have received donations of significant stature, including the monumental work *Day and Night* from Nobel laureate Gao Xingjian and an important work from Chinese contemporary artist Feng Zhengjie titled *My Parents* to SAM. Cumulatively, over the past five years alone, NHB museums have received donations worth more than \$52 million in cash and artefacts.

### MINDING THE COMMUNITY

We have made significant strides in repositioning our museums as family friendly cultural destinations, with something for everyone.

For a start, alliances were forged with community organisations such as the People's Association, Council for Third Age, Retired & Senior Volunteer Programme, Singapore Action Group of Elders and Food from the Heart. These partnerships drew the silver-haired and the underprivileged to our museums. Many of them had not visited museums for years or ever. We also offered free entry to senior citizens every Monday. This was started this year as a gesture of our thanks for their contributions to the nation.

The opening of the Peranakan Museum earlier this year added another dimension to our community ties. The museum has been warmly embraced by the Peranakan community in Southeast Asia. It has also brought many non-Peranakans to visit the museum and to learn about this hybrid culture with influences from the Chinese, Malay, Indian and European civilisations.

In changing the minds of the nation towards appreciating heritage, significant strides have been made. While much has been achieved, more remains to be done. Looking ahead, the Board will continue to work hard to grow the museum-going culture in Singapore. We will not be contented until we succeed in making a visit to our museums one of the favourite destinations of Singaporeans and residents in their leisure time. We hope that one day, Singapore will be known to the world as a museum country.



**Professor Tommy Koh**

Chairman



**Michael Koh**

Chief Executive Officer