

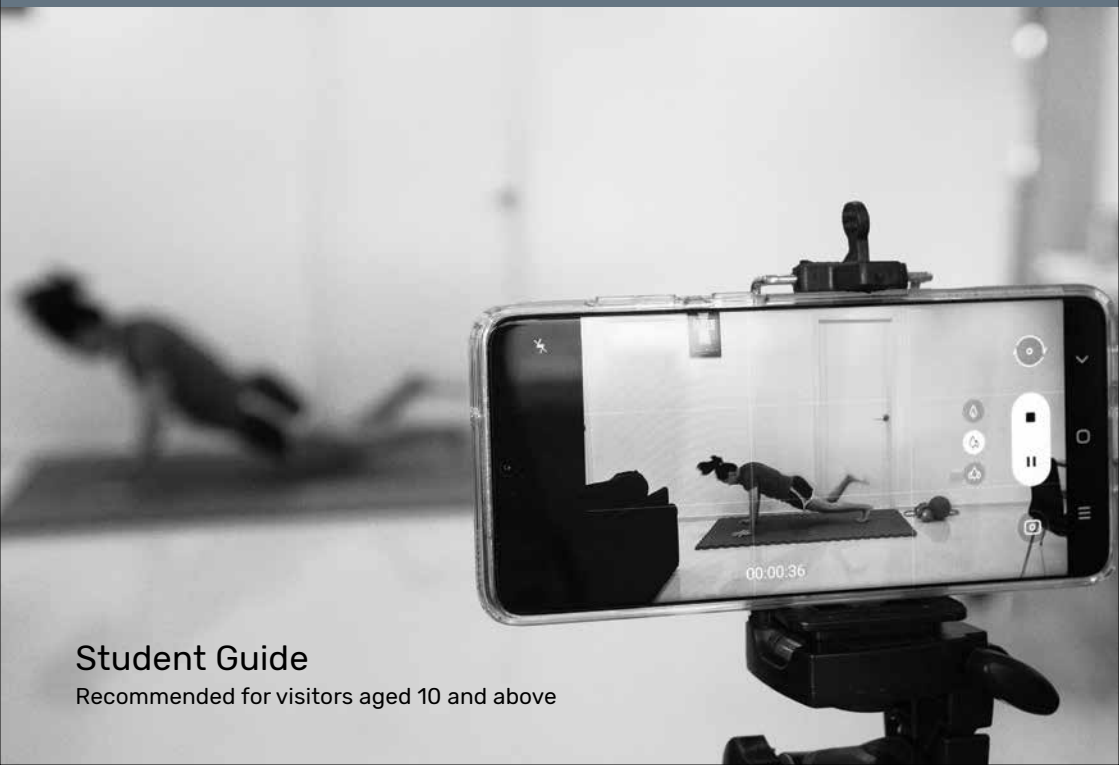
Collecting

Contemporary

Singapore

PICTURING ↔ THE
← → PANDEMIC

A VISUAL RECORD OF COVID-19 IN SINGAPORE



Student Guide

Recommended for visitors aged 10 and above

Picturing the Pandemic: A Visual Record of COVID-19 in Singapore showcases the museum's efforts to document the present for the future. Why is it important to do so, and how do we go about doing so?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the museum engaged a group of photographers and filmmakers to record everyday life in Singapore. Who are they and what stories have they "collected" during the pandemic?



As you go through the exhibition, you may use your mobile devices to access exclusive content within the exhibition, including audio commentary by the photographers and filmmakers, soundbites from selected photo subjects and oral history interviews!

Key Developments of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Singapore and the National Museum of Singapore's (NMS) Collecting Contemporary Singapore Initiative

23 Jan 2020:

Singapore confirms its first COVID-19 case.

7 Feb 2020:

DORSCON level is raised to Orange.

The DORSCON system is used to show the current disease situation in Singapore.

23 Mar 2020:

Short-term visitors are not allowed to enter or transit through Singapore.

7 Apr 2020:

Circuit breaker measures kick in. NMS is closed to the public.

14 Apr 2020:

All must wear a mask outside their homes.

17 Apr 2020:

NMS appoints five photographers and two filmmakers to document the COVID-19 pandemic in Singapore.

22 May 2020:

NMS and the National Library Board jointly invite the public to contribute records of their everyday experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1 Jun 2020:

End of circuit breaker. Phase 1 of reopening from 2 Jun.

19 Jun 2020:

Phase 2 of reopening. Dining-in allowed and people can gather in groups of up to five.

26 Jun 2020:

NMS reopens to the public.

Nov 2020 to Feb 2021:

Curation of *Picturing the Pandemic* exhibition.

28 Dec 2020:

Phase 3 of reopening. People can gather in groups of up to eight.

30 Dec 2020:

Vaccination drive begins.

27 Feb 2021:

Picturing the Pandemic opens to the public.

A Day in the Life

“A Day in the Life” presents the daily lives of a few people during the pandemic. One of them is 10-year-old Tay Kailin. When Singapore entered the circuit breaker, Kailin stayed with photographer Brian Teo, her godbrother, and his family, as her mother had to continue to go out for work.

A Child's Home-based Learning Experience ←→ Brian Teo



- How is Kailin's home-based learning experience similar to – or different from – yours?
- How do you think she felt about not being able to see her mother for two months? Which image(s) tell you so?
- What and who do you think helped her cope with home-based learning?



A large yellow rectangular area intended for students to write their responses to the questions.



Brian Teo is a Singapore-based photographer who fuses visual storytelling with the spontaneity of street photography. His works have been exhibited locally and featured in major publications such as *Lianhe Zaobao*. He clinched the Singapore Young Photographer Award in 2018 and was a finalist in the 2019 LensCulture Black and White Photography Awards.

Essential Workers

“Essential workers” is a term used for those who keep public infrastructure running during the pandemic. These workers continued to work in the community while others worked from home. However, the term has also sparked a debate: if these workers are considered essential, why are they not paid more? And does it also mean other workers are not essential?

Take a look at photographer Bob Lee’s *Unsung Heroes* series and the notes written by the workers.

Unsung Heroes ← → Bob Lee



- Who are some of these essential workers and why is their work considered “essential”?
- What are the fears and challenges they face? Describe one of their experiences in the space below.
- Can you think of any other essential worker who is not featured in the exhibition? Why do you think they are essential?



A large, solid yellow rectangular area intended for writing notes.



Bob Lee started out as a graphic designer before switching to his real passion – photography. He worked as a photojournalist with *Lianhe Zaobao* for ten years before starting his own photography business. Bob’s strength is in portrait photography, where he is able to get his subjects to relax in front of his camera, resulting in spontaneous, natural and compelling portraits.

New Ways of Living

“New Ways of Living” shows how COVID-19 and the attempts to prevent its spread have impacted the ways in which we appear and behave, as well as how people celebrate and commemorate religious events and festivals. For instance, during the month of Ramadan, Muslims would usually gather at mosques for evening prayers and to break fast. However, they observed Ramadan differently last year, as seen in Zakaria Zainal’s photographs. Let’s focus on a few of them.

A Reclusive Ramadan ← → Zakaria Zainal



- How did Muslims continue to observe Ramadan during the pandemic? What remained the same and what changed?
- How did big, extended families celebrate religious events when they had to stay apart?
- Is it important to stay connected with your extended family and friends even while you are apart? Why or why not?
- How were your religious events and festivals affected by the circuit breaker? How did you adapt?

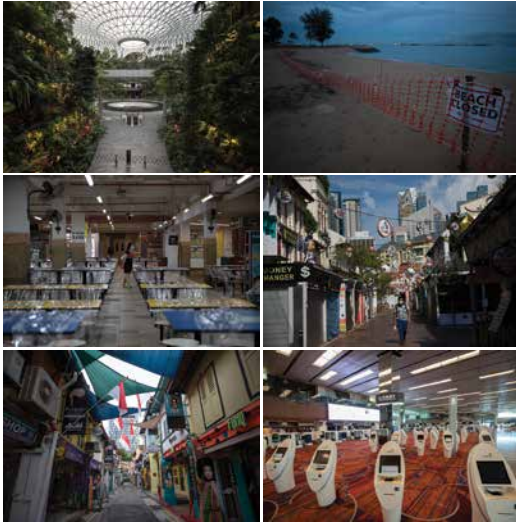


Zakaria Zainal, editor of *Visual Stories Asia* (a space for Asia’s diverse visual journalism), is a self-taught photographer. He is focused on telling stories about Asia, such as the Singapore Gurkhas and the living histories of displaced islanders south of Singapore. He studied communications and taught journalism to undergraduates at his alma mater, Nanyang Technological University.

New Ways of Living

“New Ways of Living” also shows how measures to curb the spread of COVID-19 transformed public spaces. With people staying home during the circuit breaker, spaces such as shopping centres and public transport became quiet. Eating places became empty when dining in was not allowed. Singapore closed its borders, so travellers and tourists stopped coming in. How Hwee Young’s photographs show how public spaces, which used to be bustling with life, became devoid of activity during the pandemic.

Spaces ←→ How Hwee Young



- How are these photographs of “empty” spaces different from the usual empty spaces before or after operational hours?
- What do you think happened to the people who work in these places?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected Singapore – its economy, environment and people?
- What places did you miss visiting due to the circuit breaker restrictions? How has that space changed since Singapore started opening up?



Photograph of
Hwee Young by
Stefen Chow



How Hwee Young was one of the few female photojournalists when she joined *The Straits Times* in 2001. She joined the European Pressphoto Agency (EPA) in 2004 to cover Singapore and Southeast Asia, and is currently the Chief Photographer for China with EPA. Her diverse coverage includes the 2013 Lushan earthquake in China, 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, global financial crisis and Formula One Grand Prix.

Making Visible

“Making Visible” presents the inequalities in Singapore that were exposed during the pandemic. Edwin Koo’s photographs feature the plight of the migrant workers who were affected when COVID-19 cases spiked in the dormitories, people who lived in rental flats, and the community and ground-up initiatives aimed at helping those in need.

Migrant Workers, Vulnerable Communities, Community and Ground-up Efforts ←→ Edwin Koo



- Who are the people who are usually “forgotten” in Singapore? Why is it important to remember them and how do we go about remembering them?
- How would you describe the living conditions of the migrant workers’ dormitory?
- What does it take for one to help another person?
- Do you know of any person in your family or community who needed help during the circuit breaker? How did you help that person cope during that period?



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[A large yellow rectangular area intended for writing a response to the questions above.]



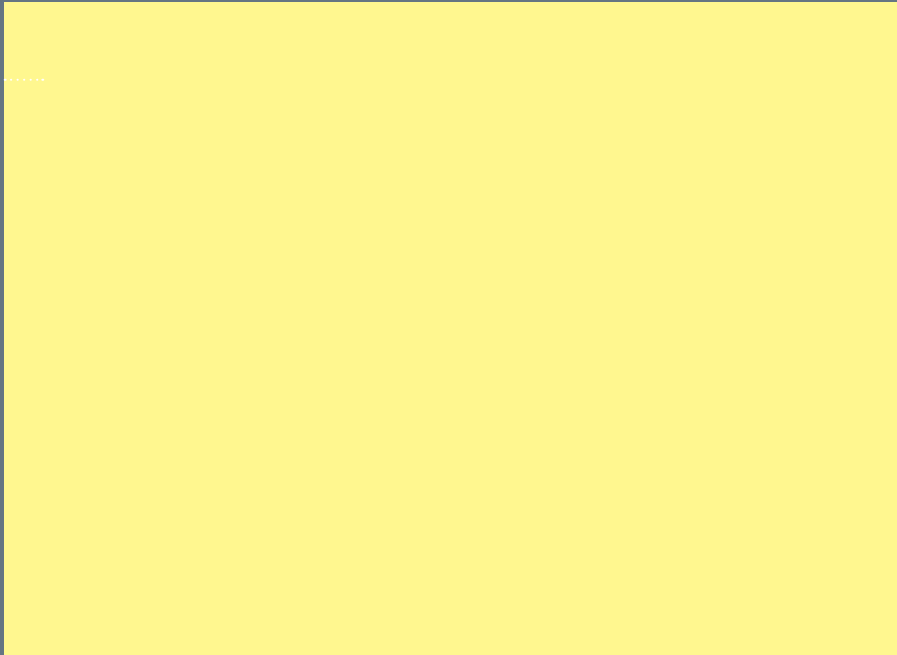
Edwin Koo was first introduced to photojournalism in university by his mentor. He began his career as a staff photographer in a free daily Singaporean tabloid in 2003, and then as a news photographer with *The Straits Times* in 2005. In 2008, he moved to Nepal with his wife, and returned to Singapore in 2011 with the birth of his son. His first personal project – a documentation of the General Election that year – is dedicated to his son.

The Spaces Between Us

The Spaces Between Us by Dave Lim and Adar Ng is a 21-minute film that documents the experiences of different people during the pandemic – how they had to contend with the new rules and challenges, and ways in which daily habits have changed. It also shows how they have coped and overcome some of the challenges.



- How did lives change during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are some challenges that the people in this film faced?
- What enabled them to cope with the changes and challenges?
- What is one challenge you faced during this pandemic and how did you overcome it?



Dave Lim and Adar Ng are an artist duo who have worked together since 2018 through multiple artistic, curatorial and research projects. Dave comes from a documentary and research background and most of his work reflects conceptual concerns. Adar's works are based on philosophical queries on reality and its impermanence in the world.



It's Your Turn!

Having seen how the museum has documented and presented Singapore's experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's your turn to record your experience!

We hope that in the process of recording your experience, you will have the opportunity to:

- Develop historical inquiry skills to question and evaluate different types of sources.
- Gain an understanding about the importance of collecting, documenting and remembering people, places or experiences for the future.

Key Question: What should be documented and remembered about the present for the future?

Subject Relevance:

- Character and Citizenship Education
- History
- Social Studies
- General Paper
- Communication-related Modules

Step 1:

Choose a suitable topic that is related to people, places or experiences. You may also select a topic outside these given categories.

People	Places	Experiences
Family	School	Home
Friends	Neighbourhood	School
Community	Hawker Centres	Community
Other groups	Museum	Nation

Step 2:

Do some research about the topic.

- Why is this person, period, place or event important to you, such that you would want to document and remember it?
- Are there objects below that you can collect and document?



Journal
(handwritten or digital)



Photographs



Scrapbooks



Video recording



Voice recording



**Drawing/
painting**



Newspaper articles, flyers, pamphlets or objects that remind you of a period, place, an event or a person.

Tip: you may choose more than 1 method or methods not listed here.

- You may also visit the museum galleries on Levels 1 or 2 to find objects that are relevant to your topic. Alternatively, you may search for images of the museum's artefacts on www.roots.gov.sg.

Step 3:

Decide how you would like to record and present your story or stories. Here are a few possible options that you can consider:

- A photo essay – you can shortlist some of the photos you have, decide on the theme for your story, and present the photographs with captions. This is similar to how the photographs have been categorised and presented in the *Picturing the Pandemic* exhibition.
- A documentary – this can take the form of an animation, a photo montage or a collection of video recordings. Here are some suggested tools and software you can use to create your documentary!

Filming equipment:

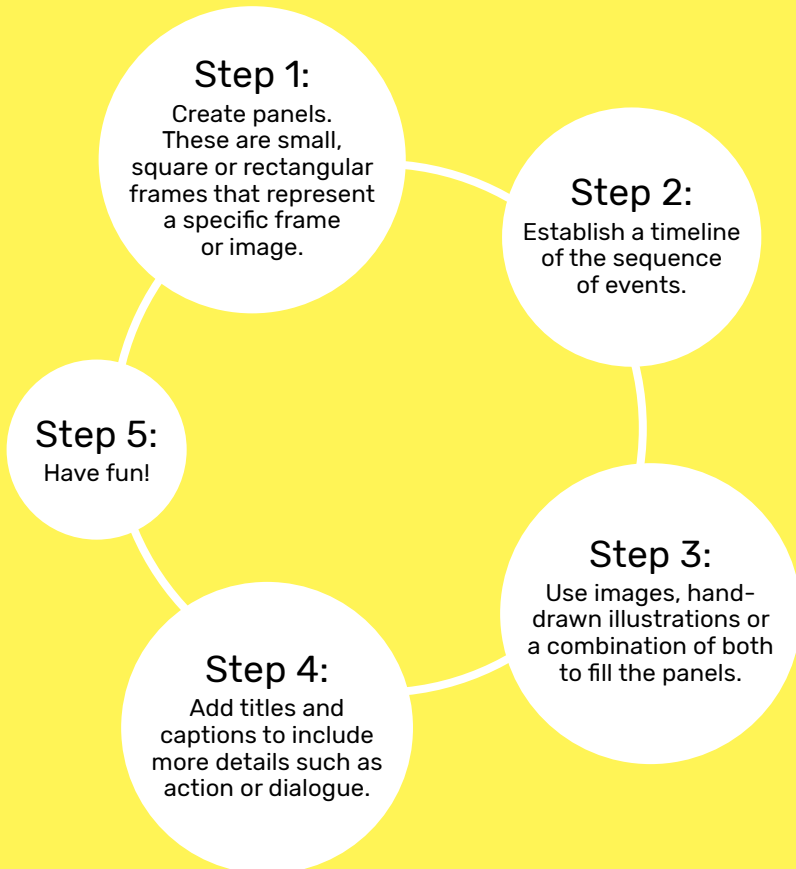
- Smartphone/tablet/camera/webcam
- Tripod
- Personal computer or laptop
- Portable light (to ensure the scene is well-lit)
- Microphone or voice-recorder

Websites or apps to edit your videos and add music, titles and graphics:

- iMovie editing app
- Windows Movie Maker
- Stop-motion animation app
- Bensound.com for royalty-free music
- Unsplash for royalty-free stock images
- Storyboard That or Canva to develop your storyboard

Tips to Produce an Awesome Presentation

- Create a storyboard.
- A storyboard is a sequential breakdown of each frame to depict significant changes of action in a film or presentation. It helps you to organise many ideas!
- What to include in a storyboard?
 - Introduction to set the context of the presentation.
 - Engaging or interesting story.
 - Impactful conclusion or reflection.
- How to create a storyboard in 5 easy steps?





- Prepare a script if necessary (if you are producing a documentary).
- Make sure your facts are correct. You may refer to the suggested list of sources when doing research.
 - National Heritage Board: <https://www.roots.gov.sg/>
 - National Library Board: <https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/>
 - National Museum of Singapore YouTube Channel: <https://go.gov.sg/nms-yt-channel>
 - The Straits Times: <https://www.straitstimes.com/>
 - Channel NewsAsia: <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/>
- For a photo essay:
 - Choose a strong focal point that you want viewers to focus on.
 - Find different and interesting perspectives/angles such as from above or below.
 - Look for ways to include patterns, symmetry, repetitive shapes or colours.
- For a documentary:
 - You do not have to be on camera. Try using animation or a photo montage.
 - Try to keep your video succinct or under three minutes.

The National Museum of Singapore is inviting students from upper primary to tertiary levels to share what you would like to document and collect for the future! Tell us why these people, places or experiences are important to you by submitting your photos or videos to us. Visit our website www.nationalmuseum.sg for more details!

**“When you press the shutter,
[a photo] will become history
many years later [...] even if
it is [of] normal daily life.”**

Bob Lee, photographer

Your museum journey does not end here! Visit the *Home, Truly* exhibition next door or our permanent exhibitions on Levels 1 and 2. Visit www.nationalmuseum.sg for updates on *Picturing the Pandemic* or other exhibitions and programmes.

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S National Museum
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