

THE YEAR IN REFLECTION

With You in Mind

“In preserving and promoting heritage, museums are reaching out to the grassroots, and making arts accessible and an essential part of everyone’s life. This has helped bridge the psychological gaps for many who are not closely acquainted with the arts.”

– A commentary by writer Huang Xin Lai in Lianhe Zaobao, 11 December 2007



At Explore Singapore! celebrity Mark Lee brings his own brand of humour to museum guiding.

NHB seeks to be all encompassing in our exhibitions, activities and events to capture the minds, hearts and spirits of the people. Reaching everyone – regardless of age, income or education – we inspire Singaporeans and visitors alike with a burning passion for all things heritage and museum-related.



SCALING NEW HEIGHTS

NHB's success in engaging Singaporeans and visitors to embrace our heritage continued in FY2007. Surpassing all expectations, some 5.21 million people visited Singapore's 46 museums – 22.2% more than the year before. Across NHB's museums and heritage centres, visitorship hit a new record of 1.86 million in FY2007, up from 1.34 million in FY2006 with a growth of 38.8%.

INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY 2007

Singapore museums came alive once more with the celebration of *International Museum Day* in May 2007. Almost 100,000 people participated in over 80 events spread across 24 museums around the island, sampling exotic cultural experiences from Europe, the Middle East, Korea, China and Southeast Asia.

SINGAPORE HERITAGEFEST 2007

NHB's signature event, the *Singapore HeritageFest*, ran for a fourth year from 18 to 29 July 2007 and attracted a record-breaking 1.43 million visitors – a 23% jump from the previous year. With the theme *What's Your Story?*, it invited participants to share their heritage stories and memories. The event garnered S\$2.3 million worth of media coverage and created much buzz with 109 exciting programmes, including new offerings such as the concerts *Sound Stories 1* and *2* at Zouk and Suntec City which featured Singapore's evergreen musicians, a vintage car showcase and an art display *Culture By The Bay* along the Singapore River. The festival was also the curtain-raiser for the National Day celebrations.



EXPLORE SINGAPORE!

Our year-end campaign *Explore Singapore!* returned with a “beng” in the form of Singapore's leading comedian Mark Lee who was the campaign's ambassador. Brandishing his own style of *Singlish* wit, Mark helped the campaign to become the talk-of-the-town, generating some S\$2.2 million worth of publicity. The event featured 86 fun-filled outreach activities over 20 museums as well as the National Library, and drew 588,000 visitors. Mark's personal guided tour of the museums was a sell-out, attracting many seniors, families and children who jostled to get up close to their favourite *Ah Beng*.

JUST FOR KIDS

“Come see, touch, learn and have fun” – this winning formula widened our museums’ appeal to children and young families. Apart from refreshing their children’s zones, our museums organised a series of workshops to stimulate the curiosity and creativity of the young. Even the very young between 18 and 36 months took part in a play-based learning experience at National Museum of Singapore’s *Museum Toddlers* programme. In collaboration with ACT 3 International, NHB launched the *Pre-schooler’s Heritage Education Programme* which reached out to over 2,000 pre-schoolers.

In *History Alive!*, kids encountered characters from the past as they walked through the National Museum’s Singapore History Gallery while in the *I Can Guide!* programme, children aged 10 to 12 years became cultural ambassadors at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM).

Competitions on various platforms connected the young to our heritage. They included NHB’s first national blogging competition *New Kids On The Blog*, and National Museum’s *Drama of History Competition* which challenged students to create plays inspired by Singapore’s history.

In conjunction with the launch of the Harry Potter book and movie, the Singapore Philatelic Museum (SPM) treated fans to a collection of stamps featuring the boy wizard. NHB also launched its first children’s storybook *Sasha visits the Museums* in collaboration with Sunbear Publishing.

Reaching out to youths in the community, NHB supported South West CDC’s *Ethnic Heritage@South West* project. This involved students from six secondary schools who documented the district’s history through developing their own community trails while being trained to be student guides.





EMBRACING THE SILVER-HAIRED

As a mark of our appreciation for their contributions to the nation, senior citizens can now visit NHB museums for free every Monday. NHB also collaborated with the Council for Third Age, People's Association and Singapore Action Group of Elders to develop special museum tours for senior citizens.

In the spirit of active ageing, the Board recruited and trained a number of seniors for its family of volunteer docents. These veterans lived through much of Singapore's formative years and have a wealth of personal anecdotes to share with the younger generations.

GOING MULTILINGUAL

Visitors to the National Museum can now explore Singapore's history in English, Mandarin, Malay and Japanese. Made easy with its multimedia handheld device called *The Companion*, the device can play video clips, audio interviews and dramatised scenarios. It also displays detailed text descriptions of artefacts and subtitles in these four languages.

To assist overseas visitors in navigating their way through the building, ACM in partnership with the Singapore Tourism Board, produced its *Visitor Guide* brochure and directional signs in seven languages.

Mandarin-speaking visitors had an enriching experience at ACM's exhibition *On the Nalanda Trail: Buddhism in India, China and Southeast Asia*, thanks to a special group of Mandarin volunteer guides – the Nalanda Explainers. Formed in collaboration with the Singapore Chinese Teachers' Union, the group together with other volunteers received special training for the exhibition from the museum's regular Mandarin guides. With their help, ACM was able to offer more Mandarin tours for this exhibition to cope with the high demand.



