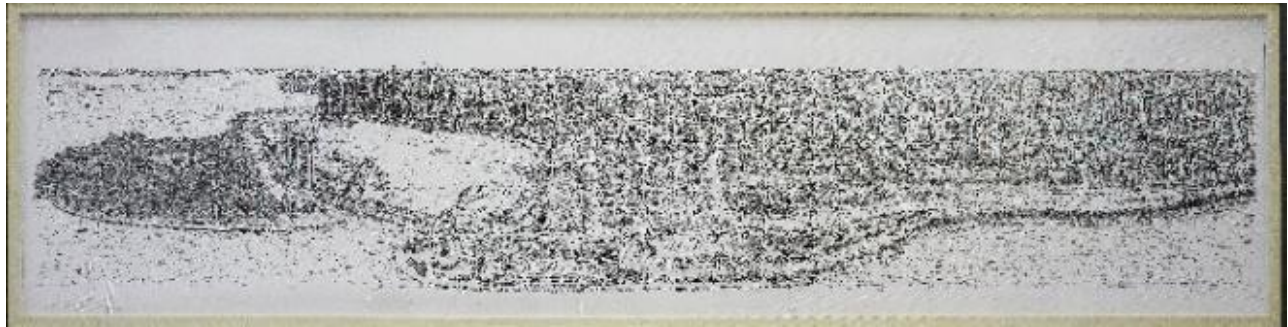


MEDIA RELEASE

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DISCOVER THE SECRETS BEHIND THE CARE OF OUR NATIONAL COLLECTION

Interactive travelling exhibition demonstrates how the Heritage Conservation Centre conserves paintings, textiles, objects and paper



Panorama of Singapore (2014) by British artist Stephen Wiltshire

Singapore, 25 August 2021 – A museum’s artworks and artefacts are usually the stars of an exhibition, captivating the attention of visitors on specially-lit walls and showcases. But who takes care of them and what happens to them when they are not on display or when they are in need of repairs?


The National Heritage Board (NHB) presents ***The World of Heritage Conservation: Sneak Peeks into Safeguarding Singapore’s National Collection***, a new travelling exhibition that brings visitors into the often unseen world of the conservators at the Heritage Conservation Centre (HCC) who care for these treasures. The exhibition features case studies of how items in the National Collection are conserved in four fields – paintings, textiles, objects and paper – alongside displays of a conservator’s tools of trade.

3 *The World of Heritage Conservation: Sneak Peeks into Safeguarding Singapore’s National Collection* is the 13th and latest addition to NHB’s ongoing *Heritage on the Move* series of travelling exhibitions, that bring different aspects of Singapore’s heritage closer to Singaporeans.



4 Ms Ong Chiew Yen, Director, HCC, said: “Every item in our National Collection tells a story, which is part of Singapore’s larger history. As their entrusted custodians, the Heritage Conservation Centre has a responsibility to care for them so that Singaporeans now and in the future can continue to enjoy and learn from them. We hope that through this exhibition, visitors will gain insights into the craft and efforts of our conservators, which are often unseen by the public, and appreciate their vital role in safeguarding Singapore’s heritage.”

5 The exhibition, which took 10 months to put together, also profiles four of HCC's conservators, each specialising in one of the four conservation fields, to demonstrate the process of interventive and preventive work on artwork and artefacts in our National Collection. The exhibition also includes interactive features such as a large puzzle and a panorama flip board, behind-the-scenes videos, and a display of 14 key tools that are used in the conservation process.

6 The four artefacts highlighted in the case studies include a 19th-century painting of an opium clipper at sea against the backdrop of the Singapore waterfront; an orange floral lace cheongsam from the mid-20th century; a toothbrush used by a prisoner of war during the Japanese Occupation; and a panorama of Singapore's cityscape hand-drawn on paper from memory. For more information on the artefacts, please refer to the table below:

Field	Artefact and background
Painting	<div data-bbox="685 827 1179 1230" data-label="Image">  </div> <div data-bbox="704 1230 1159 1262" data-label="Caption"> <p><i>Red Rover off Singapore, 19th century</i></p> </div> <div data-bbox="425 1293 1437 1495" data-label="Text"> <p>This painting, titled <i>Red Rover off Singapore</i>, was painted in the 19th century and depicts the opium clipper, Red Rover, at sea with the Singapore waterfront in the background. The Red Rover was the first of a line of clippers that transported opium from India to China during the peak of the opium trade in the 19th century. The clipper frequented Singapore, which was a regular port of call along the opium trade route between Calcutta and Hong Kong.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="425 1528 1437 1730" data-label="Text"> <p>Stylistically, this painting belongs to the genre of Chinese export art, which frequently depicted scenes of the waterfronts of treaty ports and of the vessels involved in China's trade. This work must be noted for its rarity not only owing to the identification of the Red Rover, but also considering the scarcity of such paintings depicting Singapore itself as a port of call, with many such works either with unidentified backgrounds or of the treaty ports of Macau or Canton.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="425 1764 1437 1894" data-label="Text"> <p><u>Conservation highlights:</u> A second 'hidden' layer of overpaint (a layer that was not part of the original painting) was discovered during the conservation process, complicating its cleaning and restoration. This layer of overpaint covered the original painting, distorting the artist's original intention and</p> </div>

	<p>potentially damaging the painting. As such, anything that was not part of the original painting needed to be removed.</p>
Textile	<div data-bbox="841 365 1024 701" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="513 716 1357 743"><i>Orange Floral Lace Cheongsam with Matching Jacket, mid-20th century</i></p> <p data-bbox="427 781 1440 976">This cheongsam and jacket ensemble belonged to Datin Aw Cheng Hu, the late daughter of Aw Boon Par, one of the Aw Brothers well-known for Tiger Balm and Haw Par Villa in Singapore. The cheongsam and jacket were made by Shanghainese tailors with fabric bought from High Street in Singapore. Datin Aw would often wear cheongsams with accompanying jackets when attending social functions.</p> <p data-bbox="427 1016 1440 1312">In Singapore's context, cheongsams of the post-war period are symbols of modernity as women joined the workforce and became more involved in social activities. The cinched waist is evidence of western influence, especially of couturier Christian Dior's "New Look". The matching western-styled orange jacket is yet another westernised adaptation. It provided Datin Aw with a more business-like look and functioned as an added layer of comfort in chilly environments, when air-conditioning was introduced in the 1960s. The ensemble is made of polyester, a popular material for cheongsams in the mid-20th century as it is more resistant to creases than traditional silk.</p> <p data-bbox="427 1352 1440 1547"><u>Conservation highlights:</u> A mannequin made of inert materials was customised for the display of this cheongsam-jacket ensemble for an exhibition in the National Museum of Singapore in 2012. The conservator had to study the artefact's history and biography to better understand the owner, interpret the silhouette of the mannequin and customise the mannequin to best display the ensemble in an exhibition environment.</p>

<p>Objects</p>	 <p><i>Toothbrush that belonged to former POW Sergeant John Ritchie Johnston, 1940s</i></p> <p>This toothbrush belonged to Sergeant John Ritchie Johnston from the 2/9th Field Ambulance in the Australian Army's 8th Division, which participated in the defence of Malaya and Singapore from 1941-1942. With the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942, Johnston was captured by the Japanese and spent the rest of the Japanese Occupation in Changi as a prisoner of war (POW) until 1945.</p> <p>The bristles of the brush were found to resemble the brooms made in Changi Broom Factory in the POW camp during the Japanese Occupation. Scientific analysis further confirmed that they were made from raw coconut fibres, corresponding with the broom bristles in the factory.</p> <p><u>Conservation highlights:</u> This brush was in an extremely brittle state when it first came into HCC. Its handle was broken into pieces as it was made of cellulose nitrate, a chemically unstable material that is highly susceptible to degradation even under mild or ambient conditions. The conservator had to reconstruct some parts of the handle to make it whole again.</p>
<p>Paper</p>	 <p><i>Panorama of Singapore, 2014</i></p> <p><i>Panorama of Singapore</i> was drawn from memory by British artist Stephen Wiltshire over five days at Paragon Shopping Centre in July 2014. Commissioned by Singapore Press Holdings as part of their 30th anniversary celebrations, the work was eventually presented to then-President Tony Tan as a gift for Singapore's 50th birthday.</p> <p>Diagnosed with autism at the age of three, Wiltshire possesses an exceptional memory. He drew Singapore's cityscape on a four by one metre sheet of paper based purely on his recollection from an hour-long helicopter ride over the city the day before.</p>

	<p><u>Conservation highlights:</u> <i>Panorama of Singapore</i> is a large-sized artwork that required a team of conservators to work on it. Logistics such as venue reservation and materials preparation had to be well-coordinated to allow for optimal treatment of this item. The artwork faced an issue of cockling, which meant that there were wrinkles that formed on the paper. If left unaddressed, these wrinkles can cause permanent creases on the artwork.</p>
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7 *The World of Heritage Conservation: Sneak Peeks into Safeguarding Singapore's National Collection* will be on display at the Central Public Library from today till 30 September, before it travels to different locations across the island as listed below:

- October 2021: Bishan Public Library
- November 2021: Jurong West Public Library
- December 2021: Marine Parade Public Library
- January 2022: TBC
- February 2022: Tampines Regional Library

8 Please refer to **Annex A** for profiles of the four conservators. For more information on the travelling exhibition, please visit <https://go.gov.sg/nhb-travelling-exhibitions>.

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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.

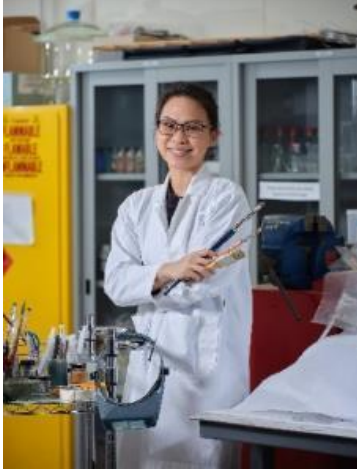

NHB's mission is to preserve and celebrate the shared heritage of our diverse communities, for the purpose of education, nation-building and cultural understanding. It manages the national museums and heritage institutions, and sets policies relating to heritage sites, monuments and the national collection. 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 Heritage Conservation Centre

The Heritage Conservation Centre (HCC) is an institution of the National Heritage Board (NHB), Singapore. The HCC building in Jurong is a purpose-built facility, for the storage and conservation of artefacts and artworks under the care of NHB. It also facilitates access to the National Collection and comprises the collections management, conservation services (including conservation science) as well as management and operations departments.

HCC hopes to play a leading role in heritage preservation in Singapore by focusing on three main objectives. Firstly, to set and maintain high professional standards of heritage preservation; secondly, to improve accessibility to the National Collection; and finally, to disseminate and share with the public our knowledge of heritage care. By leveraging our expertise in conservation and collections management, we hope to expand our role in the heritage community beyond Singapore into the region. Please visit <https://www.nhb.gov.sg/what-we-do/our-work/preserve-our-stories-treasures-and-places/the-national-collection/heritage-conservation-centre> for more information.

Field	Conservators' profiles	
Painting		<p>Senior Conservator (Paintings), HCC Damian Lizun received his Master of Arts in Conservation and Restoration of Paintings and Polychrome Sculpture from Nicholas Copernicus University, Torun, Poland, in 2001. During his studies and after graduation, he worked in his family's conservation business, where he gained practical and analytical skills from his father, conservator Zenon Lizun. In 2006, he was appointed Conservator (Paintings) at Tipperary County Museum, Ireland. He moved to Singapore in 2013, where he was appointed Conservator (Paintings) at HCC.</p>
Textile		<p>Conservator (Textiles), HCC Chuance Chen graduated with a Master of Philosophy in Textile Conservation with Merit from the Centre for Textile Conservation and Technical Art History at the University of Glasgow. He has</p>

	<p>worked at HCC for over 10 years and was the textile conservator-in-charge for several special exhibitions including <i>In the Mood for Cheongsam: Modernity and Singapore Women</i> (2012) and <i>Nyonya Needlework: Embroidery and Beadwork in the Peranakan World</i> (2017).</p>
<p>Objects</p>	 <p>Assistant Conservator (Objects), HCC Sophia Lee obtained her Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Communication Design from Glasgow School of Art Singapore in 2014, with a focus on technical and sculptural design. Upon graduation, she worked as an artist focusing on wax and fibreglass materials, as well as prop construction. In 2019, she joined HCC as an Assistant Conservator for Objects.</p>
<p>Paper</p>	 <p>Senior Conservator (Paper), HCC Lee Siew Wah has worked at NHB since 1995, after graduating in 1994 with a Bachelor of Science (Merit) in Chemistry from the National University of Singapore. She obtained her Master of Arts in Conservation from Camberwell College of Arts in 1998, and professional accreditation from the Institute of Conservation in United Kingdom in 2012.</p>



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