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**PAST FASHION:** Designer Benny Ong will showcase his ballgowns in a special exhibition at the museum.

## 4 months of treats at museum

**The National Museum  
celebrates its 120th birthday  
with exhibitions and festivities**

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**S**INGAPORE'S oldest museum, the National Museum, is turning 120 this year.

And it is celebrating its supercentenarian status with a four-month-long festival of performances, film screenings, exhibitions and outdoor activities.

The recently refurbished museum at Stamford Road will come alive with a flurry of activities aimed at luring the public onto its grounds, such as night market stalls and performances by Singapore bands.

Museum director Lee Chor Lin says: "If we don't innovate to keep in step with the wider context by, for example, using new technology to present ancient history, then we cease being relevant."

The museum was set up in 1887 as the Raffles Library and Museum by the Governor of the Straits Settlement, Sir Frederick Weld, and renamed the National Museum after Singapore's independence.

The festivities hark back to the institution and Singapore's beginnings.

One key exhibition, from Sept 7 to Oct 21, is the first public showing of the entire collection of William Farquhar's 477 natural history drawings, illustrating the flora and fauna of South-east Asia.

The collection, worth \$3 million and acquired by stockbroker G.K. Goh through auction house Sotheby's, was donated to the museum in 1996.

Singapore fashion designer Benny Ong, 58, will also showcase 10 of his sumptuous ballgowns in another exhibition from now till Jan 1 next year.

He says: "I hope they will be seen as art and as a snapshot of my career in fashion."

Another highlight of the celebrations: a new, site-specific work called 120, by TheatreWorks' artistic director Ong Keng Sen.

The production, from Oct 12 to 14, stars household names like Hossan Leong and Kumar. It takes the form of a guided tour of the museum, with the cast taking on the roles of curators, visitors and even the director, Ms Lee.

She says with a laugh: "I'm curious as to who will play me. Every time I talk to Ong Keng Sen now, he's observing me."

"The production is an experiment to see how the entire museum can become a stage."

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> For the complete schedule of performances, exhibitions, films and activities, log on to [www.nationalmuseum.sg](http://www.nationalmuseum.sg)