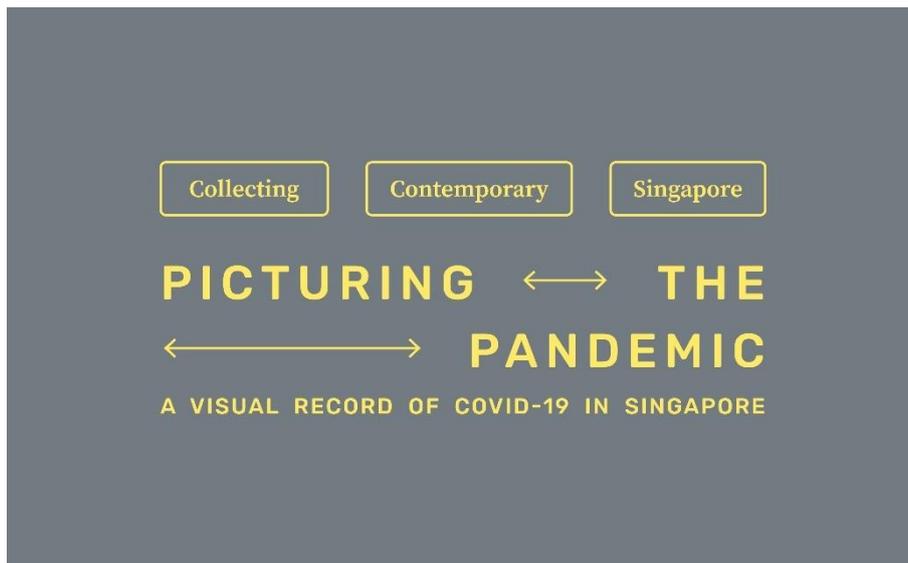


The National Museum of Singapore's *Picturing the Pandemic: A Visual Record of COVID-19 in Singapore* is an intimate look into life in Singapore in the “new normal” featuring commissioned photographs and film, alongside personal objects contributed by the public, the exhibition is a documentation of how people in Singapore live through and experience the pandemic, to be shared with future generations.



Singapore, **23 February 2021** – The National Museum of Singapore opens its first major exhibition of the year – *Picturing the Pandemic: A Visual Record of COVID-19 in Singapore* – on 27 February. Made possible by the museum’s rapid response to documenting the stories and experiences of people in Singapore in the early phases of the pandemic, the exhibition tells the story of how people in Singapore have come together to respond and live through this unprecedented global crisis.

Through the 272 photographs, a short film and 16 donated artefacts on display in this exhibition, visitors will get a glimpse of the diverse lives of fellow residents, as they adapt to this “new normal”, working and caring for one another in this pandemic. These experiences, told through the lens of the photographers, filmmakers, curators as well as the subjects themselves, lend a voice to lesser-known stories of this pandemic. It also offers a glimpse into the social bonds, tenacity and resilience across the diverse communities in Singapore.

The exhibition is a result of the National Museum of Singapore's rapid response to documenting and collecting materials related to Singapore's experience of the pandemic. The move is part of the institution's ongoing *Collecting Contemporary Singapore* initiative, which seeks to collaborate with the public to collect personal stories and objects that capture shared moments in Singapore's recent history for posterity.

Ms Chung May Khuen, Director of the National Museum of Singapore, says: "*Picturing the Pandemic: A Visual Record of COVID-19 in Singapore* is an exhibition that everyone can identify with. It is a tribute to everyone who is living through this pandemic with fortitude, empathy and compassion. As a people's museum, we want to co-write history with the community. The public's contributions of stories and artefacts to our Collecting Contemporary Singapore initiative will help build our National Collection further, so that future generations can look back and learn from this important episode in our history."

### A visual record of COVID-19 in Singapore

The exhibition showcases photographs by five photographers – Bob Lee, Edwin Koo, How Hwee Young, Brian Teo and Zakaria Zainal – as well as a short film produced by filmmakers Dave Lim and Adar Ng. The exhibits span five themes – *A Day in the Life*, *Essential Workers*, *New Ways of Living*, *Making Visible*, and *The Spaces Between Us*, and they document up-close the pandemic experience of people living in Singapore, from children and the elderly to migrant workers and professionals providing essential services. These members of the public welcomed the photographers and filmmakers into their lives and offered an honest look at how they have responded to and coped with the pandemic.



*Deliver* by Zakaria Zainal features Zulkifli Atnawi, whose routine during the pandemic included buying and delivering groceries to vulnerable members of the community.

Zakaria Zainal's photo series *Deliver* spotlights retired cleaner Zulkifli Atnawi, whose routine during the pandemic included buying and delivering groceries to vulnerable members of the community. How Hwee Young's *Para-athletes* series follows the lives of para-athletes whose routines were impacted by the pandemic, while Bob Lee's *Unsung Heroes* series features portraits of essential workers in Singapore such as postmen and garbage collectors, who continued to work during the pandemic and whose work and sacrifices typically go unrecognised.



The *Community Healthcare* series by Edwin Koo spotlights elderly day care centres and community nurses who continued to visit patients at home even during the Circuit Breaker period.

Edwin Koo's *Community Healthcare* series spotlights elderly day care centres as well as community nurses who continued to visit their patients at home even during the Circuit Breaker period. The series also captures how the HCA Day Hospice recreated an airport and flight experience for its 25 residents. Brian Teo's *Safe Distancing Ambassadors* series offers an intimate view of the experience of public safety officers who work tirelessly to maintain safe management measures in public spaces during the pandemic.



The exhibition also features sketches and paintings, alongside other pandemic-related objects contributed by the public.

The exhibition also features 16 pandemic-related objects, contributed by members of the public and organisations as part of the museum's *Collecting Contemporary Singapore* initiative. The artefacts range from a seal carving made by a doctor to remember a patient's smile behind her face mask, to sketches and paintings by the public, which function as a visual diary of the lives of individuals during the pandemic. Also on display is a plate that was turned into a piece of art by a café owner when dining-in at eateries was not allowed during the Circuit Breaker period, as well as the vial used to contain the vaccine that was administered to the first healthcare worker in Singapore to receive the injection.

As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, the National Museum of Singapore welcomes members of the public to contribute objects and stories, particularly their unique face mask creations, or innovative and creative responses to the pandemic. Learn more about the National Museum's *Collecting Contemporary Singapore: Documenting COVID-19 in Singapore* initiative [here](#). The public call, jointly held with the National Library Board, is open for submissions until 30 June 2021.

*Picturing the Pandemic: A Visual Record of COVID-19 in Singapore* will run from 27 February to 29 August 2021. Visitors can also look forward to a special online video series of the exhibition curators in conversation with the photographers and filmmakers, alongside selected profiles featured in the exhibition. The video series, which will also be presented in the exhibition, gives a first person perspective on some of the stories and behind-the-scenes insight into the making of these photographs.

Admission to the exhibition is free for everyone. Please visit [go.gov.sg/picturingthepandemic](https://go.gov.sg/picturingthepandemic) for the latest updates on the exhibition. More information about the photographs and artefacts in the exhibition is available at [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#) respectively. Publicity images of works in the exhibition are available [here](#) and they should be credited to National Museum of Singapore and to the respective photographers.

For media queries, please contact:

**Ada Tong**

Ogilvy Singapore

Tel: 9297 0748

Email: [ada.tong@ogilvy.com](mailto:ada.tong@ogilvy.com)

**Chryssa Celestino**

Ogilvy Singapore

Tel: 8304 5395

Email: [chryssa.celestino@ogilvy.com](mailto:chryssa.celestino@ogilvy.com)

**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).

The National Museum is an institution of



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**Annex A: Photograph highlights in *Picturing the Pandemic: A Visual Record of COVID-19 in Singapore***

Section	Image	Captions
<p>Zakaria Zainal's <i>Deliver</i></p>		<p>Together with his children, retired cleaner Zulkifli Atnawi organised grocery runs of basic supplies for several underprivileged neighbours in Mei Ling Street. In this photo, they are organising their purchases and some donations in their living room.</p>
<p>How Hwee Young's <i>Para-athletes</i></p>		<p>Aishah Samad is a competitive para-shooter who retired just before Circuit Breaker. This photo shows her exercising at home during the Circuit Breaker period.</p>
<p>How Hwee Young's <i>Singapore General Hospital</i></p>		<p>How Hwee Young's photographs in the Singapore General Hospital capture different groups of healthcare workers working together to care for their patients through the challenging times. In this photo, Radiographer Hsiao Yi-Chun (left) and Enrolled Nurse Sakunthala d/o Thanapal (right) prepare a suspected Covid-19 patient for a CT scan.</p>

<p>Edwin Koo's <i>Community Healthcare</i></p>		<p>HCA Day Hospice remained open during the circuit breaker. About 25 senior citizens with terminal illnesses visited the hospice every weekday for palliative care. One day, the hospice recreated an airport and flight experience for its residents, giving them an imaginative flight experience even as airports around the world limited travel.</p>
<p>Brian Teo's <i>Schools' Responses to COVID-19</i></p>		<p>A student from Clementi Primary School walking around the canteen with a sign, reminding students to practise social distancing.</p>
<p>Zakaria Zainal's <i>Keeping the Faith</i></p>		<p>Ustaz Mahmoud Mathlub Sidek recording his Friday prayer sermon in the <i>Berita Harian</i> studio. Such a recording session was Ustaz Mahmoud's first as the 45-year-old is more familiar with addressing thousands of Muslim congregants inside a mosque on a regular Friday.</p>

<p>Brian Teo's <i>Safe Distancing Ambassadors</i></p>		<p>Ms Serene Claire Tay advising commuters to practise social distancing at Lavender MRT station. A Leading Stewardess for Singapore Airlines, she was temporarily redeployed as a transport ambassador with SMRT.</p>
<p>How Hwee <i>Young's Spaces</i></p>		<p>Delivery personnel waiting to pick up food deliveries with safe distancing measures marked on the floor in Waterway Point shopping mall in Punggol during Circuit Breaker in Singapore.</p>
<p>Bob Lee's <i>Angels of Mercy</i></p>		<p>Christina is a senior staff nurse with Khoo Teck Puat Hospital. In this photo, she and another nurse help each other to don their PPE.</p>

**Annex B: Collecting Contemporary Singapore highlights in *Picturing the Pandemic: A Visual Record of COVID-19 in Singapore***

Object/Description	Image	Contributor
<p><b>SG United embroidery</b> <b>April 2020</b> <b>Cotton</b> <b>Gift of Alyssa Lim</b></p> <p>This piece of embroidery was created by Alyssa Lim during Singapore’s Circuit Breaker period, which disrupted her plans to travel or take on part-time jobs before she enrolled in university. Like many others whose lives have been interrupted by the pandemic, Lim turned to home crafts and activities while staying indoors.</p> <p>Lim’s embroidery pays tribute to those involved in Singapore’s fight against COVID-19. Six figures are depicted here, including a supermarket employee, a volunteer distributing masks, an NSman packing masks, a family doctor, as well as Minister Lawrence Wong – co-chair of the multi-ministry taskforce on COVID-19 – and Dr Ong Pei Yuin, a physician at the National University Hospital.</p>		<p>Alyssa Lim</p>

**Chinese seal entitled “口罩背后的微笑” (A Smile Behind the Mask)**

**April 2020**

**Yew Tong Wei**

**Zhejiang red stone (浙江红), paper  
Gift of Dr Yew Tong Wei**

This seal was carved by Yew Tong Wei, a Consultant at National University Hospital, during the Circuit Breaker. A warm smile from a patient during a regular ward round reminded him that such heartfelt gestures can be conveyed even while wearing a mask, and inspired him to stay positive for his patients.

Yew’s seal is a tribute to all healthcare heroes who served above and beyond during the pandemic. The seal is titled “口罩背后的微笑” (A Smile Behind the Mask). It merges word and image, depicting the Chinese character “笑” (smile) in seal script peeking out from behind a surgical mask.



Yew Tong Wei

**Sketch journals**

**April 2020**

**Paper, watercolour, ink**

**Gifts of Serene Ong and Priscilla Ng**

When the Circuit Breaker first started in Singapore in April 2020, the local arm of the global community of artists who draw on location, Urban Sketchers Singapore (USS), launched the



Priscilla Ng  
and Serene  
Ong

#circuitsketchbreak challenge to encourage its members to produce one sketch a day for 28 days.

USS members Serene Ong and Priscilla Ng created their own sketch journals in response to this challenge, using sketches and watercolours to depict their observations and daily routine over the Circuit Breaker period. In one of her entries, Ong painted an image of the different ingredients she had used to cook her pasta, while Ng documented a memorable celebration of her own birthday via Zoom on day 21, both scenes that have become ubiquitous in this “new normal”.



From top: Sketchbooks by Priscilla Ng and Serene Ong

**Vial of first Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccination in Singapore**  
30 December 2020  
Glass, plastic  
Gift of the Ministry of Health

Nearly a year after the first COVID-19 cases were detected in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, vaccinations to provide immunity against the disease were introduced. The first shipment of the vaccines, developed by pharmaceutical companies Pfizer and BioNTech, arrived in Singapore on 21 December 2020.

This empty vial contained the vaccine administered to senior staff nurse



Ministry of Health  
Singapore

<p>Sarah Lim from the National Centre for Infectious Diseases, the first person in Singapore to receive the injection. The biohazard bag was used to seal the vial in the unlikely event of leakage from any vaccine that was left after the vaccination.</p>		
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