





MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

DISCOVER THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF MODERN WOMEN IN SINGAPORE THROUGH FASHION

Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall launches a new exhibition that dives into the evolving roles of women throughout history

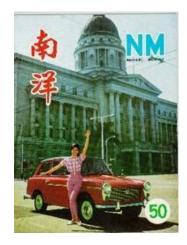


Photograph of Soong Ching-ling with her mother (early Republican period) Soong is wearing an *ao* (blouse-jacket) over pants, an attire typically worn by Han girls in the late Qing dynasty. During the early years of the Republican period, women continued to wear Chinese-style outfits as they were still regarded as bastions of tradition and culture. Reproduced with permission from The Museum of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Cuiheng China



Advertisement poster for "Gold Bar Hatamen" brand of cigarettes (1930s)

The model spots fashionably permed hair, wears a fitted cheongsam, and is seated in front of a Western-style dressing table. She espouses the ideal of the "modern woman" in her confidence and her comfortable bourgeois lifestyle. Collection of Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall.



Nanyang Monthly's 50th Edition Cover (1961)

Featuring a woman dressed in fashionable clothes with her car parked in front of the former Supreme Court Building and City Hall. The car symbolises women's increased social mobility and independence. 1961 also marks the year when the Women's Charter was passed in Singapore. Collection of Mr. Yung Sai-Shing

Singapore, 3 June 2021 – From 12 June to 12 December 2021, Sun Yat Sen Memorial Hall (SYSNMH) will be presenting its latest special exhibition, *Modern Women of the Republic: Fashion and Change in China and Singapore*, which uses fashion as a barometer of societal change to shed light on the changes in women's status, roles and lifestyles since the late 19th century. The exhibition will display close to 100 artefacts and photographs, focusing on Chinese women's clothing and accessories from China and Singapore that span almost a hundred years.



2 Fashion was a means of self-expression for women from as far back as the late Qing period, through post-independence Singapore, and even till today. Whether it was loose-fitting robes, form-fitting cheongsams or "civilised new outfits", the stylistic evolution of women's clothing reflects social and political changes that took place over the century and also shapes what we now know as the "modern woman" and her roles in society.

3 By examining the changes in women's fashion during this period, SYSNMH hopes to trace the rise of the "modern woman" in China and Singapore. It also hopes to examine the various factors that shape our understanding of what constitutes a "modern woman". It does this over three separate sections - from charting political changes in society from the 1890s to the 1930s, to covering the evolving notion of a modern woman from the 1930s to the 1960s, and finally to exploring how fashion empowered working women in Singapore from the 1950s to the 1970s.

4 Ms Tan Yan Ni, assistant curator at SYSNMH, said: "Fashion, besides being a form of self-expression, is often a reflection of the times. This is why we chose fashion as a medium to tap into broader conversations, to discuss women's multi-faceted and ever-changing roles across history, and how their contributions are integral to the political, social and economic development of a society. It is also timely for us to explore this topic as 2021 is the Year of Celebrating SG Women, and we hope to spark off more discussions amongst Singaporeans about what constitutes a modern woman today."

Charting Change Through Fashion (1890s – 1930s)

5 The early years after the founding of the new Chinese Republic were fraught with political turmoil and uncertainty, accompanied by anxieties about what constituted "ideal womanhood". The government of the time made big strides towards abolishing practices such as the binding of feet and breasts, whilst female education developed and ignited the concept of the "modern woman" and her role. This section traces changing fashion trends at that time which sheds light on the social and political changes that took place during the creation of a modern society.





ME SUN YAT SEN

Embroidered wedding blouse and skirt set worn by Tan Kah Kee's daughter on her wedding day (1928) Malacca, Malaya This set of wedding clothes was worn by Mdm Tan Lay Choo, the sixth daughter of prominent community leader Tan Kah Kee. The top with large trumpet sleeves had elements of the then fashionable "civilised new outfit", while the skirt had Western-style buttons. The butterfly and flower motifs embroidered on smooth satin embodied wishes for the couple to enjoy a harmonious and fruitful marriage. This bridal ensemble was tailored by tailors in China and sent to Malacca for the wedding. <i>Collection of National Museum of Singapore</i>
Photograph of two Chinese women wearing their "civilised new outfits" (date unknown) Singapore In the wake of the May Fourth Movement in 1919, the issue of whether women should cut their hair attracted widespread attention and discussion in newspapers in China. During that period, short hair was seen as a form of physical and psychological liberation for women. In addition, women with progressive ideas preferred collarless garments as they felt that the collar restricted the movement of the neck and should be abandoned by "modern women". Reproduced with permission of National Museum of Singapore
Cheongsam with a ren-front China This cheongsam features handmade buttons made out of silk fabric and a diagonal ren-front which extends to the under-arm on either side and resembles the Chinese character "ren" (人, "human being"). The front opening of the cheongsam is called jin (襟), and there are many variations such as straight slant front, pipa front etc. The period from the 1920s to the 1940s was regarded as the golden age of the cheongsam. As China became increasingly influenced by Western fashion trends, more and more Chinese tailors began to incorporate waist and bust darts onto the cheongsam to accentuate the wearer's figure. <i>Collection of Mr. Hok Pui Leung and Mrs. Sally Yu Leung</i>





Imagining the Ideal Modern Woman (1930s-1960s)

6 The proliferation of print media from the 1930s onwards encouraged the growth of fashion consciousness and experimentation amongst women then. Fashion magazines, advertisements and pictorials continuously sparked consumer desires, tested society's acceptance of new ideas, and embedded the idea of "modernity" into all aspects of daily life.



Dressing Modern Working Women in Singapore (1950s -1970s)

7 The third and final section of the exhibition examines the growing economic empowerment amongst women, with more joining the workforce and gaining financial independence from the 1950s. As they took on their new and more public roles, women became more conscious of how they groomed and presented themselves in public, and this led to a boom in the beauty and fashion industries in Singapore.





 Beige Western-style dress (1970s) Singapore The design of this one-piece dress can be traced back to the "New Look" design popularised by Christian Dior in 1947. Its cinched waist flatters a woman's figure and accentuates her femininity. The rise of Singapore as a hub for textiles in the region in the 1960s also meant that local women could buy imported fabrics and Western-style clothing at affordable prices. As Singapore became increasingly exposed to Western culture and fashion trends through films and television, such one-piece dresses with an A-line skirt became highly popular among young working women.
Collection of National Museum of Singapore
 Photograph of female workers in Tancho Corporation Limited factory at Little Road (1967) Singapore In the early days of independent Singapore, in order to address the issue of unemployment, the Singaporean government turned to export-oriented labour-intensive industries and successfully attracted investments through a slew of free and open economic policies. In this photograph, the female workers are packaging the Japanese product, "Tancho Hair Cream". They are spotting fashionably permed short hair which is a practical choice for working women at that time as such a hairstyle is relatively
low-maintenance. Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

8 The exhibition at SYSNMH will be open from 10am to 5pm from Tuesdays to Sundays (and closed on Mondays). Admission is free for Singaporeans and Permanent Residents. For more information on *Modern Women of the Republic: Fashion and Change in China and Singapore*, please visit <u>http://sysnmh.org.sg</u>. Exhibition highlights can be found in the **Annex**.

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About the National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993. As the custodian of Singapore's heritage, NHB is responsible for telling the Singapore story, sharing the Singaporean experience and imparting our Singapore spirit.

NHB's mission is to preserve and celebrate the shared heritage of our diverse communities, for the purpose of education, nation-building and cultural understanding. It manages the national museums and heritage institutions, and sets policies relating to heritage sites, monuments and the national collection. Through the national collection, NHB curates heritage programmes and presents exhibitions to connect the past, present and future generations of Singaporeans. NHB is a statutory board under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Please visit www.nhb.gov.sg for more information.

About the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall

Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall (SYSNMH), a heritage institution under the National Heritage Board, traces Dr Sun's revolutionary activities in the Southeast Asian region and highlights the impact of the 1911 Chinese Revolution on Singapore as well as Singapore's contributions to the Revolution.

The SYSNMH was re-opened to the public on 9 October 2011. The revamped Memorial Hall features a new storyline that introduces key community leaders in the early 20th century; highlights Nanyang as a base for Revolution; and explores the impact and influences of the 1911 Chinese Revolution on the Singapore Chinese community. It will also continue to promote the understanding of our history through research and publication; work with the community in outreach and education programmes as well as organise Chinese cultural events for all Singaporeans and visitors.

Please visit www.sysnmh.org.sg for more information.



Annex – Highlight Artefacts

Section 1: Mirroring Society: Charting Change through Fashion (1890s -1930s)

S/N	Item Accession No. & Description	Photo	Collection
1	 Han women's ao (blouse-jacket) with floral and "boys at play" motif (late Qing Dynasty) China Children, especially boys, hold a very special place in Chinese society as they are believed to perpetuate the family line. This women's ao (jacket-blouse) is decorated with the "boys at play" (yingxitu, 婴戏图) motif which reflects the desire for male progeny. 		Collection of Mr. Hok Pui Leung and Mrs. Sally Yu Leung 梁学培先生、余 翠雁女士珍藏
	It is also embroidered on the cuffs with other fertility symbols such as squirrels and grapes. The Chinese character for "squirrel" (songshu, 松鼠) contains the character for "rat" (shu, 鼠), an animal known for its reproductive ability. Grapes is a fruit with an abundance of seeds and the Chinese character for seeds (zi, 籽) is homonymous with the character for offspring (zi, 子). Together, the squirrel and grapes symbolise the desire for progeny.		
	褐色缎绣花卉纹百子镶边如意襟汉袄(晚清时期) 中国		
	在华人传统思想中,背负着传宗接代使命的男丁尤为重要。这件汉袄中的婴 戏图便体现出对男嗣的渴望。		





2	此外,寄寓生命繁衍的纹饰还包括袖口处的松鼠与缠枝葡萄:松鼠二字中所 含的"鼠"是一种繁殖能力强盛的动物;葡萄硕果累累,其籽与"子"谐 音。两者结合,再次强调了人们对子孙满堂的渴求。 Embroidered silk women robe with rabbit fur (Late Qing dynasty) <i>China</i> The collar, cuffs and inner layer of this silk women robe are lined with rabbit fur and decorated with scenes from different seasons, and depictions of literati gatherings which represent an ideal lifestyle. The robe is also embroidered with chrysanthemum and lotus motifs, which symbolize longevity and purity. 石青缎五彩绣庭院仕女纹对襟兔绒女褂(晚清时期) 中国	Collection of Mr. Hok Pui Leung and Mrs. Sally Yu Leung 梁学培先生、余 翠雁女士珍藏
	这件袍服领口与袖口处缀有兔绒,袍身前后绣有随着四季更替各异的文人雅 集图样,代表了人们心向往之的精致生活。袍身亦有菊花和莲花绣纹,意寓 长寿与纯洁。	
3	Embroidered wedding blouse and skirt set worn by Tan Kah Kee's daughter on her wedding day (1928) <i>Malacca, Malaya</i> This set of wedding clothes was worn by Mdm Tan Lay Choo, the sixth daughter of prominent community leader Tan Kah Kee. The top with large trumpet sleeves had elements of the then fashionable "civilized new outfit", while the skirt had Western-style buttons. The butterfly and flower motifs embroidered on smooth satin embodied wishes for the couple to enjoy a	Collection of National Museum of Singapore 新加坡国家博物 馆馆藏





	harmonious and fruitful marriage. This bridal ensemble was tailored by tailors in China and sent to Malacca for the wedding. 陈嘉庚之女在婚礼当天所穿的绣花婚服(1928年) 马来亚马六甲 这是著名华社领袖陈嘉庚第六个女儿陈丽珠的一套婚服。这套婚服采用了 "文明新装"的喇叭状倒大袖设计,裙子上则有西式纽扣。光滑缎面上的蝶 恋花绣饰具有夫妻和美,繁衍生命的寓意。整套婚服乃是由中国国内师傅完 成后再寄至马六甲。	
4	"Cantonese style" cheongsam with scalloped hem and collar (early Republican period) China The cheongsam features hibiscus (fu rong hua, 芙蓉花) motifs, which is a pun for wealth and honour (fu rong, 富荣) in Chinese. The scallop patterns on the collar, cuffs and hem indicate that this cheongsam most likely originated from Xiguan in Guangzhou, China. Xiguan was the commercial center of Guangzhou since antiquity and was at its most prosperous during the late Qing period and early Republican period. 具有扇贝状花边下摆和立领的粤式旗袍(民国初年)	Collection of Mr. Hok Pui Leung and Mrs. Sally Yu Leung 梁学培先生、余 翠雁女士珍藏





	这件旗袍上芙蓉花纹饰,取其谐音"富荣",寓意富贵荣华。旗袍衣领、袖口和裙摆上的扇贝状花边表明,这件旗袍最有可能起源于中国广州的西关, 西关自古以来就是广州的商业中心,也是清末民初最富饶之地。		
5	Teo Soon Kim's graduation certificate from London's Honourable Society of Inner Temple (1928) Singapore	INTER TEATPLU. This is to Certify to advant of many annan. That have been been be for good bedge	Collection of Madam Wang Lei
	Teo Soon Kim studied law at the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple in London and she was the second Malayan Chinese woman to qualify as a barrister in England in 1927.	the lange line is to have been and a second of the second	王雷女士珍藏
	张舜琴由伦敦内殿律师协会所颁发的毕业证书(1928年) 新加坡	Humand to the Office, haven't belonging In Testimony, where I bene have been and may be not and the half of the read becauge the second reach way of from an degree of becched bear housed over boarded and bearing second	
	张舜琴在伦敦内殿律师协会修读法律。1927年,她成为第二位在英国取得律师资格的马来亚华人妇女。	Holows	





Section 2: In Vogue: Imagining the Ideal Modern Women (1930s-1960s)

6	Paper carrier bag for Nestlé with Milo advertisement Singapore		Collection of National
	This paper shopping bag was produced by Nestlé to promote its popular Milo beverage in Singapore, and features the image of a swimsuit-clad woman	美祿	Museum of Singapore
	enjoying sea sports. The use of such an image serves to associate the beverage with youth, beauty and vitality.	THE READ BY BUT AN AN AN	新加坡国家博物 馆馆藏
	雀巢公司印有美禄广告的纸袋(约 1960 年) 新加坡	B	
	这款纸质购物袋是雀巢公司为本地广受欢迎的美禄饮料而制作,采用了身穿泳 衣的女子享受海上运动的形象。该女子散发的"健康之美"将饮料与青春、美 丽和活力有效地联系起来。	ARANARAN BITHEAATTIN	





The Young Companion Pictorial (1967) Collection of Shanghai, China National OMPANIO Museum of Founded in Shanghai in 1926, The Young Companion Pictorial was the most Singapore widely distributed pictorial amongst Chinese communities all over the world. Not surprisingly, it was a highly influential pictorial which shaped and dictated 新加坡国家博物 fashion trends. The pictorial later relocated its operations to Hong Kong and 馆馆藏 ceased publication in 1998. The woman on this cover is wearing false evelashes with heavy eye make-up and thick eyeliner, a look that was highly popular in the 1960s. The theatricallypainted eyes make the face more expressive and capture the free and rebellious spirit of the "swinging sixties". 《良友》画报(1967年) 中国上海 《良友》于 1926 年在上海创刊,是全球华人社群中发行量最大的画报,引领 和塑造了时尚潮流。该画报后来复刊于香港,并于1998年停刊。 这张封面上的女子戴着假睫毛,浓重的眼妆和加粗的眼线很好地刻画了 1960 年代的流行风格。她戏剧化的眼妆可突显脸部轮廓、增加表现张力,成功捕捉 了"摇摆的 60 年代"那种自由反抗的精神。

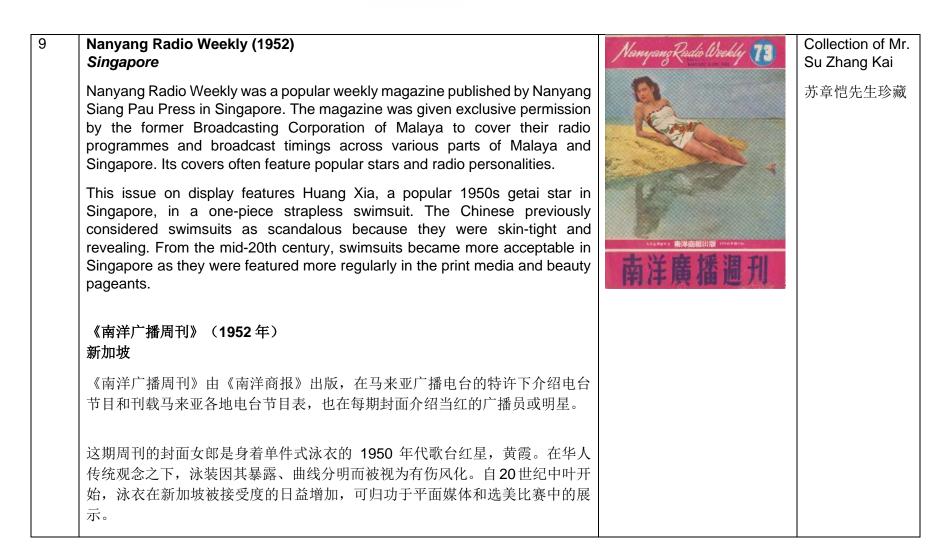




Nanyang Monthly (1961) Collection of Mr 8 Yong Sai Sheng Singapore 容世诚先生珍藏 Founded in 1957, Nanyang Monthly featured content that was similar to pictorials although it paid special attention to Nanyang-related issues. The cover of its 50th edition features a woman dressed in fashionable clothes with her car parked in front of the former Supreme Court Building and City Hall (presently National Gallery of Singapore). The car serves as a symbol of women's increased social mobility and independence. The year of the publication is significant as 1961 also marks the year when the Women's Charter was passed in Singapore. 《南洋画报》(1961年) 新加坡 《南洋画报》创刊于 1957 年, 虽与大部分综合性画报覆盖的内容相似, 但极 大地关注了南洋地区的议题。第50期画报中的女性以时髦装束将轿车停泊在 当时的最高法院和政府大厦(现为国家美术馆)前。 轿车反映了女性的独立自主和行动自由。这期刊印的年份,1961年,也正是 《妇女宪章》在新加坡通过之时。











10	 "Nelbarden" swimsuit (1950s) Singapore The early versions of women's swimsuits were one-piece outfits which covered a significant portion of the body. The bikini was introduced in 1946 and revolutionised swimwear design. This two-piece swimsuit produced by Nelbarden may have been a conservative version of the bikini, and its top and bottom pieces have a zipper in front to create a more fitting silhouette. Previously made from wool, cotton, knit and/or other fabrics with strong water absorption capacity, swimsuits became more fitted after World War II when elastic materials such as nylon and latex became available and more widely used in clothing. Nelbarden 公司生产的两件式泳装 (1950 年代) 新加坡 	Collection of National Museum of Singapore 新加坡国家博物 馆馆藏
	最早的泳衣是单件式的,覆盖了身体相当大的部分。随着 1946 年比基尼面世,泳装款式也发生革命性发展。这件由 Nelbarden 公司推出的两件式泳装可被视为较为保守的比基尼款式。它的上下截都附有拉链,以便塑造更贴切的轮廓。	
	早期的泳装是由羊毛、棉布、针织品等吸水能力较强的纺织面料制成。二战后,尼龙和乳胶等弹性材料的问世及在服装中的广泛应用让泳衣变得更加紧身。	



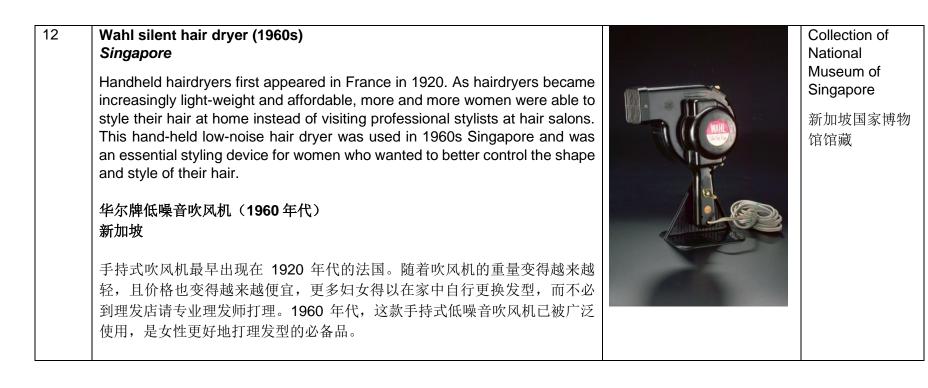


Section 3: Fashion of Empowerment: Dressing the Modern Career Women in Singapore (1950s-1970s)

11	4711 Cologne (date unknown) <i>Singapore</i>	Collection of Sun Yat Sen
	4711 cologne is a perfume that originated from Germany in the 18th century and is still being sold in Singapore today. In the early 20th century, the perfumes and cosmetic products that were available in Singapore were often imported and expensive, and were highly coveted by women.	Nanyang Memorial Hall 晚晴园—孙中山 南洋纪念馆馆藏
	4711 古龙香水(年份不详) 新加坡	
	4711 古龙香水源自 18 世纪的德国,至今仍在本地销售。20 世纪初,新加坡 的香水和化妆品多为舶来品且价格昂贵,但仍深受女性青睐。	

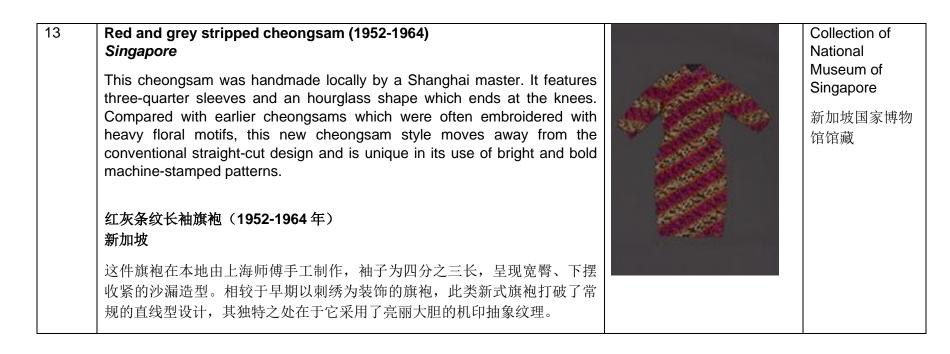
















14	Green sleeveless cheongsam with matching lace jacket (1950s-1960s)SingaporeThe style of this cheongsam and lace jacket ensemble is reminiscent of the traditional Malay "kebaya", which consists of a fitted translucent long-sleeved blouse worn over a sarong skirt. The jacket has a V-shape neckline and scallop patterns at the hems, and is decorated with floral motifs.This fusion of Malay and Chinese designs reflects Singapore's unique multiculturalism and also shows how local women were confident of and comfortable with their identity to use fashion as a form of self-expression.青色无袖旗袍与蕾丝外套 (1950-1960 年代) 新加坡该款旗袍和蕾丝外套组合,让人联想起马来民族的"卡巴雅" (Kebaya) — ————————————————————————————————————	Collection of National Museum of Singapore 新加坡国家博物 馆馆藏





15	Brown batik cheongsam with matching cropped jacket (1960s) Singapore This cheongsam is a good example of "hybridity" in fashion. It uses batik, a Malay fabric, for a garment that is Chinese in style, and pairs it with a Western-style cropped jacket.	T	Collection of National Museum of Singapore 新加坡国家博物
	This cheongsam in batik also reflects how the Chinese community was heading towards "Malayanisation" in the 1960s, and shows how keen the community was in identifying with Malaya and its indigenous culture. In Singapore's multi-ethnic society, cultural interaction and integration often result in innovative fashion designs.		馆馆藏
	配有短外套的峇迪旗袍(1960 年代) 新加坡		
	这款旗袍很好地诠释了时尚的"糅杂性"(Hybridity)——马来族峇迪 (Batik)面料制成的中式服装,搭配上西式剪裁的短外套。		
	这件峇迪蜡染布制成的旗袍反映了上世纪 60 年代华人社会走向"马来亚化" 的历程,也展现了他们对马来亚和原住民文化的认同。在多元社会中,文化 互动和融合的结果造就了新加坡在服装设计上的创新。		