

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

*For immediate release*

### **Experience iconic technology of the past in an immersive showcase at the National Museum of Singapore**

*This second edition of the National Museum's Collecting Contemporary Singapore initiative will explore the theme of technology, and how everyday technological tools changed and shaped the lives of Singaporeans from the 1970s to 2000s.*



**Singapore, 7 June 2022** – From sleek smartphones to laptops, technology is inextricably linked to our daily lives today. But what came before these gadgets, and how did life look like then? Get a glimpse of this era that predates smart devices in the National Museum of Singapore's latest experiential showcase, ***Off / On: Everyday Technology that Changed Our Lives, 1970s–2000s***, and be transported back to a time where gadgets such as pagers, payphones and typewriters were among the technologies that were widely used.

2 The showcase is the second edition of the *Collecting Contemporary Singapore* initiative that is aimed at growing the museum's contemporary collection to better reflect Singapore's ever-evolving national identity. Set against the backdrop of a time when Singapore was undergoing rapid transformation during its post-independence decades, *Off / On* invites visitors

into uniquely themed installations that are inspired by common spaces found at the time, including a hair salon, coffeeshop and office space set in the 1970s to 1990s. Each space features a specially curated selection of ubiquitous technological icons of that era, with interactive elements that invite visitors to discover and experience how these technologies transformed and made an indelible mark on our everyday life. The showcase also aims to spur visitors to think about how they can continue and contribute to this conversation, by sharing their stories and objects with the National Museum.

3 Chung May Khuen, Director of the National Museum of Singapore, said, “We were heartened by the encouraging response from our first edition of the *Collecting Contemporary Singapore* initiative on documenting COVID-19 in Singapore, which saw contributions of diverse stories and objects from residents here. We are returning with the second edition of the initiative – focusing on the theme of technology – to continue engaging the public in contributing and co-creating with the National Museum. As technology evolves rapidly through the years, and with the pandemic further highlighting the significant role of technology in our daily lives, we hope to broaden and update our collection in this area which would enrich our documentation of the lived experiences of the people of Singapore.”

4 Priscilla Chua, Senior Curator, National Museum of Singapore added, “Through the *Off / On* showcase, we invite visitors to reconnect with these technologies, while inspiring conversations and curiosity among the younger generations unfamiliar with them. As we are more ‘switched on’ now than ever before, the indispensable role of technology continues to shape and change the way we live, work and play, and we hope visitors will share their unique stories and experiences with us.”

A thematic experience through the iconic technology of yesteryears



*Work in Progress*

5 On entering the showcase, visitors are greeted by the familiar buzz of the workplace. But instead of modern laptops, the **Work in Progress** section is filled with typewriters and bulky computers, reminiscent of an office from the past. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, companies and businesses in Singapore were encouraged to adopt new technologies and to automate their processes to raise productivity. This was seen as critical in maintaining Singapore's competitive edge in the global economy. Visitors can interact with tactile elements such as typing on a typewriter and view the early models of computers by IBM and Apple – once a common sight in offices of that era – giving visitors a taste of what a day in the office was like then. The computer screens also come alive with personal anecdotes of using everyday technological objects for visitors.



*Hello Mobile*

6 Moving from computers to handheld gadgets, the next section, ***Hello Mobile***, explores the use of telecommunication tools that predate the smartphones of today. During the post-war years, Singapore had a telephone density of just 1.6 telephones for every hundred individuals. In the late 1980s, telephones and other personal devices such as pagers became more accessible, allowing people in Singapore to contact one another more conveniently, even if it meant having to wait in line to return a call using a payphone. Today, while personal telecommunication devices such as smartphones and mobile devices have evolved to be an everyday essential, visitors to the showcase can relive the experience of using some of these gadgets from the past, within the familiar local settings of a hair salon and coffeeshop. These include picking up telephone receivers to listen to re-enacted nostalgic conversations of daily experiences that would have taken place in these spaces, and engaging with larger-than-life interactives modelled after a handphone or pager, to send personalised messages that will be displayed on running LED bars.

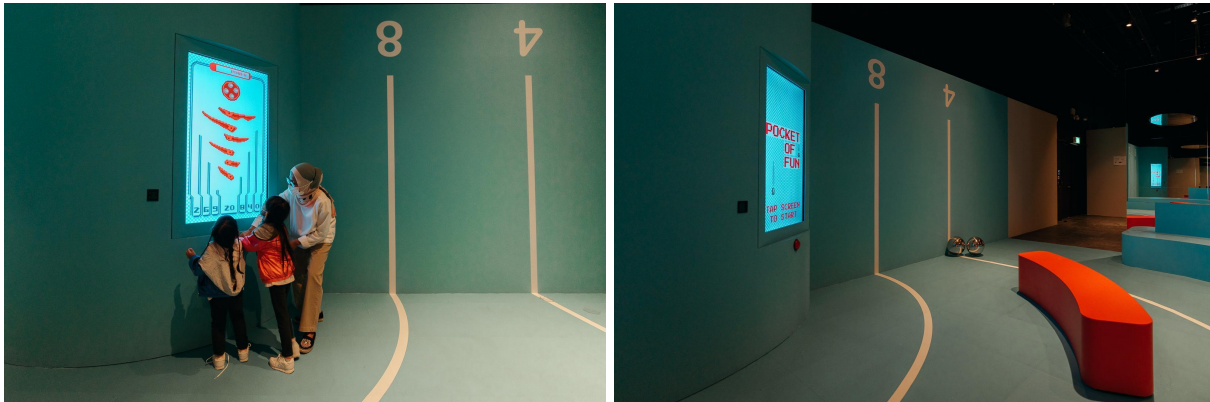




*The Art of Living*

7 The next section, **The Art of Living**, outlines how the influx of consumer technology transformed the lifestyles of Singaporeans. The introduction of home entertainment gadgets such as colour television sets and radio cassette players, as well as lifestyle gadgets like cameras, allowed Singaporeans to choose their preferred entertainment and recreational activity at their own convenience and within the comforts and privacy of their own home. In this section, visitors are invited to step into an old-school interactive photo studio to interact with a camera replica that allows them to take black-and-white photos against a backdrop with various props, to help them create their preferred ambience. They can then enter the adjacent dark room, where their photos will be “developed”. Visitors can also interact with an installation of television sets from the past, where they can toggle between and view a selection of nostalgic local television programmes, commercials and re-created Teletext messages. The section concludes with a typical 1970s to 1990s’ living room setting, featuring some memorable

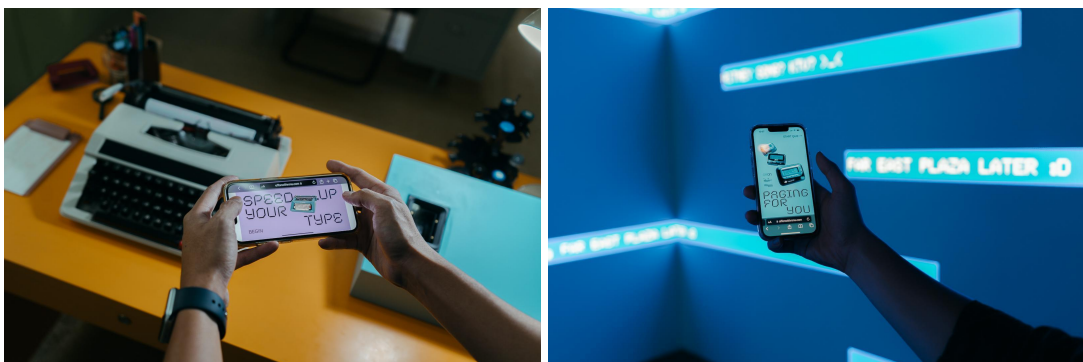
technological objects from that era as well as a cassette player replica that visitors can interact with.



*Game On*

8 The next section, **Game On**, looks back at how gaming became more prevalent as a source of entertainment, especially in the 1980s, with the increasing popularity of video games. The design of this section takes inspiration from the once-popular handheld series of games known as the Tomy Pocketeer, which typically required players to guide a ball bearing in and around obstacles. Here, visitors can look forward to playing digital games that will pit visitors against one another for a chance to be featured on the leader board.

### More fun and games through a digital companion



*Digital Companion*

9 Each section of the showcase contains other unique digital and gamification elements that visitors can access via a digital companion on their mobile devices. To enjoy these exciting

elements, visitors can visit <https://go.gov.sg/offon> to find out how they can sign up for an account and generate a unique QR code, which they then scan with their personal mobile devices. Activities include exclusive digital games such as the ‘Fastest Typist’ game, as well as a pop quiz that challenges players to decode numerical pager messages. Visitors can also access bonus educational content that is unique to the digital companion, which will complement their learning experience at the showcase. Players who successfully complete all the assigned activities in the digital companion can stand a chance to win prizes through a lucky draw that will be conducted at the end of the showcase period. Details on the draw and the list of prizes to be won will be announced soon.

### **Complementary after-hours onsite experiences**

10 The fun doesn’t end after hours. *Off / On* also transforms into an escape room at night, where visitors can pre-register in groups of minimally 3 and up to 10 participants each time, to explore the showcase space through the popular and interactive format of an escape room game. Participants will “journey” through time in the gallery to decipher clues that will help uncover a secret technological device that can help prevent a mass shutdown of the world’s technology.

### **Public call for contributions of technological objects and related stories**

11 Beyond objects from the National Museum’s collection, *Off / On* will also feature contributions and loans of technological objects from individuals and corporate organisations. This includes homegrown company Creative Technologies, which has loaned the museum its revolutionary Sound Blaster 1.0, launched in 1989, as well as the 2004 edition of the Zen Micro. The Sound Blaster 1.0 was the world’s first sound card ever made that significantly improved the audio quality of personal computers. Creative Technologies was also a pioneer producer of MP3 players, and the 2004 edition of the Zen Micro displayed in this showcase, is among its most popular models of MP3 players. In addition, local contributors, Professor Tan Tiong Gie, loaned an Apple IIe personal computer, while Gerald Tan, from local gaming collective, Retro DNA, loaned a Sony PlayStation Portable (PSP) handheld gaming console.

12 In line with the *Collecting Contemporary Singapore* initiative, we invite residents in Singapore to share their technological objects from the 2000s onwards up to the present day,

along with their related experiences and stories of the objects that have shaped their lives in the areas of work, communications, home living and play. These contributions would enrich the National Museum's collection in the area of technology as we seek to broaden the scope of our contemporary collecting. The public can visit <https://go.gov.sg/ccstechopencall> to submit stories and photos of the objects. The public call runs until 31 December 2022.

### **Admission details and exclusive merchandise**

13 *Off / On* is a ticketed showcase, where Singaporeans and Singapore permanent residents can enjoy free admission. Visitors are encouraged to pre-book their museum admission tickets for this ticketed show ahead of their visit. The escape room activity will be charged separately from the showcase, with different pricing tiers depending on the number of participants per group booking. Tickets for the escape room activity will be released for sale on 9 June 2022. In conjunction with the showcase, an exclusive range of merchandise inspired by some of the technological icons featured, is also available for purchase at Supermama The Museum Store @ NMS. For opening hours and ticketing details, please refer to **Annex A**. For more information, please visit <https://go.gov.sg/offon> or the National Museum's [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages for more information on the showcase.

- **Annex A: Visitor information and ticketing details**
- **Annex B: Showcase details**
- **Annex C: Exclusive showcase merchandise**



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**About the National Museum of Singapore**

With a history dating back to 1887, the National Museum of Singapore is the nation's oldest museum with a progressive mind. Its galleries adopt cutting-edge and multi-perspective ways of presenting history and culture to redefine conventional museum experience. A cultural and architectural landmark in Singapore, the Museum hosts innovative festivals and events all year round—the dynamic Night Festival, visually arresting art installations, as well as amazing performances and film screenings—in addition to presenting thought-provoking exhibitions involving critically important collections of artefacts. The programming is supported by a wide range of facilities and services including F&B, retail and a Resource Centre. The National Museum of Singapore re-opened in December 2006 after a three-year redevelopment. It

refreshed its permanent galleries and re-opened them in September 2015 for Singapore's Golden Jubilee. In 2017, it celebrated its 130th anniversary. For more details, please visit [www.nationalmuseum.sg](http://www.nationalmuseum.sg).

## **ANNEX A**

### **Visitor information and ticketing details**

**Off / On: Everyday Technology that Changed Our Lives, 1970s–2000s**  
**10 June – 30 October 2022**  
**Exhibition Gallery, Basement Level**

#### **Opening Hours**

10am–7pm daily\*

Last admission is at 6.30pm

\*The gallery will be closed at 6pm for the escape room game on selected dates, with the last admission at 5.30pm. Please refer to the National Museum's website for the list of dates where early closure of the showcase is expected.

#### **Admission to the *Off / On: Everyday Technology that Changed Our Lives, 1970s–2000s* showcase**

Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents and Children 6 years and below (any nationality) will enjoy free admission to the showcase.

#### **Tourists & Foreign Residents**

Standard Adult \$18

Concession [Senior (60 years and above), student and special access] \$14

#### **Admission to the escape room experience\***

The escape room experience is available on selected Friday and Saturday evenings from 17 June 2022. Participants will be given 30 minutes to complete the game. Please refer to the National Museum's website for the list of dates where the escape room experience will take place.

Groups of 3 to 6 participants \$15 per person

Groups of 7 to 10 participants \$12 per person

## ANNEX B

### Exhibition details

**Off / On: Everyday Technology that Changed Our Lives, 1970s–2000s**

**10 June – 30 October 2022**

**Exhibition Gallery, Basement Level**

Just a few decades ago, it was still common to complete an assignment using pen and paper instead of a computer, and to play with physical toys rather than a handheld device. Fast forward to today, where technology now plays an indispensable role in our daily lives, and pivotally transformed the ways in which we live, work, play and socialise. We are more “switched on” today than ever, and connected to a vast network of technology and gadgets than we could have possibly imagined back then.

Step into this immersive showcase and explore how everyday technological tools changed and shaped the lives of Singaporeans from the 1970s to 2000s. Set against the backdrop of the nation’s industrialisation and rapid transformation period, the showcase takes visitors through familiar local settings at home, work and other social spaces with a small, yet specially curated selection of technology icons from Singapore’s past. These include the typewriter and personal computer, as well as telecommunications and entertainment devices such as the payphone, pager and the technicolour television set. Visitors can look forward to getting to know and reconnecting with some of these technologies, through several themed installations with complementary gamified experiences including an escape room activity.

Presented as part of the National Museum’s Collecting Contemporary Singapore initiative that aims to broaden the museum’s efforts in documenting diverse perspectives of contemporary Singapore, this showcase encourages visitors to reflect on how technology has made an indelible mark on their everyday life. Residents in Singapore are also invited to contribute their memories and objects relating to the theme of technology up to the present day, and how it has played an important role in their lives.



### Work in Progress

Laptops and tablets may be indispensable for most of us at work today, but it was not too long ago that their predecessors – the much bigger typewriter and personal computer – were the go-to office equipment of the day. Between the 1970s and 1990s, companies and businesses were encouraged to adopt new technologies and to automate their processes to raise productivity, so as to maintain Singapore's competitive edge in the global economy. A modern workplace at the time would often be equipped with the latest communication systems, office furniture and machines, where typewriters and personal computers were considered essential equipment for office workers.

Being labour and time saving, the typewriter and personal computer helped to improve efficiency – the former enabled clerks or secretaries to accomplish more than they would with a pen, while the latter made it possible to manage large volumes of information more quickly. Although the two machines are rarely seen in offices today, both have played a key role in changing the way office workers completed their tasks. Step into this space and discover how technology transformed the workplace during a period when Singapore sought to boost productivity as part of a nationwide effort to grow its economy.





### Hello Mobile

With telecommunications technology becoming more advanced by the day, getting in touch with our family, friends and colleagues has never been easier. Be it text messaging, audio or video calls, we are able to connect with just about anyone anytime and anywhere, in a matter of seconds. Telecommunications tools that Singaporeans relied on in the past were not as readily available – during the post-war years, Singapore had a telephone density of just 1.6 telephones for every hundred individuals. Today however, many of us own a personal mobile device. When telephones and other personal devices such as pagers became more accessible in the 1970s, Singaporeans were able to contact one another more conveniently, even if it meant having to wait in line to return a call using a payphone.

The authority overseeing telecommunications services at the time, Telecoms, was formed in 1974 after a merger between the Telecommunication Authority of Singapore and the previously British-run Singapore Telephone Board. Renamed Singapore Telecom in the late 1980s before becoming Singtel as we know it today, Telecoms set out to provide a reliable

service for Singaporeans. In this space, visitors can relive the experience of using some of the early telecommunications gadgets that predate our smart phone era today.



### **The Art of Living**

The 1970s to 1990s saw an influx of consumer technology that transformed the lifestyles of Singaporeans, as can be seen from the many advertisements promising enjoyment and convenience from the newest home entertainment gadgets. From colour television sets to radio cassette players broadcasting the latest programmes, families had no lack of choices for leisure time together at home. For those seeking other forms of recreation, photography became popular as a hobby as cameras became more user-friendly and affordable by the 1970s.

While the 1960s were primarily spent addressing the critical challenges faced by a newly-independent Singapore – such as ensuring sufficient housing for the population – the decades after were shaped by a shift towards improving the quality of homes. The introduction of home entertainment products, in particular, significantly transformed the ways

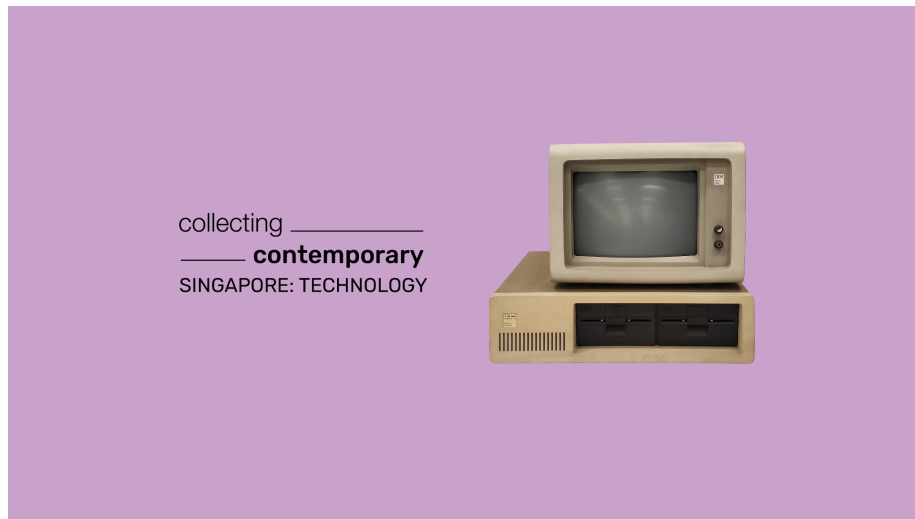
in which people spent their leisure time. Singaporeans were able to choose their preferred entertainment and recreational activity at their own convenience and within the comforts and privacy of their own home. This led to the creation of a modern space and lifestyle that was starting to emerge in Singapore during this period, as personified by the various gadgets on display here.



### Game On

In addition to television and radio programmes, there were other activities that kept Singaporeans – both young and old – entertained at home. While the handheld pocket toy-cum-game had its charms, video games captured the imagination of many with their interactivity and graphics display. The latter, in particular, were very popular in Singapore from the 1980s onwards. By connecting the game console to a television set, users were able to enjoy a wide variety of games featuring realistic three-dimensional images on screen via a controller, much like having a personal games arcade at home. Relive the novelty and

excitement of playing some of the iconic games from the past that have provided plenty of entertainment for Singaporean families over the years.



### **Collecting Contemporary Singapore: Technology**

The iconic technological tools featured in the earlier sections may have brought back fond memories of your own. You might recall the chats you had on your first mobile phone, or how the videocassette recorder came to the rescue when you had to miss your favourite television sitcom because of work. These everyday devices have brought us convenience, saved us time, and changed our way of life.

Spurred by continuing advancements in technology, the 2000s welcomed newer and faster gadgets that continue to leave an indelible mark on our lives. This final section presents some memorable devices from this decade that have pivotally transformed the way we live, work, and play.

Do you own any gadgets similar to the ones on display here, corresponding to our showcase themes of work, communications, home living and play? As part of the National Museum of Singapore's *Collecting Contemporary Singapore* initiative, we invite you to contribute your

own technological objects from the 2000s onwards – and their stories – that have shaped your daily life.



## ANNEX C

### Exclusive showcase merchandise

*Available for purchase at Supermama The Museum Store @ National Museum of Singapore.*



Remember the typewriter, pager, payphone and even the technicolour television set? These are some of the technological icons many Singaporeans grew up with in the 1970s to 2000s. For the uninitiated, this is an invitation to experience what life was like before fast speed internet and instant messaging. If you used to own these gadgets (or still using), join us on a journey down memory lane and bring these "artefacts" home!