

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National Museum of Singapore presents memories of World War Two on the big screen

In conjunction with its namesake exhibition, Witness to War: Memories and Screens presents 13 war films, some screened in Singapore for the first time



Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence / 戦場のメリークリスマス (1983)

(Image Courtesy of The Festival Agency)

Singapore, 10 January 2018 – For the very first time, the National Museum of Singapore will be presenting a special selection of films which documents and recollects the experience of World War Two and its aftermath in the Pacific. Programmed by the Asian Film Archive, *Witness to War: Memories and Screens* will showcase 13 films that present memories of World War Two across different film genres, including several films that have never been screened in Singapore before.

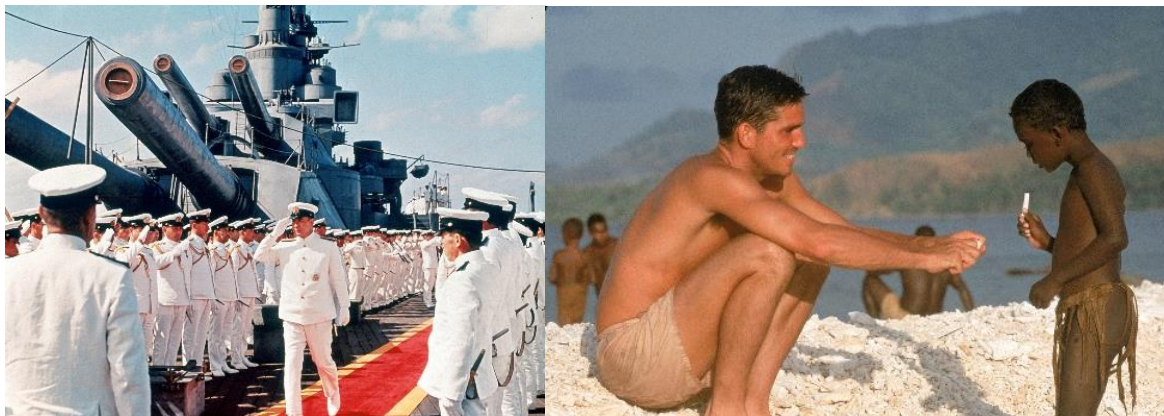
Complementing the ongoing blockbuster exhibition *Witness to War: Remembering 1942*, the film programme continues the compelling narrative on Singapore's fall against the larger backdrop of upheaval in the Pacific region, through a captivating mode of storytelling on the silver screen. The diverse selection of films traces the historical development from the bombing of Pearl Harbour to

Hiroshima in a collection of narratives from Singapore and its regional neighbours, and extending across continents to Britain, Japan and America.

Director of the National Museum of Singapore, Angelita Teo, said, “Film is an especially powerful tool in capturing memories and sentiments. With *Witness to War: Memories and Screens*, we hope to highlight the ways that different nations remember the shared history of World War Two, as well as offer our visitors a wider perspective and understanding of this key event that changed the world.”

From first-in-Singapore screenings, to Hollywood and cult favourites

Some of the films making their debut in Singapore include *Spirit of the Overseas Chinese*, a rare document of Singapore cinema which was recently discovered in the vaults of the China Film Archive; *Devils on the Doorstep*, which clinched the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival in 2000 and will be debuting its director’s cut; *Momotaro, Sacred Sailors*, which is the first ever Japanese animated feature film and follows the adventures of the titular character and his loyal sailors during the war; and *Three Godless Years*, a Tagalog favourite that touches on love lost and found during the turbulent period.



From Left to Right: Film stills from Tora! Tora! Tora! (1970), The Thin Red Line (1998)
(Images courtesy of 20th Century Fox Film Corporation)

Visitors can also look forward to blockbusters such as *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, an iconic war film that dramatically retells the Pearl Harbour attack from both sides of the conflict; *Merry Christmas*, *Mr. Lawrence*, featuring the late international icon David Bowie in his role as a prisoner-of-war and the cultural clashes at the internment camp; and *The Thin Red Line*, a Hollywood ensemble film by auteur Terrence Malick that gives a meditative view on the war.

Collaborative project with LASALLE College of the Arts, The School of Creative Industries

Witness to War: Memories and Screens will also feature a pop-up installation developed by third-year Arts Management students from LASALLE College of the Arts, The School of Creative Industries, under the tutelage of the National Museum as part of its efforts to cultivate the interest of youth audience in the cultural sector. Responding to films presented in *Witness to War: Memories and Screens* and the survivors' accounts featured in the exhibition *Witness to War: Remembering 1942*, *De:code* is a pop-up installation based on wartime communication. Through teaching us how to communicate in Morse code, the installation explores how covert wartime communication was a matter of life and death. It emphasizes the importance of remembering wartime experience, be it through film or through an appreciation of how our landscapes and modes of communication have changed. From 20–28 January, visitors are invited to drop by *De:code* at the Gallery Theatre Foyer of the National Museum and try their hand at crafting and deciphering messages in Morse code. They may also leave behind their secret messages about *Witness to War: Memories and Screens* for fellow Morse code readers!

The *Witness to War: Remembering 1942* exhibition is open to the public till 25 March 2018. *Witness to War: Memories and Screens* will be held at the National Museum of Singapore from 13 to 27 January 2018 with free admission to the public. Registration is required and ticketing information can be found at nationalmuseum.sg.

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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, and refreshed its permanent galleries and re-opened them in September 2015 for Singapore's Golden Jubilee. For more details, please visit www.nationalmuseum.sg

About Asian Film Archive

The Asian Film Archive (AFA) is a subsidiary of the National Library Board. It preserves the rich film heritage of Asian cinema, encourages scholarly research on film, and promotes a wider critical appreciation of this art form.

asianfilmarchive.org

ANNEX A

Witness to War: Memories and Screens

Programmed by Asian Film Archive

Featuring a collaborative project by Lasalle College of the Arts, The School of Creative Industries

The memories of World War Two have been captured, interpreted and presented in various films – from iconic war films like *Merry Christmas*, *Mr. Lawrence* to romance films such as *Hiroshima Mon Amour* and historically significant films like *Momotaro*, *Sacred Sailors* and *Spirit of the Overseas Chinese* which have not been seen in Singapore in recent history. For the first time, the National Museum, in collaboration with the Asian Film Archive, will be presenting *Witness to War: Memories and Screens*, a selection of films which document and remember the experience of World War Two in the Pacific and its aftermath.

In tracing the historical development from the bombing of Pearl Harbour (1941) to Hiroshima (1945), *Memories and Screens* will showcase films and narratives from Singapore and Malaya, Britain, Japan, America and Singapore's regional neighbours, accounting for the diverse yet shared narratives of countries and people that have participated in and witnessed World War Two. This film programme – inspired by the exhibition *Witness to War: Remembering 1942* – invites us to reflect upon the ways film across national borders remembers a shared history that continues to shape our reality today.

Information on the Feature Films

DEVILS ON THE DOORSTEP

(Newly-restored extended version)

Dir: Jiang Wen

20 Jan, Sat / 4.30pm

China / 2000 / 162min / Mandarin (with English subtitles) / DCP/ NC16 (Sexual Scenes and Coarse Language)

Set in the last months of Japanese-occupied China in a small village, a mysterious visitor leaves two kidnapped victims – a Japanese soldier and a Chinese translator – at Ma Dasan's (Jiang Wen) house for reasons unknown. The villagers end up forming a strange kinship with the duo that leads to a series of tragicomic events. This original 162-minute version (20 minutes longer than its theatrical cut) of the film has only recently been restored and has not been seen since its initial festival-run in 2000.

GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES

Dir: Isao Takahata

27 Jan, Sat / 4.30pm

Japan / 1988 / 89min / Japanese (with English subtitles) / Format TBC / PG

Set a few weeks before the American occupation of Japan, *Grave of the Fireflies* centres on the lives of two brave young siblings, Seita and Setsuko. With their father away serving the Imperial Navy, and their mother tragically killed in an air raid, the children are forced to stay with their cruel aunt, whom they eventually flee from. Depending solely on each other for survival, Seita does all he can to take care of his starving younger sister who gets weaker by the day.



Image courtesy of Tamasa Distribution

HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR

(Newly-restored version)

Dir: Alain Resnais

27 Jan, Sat / 8.00pm

France, Japan / 1959 / 90min / French (with English subtitles) / DCP / PG

An actress arrives in Hiroshima to star in a film about peace. She meets a Japanese man, they become lovers and he also becomes her confidant. He tells her about his life and repeats: "You've seen nothing of Hiroshima." She talks to him about her teenage years in Nevers during World War Two and her love affair with a German soldier. After 54 years, this classic of French cinema has been restored in 4K digital. It premiered in the Cannes Classics section in 2013.



Image courtesy of Metro Goldwyn Mayer Studios

IN WHICH WE SERVE

Dir: David Lean, Noel Coward

14 Jan, Sun / 2.00pm

UK / 1942 / 116min / English / DCP / PG

Developed as propaganda to boost morale in Blitz-weary Britain, *In Which We Serve* features the impressive directorial debuts of playwright Noel Coward and David Lean (*Brief Encounter*, *Lawrence of Arabia*). Inspired by the exploits of Captain Lord Mountbatten (re-written as Captain Kinross and played by Coward himself), who was in command of the celebrated HMS *Kelly* when it was sunk by the Germans during the Battle of Crete. Patriotic, yet humanistic in its approach, the film was received rapturously by the Allies upon its initial release in 1942. After the end of war, it continued to be screened by the British during their Victory Parade Day celebrations around the world.



Image courtesy of Sony Pictures
Releasing

KING RAT

Dir: Bryan Forbes

21 Jan, Sun / 2.00pm

USA / 1965 / 134min / English / 35mm / PG

Based on the novel of the same name, *King Rat* is partly based on the experiences of writer James Clavell (*Shōgun*, *Tai-Pan*) as a POW interned in Changi just before the end of World War Two. The story features King, an opportunistic American Corporal, who strikes a friendship with British Lieutenant Marlowe and others. The group schemes to profit by breeding rats and selling rat meat to fellow prisoners. But as Marlowe's health deteriorates after an injury and the war begins to come to a close, King must choose between his own needs and that of his fellow man.



Image courtesy of The Festival Agency



MERRY CHRISTMAS, MR. LAWRENCE



Dir: Nagisa Oshima

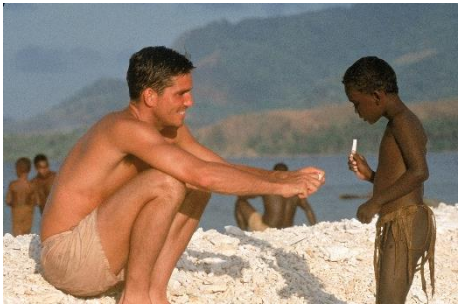

19 Jan, Fri / 8.00pm


UK, Japan / 1983 / 123min / English & Japanese (with English subtitles) / DCP / Rating TBC

In a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp in Java, in 1942, Lieutenant-Colonel John Lawrence (Tom Conti), a British officer, enjoys an uneasy relationship with his jailors and fellow prisoners. He faces a new challenge with the arrival of fellow Briton, the indomitably spirited Major Jacques Celliers (David Bowie), who becomes an object of strange desire for the Japanese Captain Yanoi (Ryuichi Sakamoto). What follows is not merely a battle of survival between the British prisoners and their Japanese captors, but a battle of wills and world views. But towards the end of the war, as Christmas approaches, both sides begin to realise that there is more common ground between them than either could have imagined.


 <p><i>Image courtesy of Shociku Company</i></p>	<p>MOMOTARO, SACRED SAILORS (Newly-restored version)</p> <p>Dir: Mitsuya Seo 26 Jan, Fri / 8.00pm Japan / 1945 / 74min / Japanese (with English subtitles) / DCP / PG</p> <p>Japan's first-ever feature-length animated film, <i>Momotaro, Sacred Sailors</i> was produced with the backing of the Ministry of the Navy of Japan in the last days of World War Two as a means of boosting morale back home when the prospect of a Japanese victory began to wane. Featuring the Japanese folk character Momotaro ("Peach Boy" in English) and with various animals representing soldiers invading an island in the South Pacific, the film was made for children. The film notably features an amusing representation of the historical surrender of Singapore by British General Percival in 1942. A rare film seen by very few when released in 1945. This screening presents a recently released digital restoration from 2016.</p>
 <p><i>Image courtesy of Shaw Organisation</i></p>	<p>SERGEANT HASSAN</p> <p>Dir: Lamberto V. Avallena 14 Jan, Sun / 5.00pm Singapore / 1958 / Malay, Japanese & English (with English subtitles) / DigiBeta / PG</p> <p>Made during the golden era of Malay cinema, <i>Sergeant Hassan</i> is a patriotic film that reimagines military and civilian struggles during the Japanese occupation. The film is inspired by heroic folklore. The legendary P. Ramlee stars in the titular role as a young man who leaves his village to join the Malaya Regiment where he rises up the ranks, succeeds in battle and brings peace and victory to his nation and community. Released a year before Singapore gained full internal self-governance from the British, the film can be viewed as a projection of a nation's desire for independence and harmony among people, through its perseverance through a traumatic past.</p>



 <p><i>Image courtesy of China Film Archive</i></p>	<p>SPRIT OF THE OVERSEAS CHINESE <i>(Newly-restored version World premiere)</i></p> <p>Dir: Wan Hoi-ling 18 Jan, Thur / 8.00pm Singapore / 1946 / Mandarin & Hokkien (with English subtitles / DCP / PG</p> <p>Previously thought to be a lost film, <i>Spirit of the Overseas Chinese</i> was recently discovered in the vaults of the China Film Archive and restored. A rare document of Singapore cinema, the film was made by pioneering female Chinese film-maker Wan Hoi-ling, who had directed films in Singapore for the Shaw Brothers since 1940. Her partner Hou Yao, who tragically died during the war, collaborated with her on her films. Made just a year after World War Two ended, the story of <i>Spirit</i> begins before the war comes to Malaya and reflects upon the struggles of newly-emigrated and affluent Chinese immigrants who have to choose between the comfortable luxury of their lives in Singapore and returning to their motherland to fight the enemy.</p>
 <p><i>Image courtesy of Films Sans Frontiers</i></p>	<p>THE MOST BEAUTIFUL</p> <p>Dir: Akira Kurosawa 25 Jan, Thur / 8.00pm Japan / 1944 / Japanese / (with English subtitles) / Digital File / Rating TBC</p> <p>This World War Two propaganda film that depicts the stories of several young women who work in a precision optical instruments factory was Akira Kurosawa's second film as a director. Originally tasked to direct an action film about the Zero fighter planes, Kurosawa conceived <i>The Most Beautiful</i> instead when it became clear that Japan was losing the war and planes could not be spared for use. Unlike other films in the canon of war cinema, <i>The Most Beautiful</i> does not reflect and perpetuate romanticised notions of masculine heroism on the frontlines. What transpires then is a compassionate film that portrays the women back home who quietly dedicated themselves to Japan's ambitious war effort through perseverance, despite illness and hardship.</p>

 <p><i>Image courtesy of the 20th Century Fox</i></p>	<p>THE THIN RED LINE</p> <p>Dir: Terrence Malick 20 Jan, Sat / 8.00pm USA / 1998 / English, Tok Pisin, Japanese & Greek (with English subtitles) / DCP / PG</p> <p>Based on the novel by James Jones, <i>The Thin Red Line</i> tells the story of a group of soldiers, who change, suffer, and ultimately make important discoveries about themselves during the fierce World War Two battle of Guadalcanal, the first major Allied offensive against the Japanese. The story takes place as Army troops relieve battle-weary Marine units. It follows their journey through bloody and exhausting battles to the ultimate departure of those who survived.</p>
 <p><i>Image courtesy of ABS-CBN</i></p>	<p>THREE GODLESS YEARS <i>(Newly-restored version)</i></p> <p>Dir: Mario O'Hara 21 Jan, Sun / 5.00pm Philippines / 1976 / Tagalog & Japanese (with English subtitles) / DCP / Rating TBC</p> <p>World War Two shatters the idyllic lives of two lovers as Crispin (Bembol Roco), a soldier, is summoned to fight the war and a school teacher Rosasio (Nora Aunor) is caught up in the violence of war. After being assaulted by a Philippine-born Japanese soldier Captain Masugi (Christopher De Leon), she becomes pregnant and falls in love with Masugi, eventually agreeing to marry him. With the return of American forces to the Philippines, Masugi and Rosario's family must flee as the Japanese start to withdraw from occupied areas. Considered one of the greatest Filipino films of all time, <i>Three Godless Years</i> was recently digitally restored from the only surviving but severely damaged print of the film. It is being shown in Singapore for the first time.</p>

 <p><i>Image courtesy of the 20th Century Fox</i></p>	<p>TORA! TORA! TORA!</p> <p>Dir: Richard Fleischer, Kinji Fukasaku, Toshio Masuda 13 Jan, Sat / 8.00pm USA, Japan / 1970 / Japanese & English (with English subtitles) / DCP / PG</p> <p><i>Tora</i> is a Japanese code word for “lightning attack”, a tactic which was employed on 7 December 1941, when the Imperial Japanese Navy launched a surprise offensive on America’s Pearl Harbour, a devastating move that abruptly drew America into World War Two and set in motion the Pacific War. A detailed and ambitious dramatisation of the events that led up to “the day of infamy”, <i>Tora! Tora! Tora!</i> was a joint project by both American and Japanese writers and directors and a cinematic exercise in the reconciliation of memories from both sides of the war.</p>
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Information on the Short Films

 <p><i>Image courtesy of Charles Lee</i></p>	<p>THE BATTLE OF BUKIT CHANDU</p> <p>Dir: Charles Lee, Goh Zi Hao, David Hwee, Lim Sze Yang, Darwin Muis, Chew Kai Fook, Shum Kah Fai Singapore / 2005 / Japanese & Malay (with English subtitles) / Rating TBC</p> <p>On 14 February 1942, the 56th Infantry Regiment of the Imperial Japanese Army launched one of the bloodiest attack in Singapore to take control of Pasir Panjang Ridges. A Malay platoon made up of 42 men commanded by 2nd Lt Adnan Bin Saidi, from the C Company of the Malay Regiment, fought bravely against the Japanese despite being severely outnumbered, until their eventual deaths. Originally produced in 2005 by a team of students, the animated film has since been updated in 2014 with newly produced motion graphics and interview segments with survivors. The short film remains one of the very few Singapore films that depict this true story.</p>
 <p><i>Image courtesy of Don Aravind</i></p>	<p>JANAKI</p> <p>Dir: Don Aravind Singapore / 2012 / Tamil (with English subtitles) / PG13</p> <p>Janaki, a former recruit from the Rani of Jhansi women’s regiment of the Indian National Army, reflects on the painful experiences of World War Two. More than just a wartime account, <i>Janaki</i> also brings together a soldier’s memories and a woman’s mediation upon them</p>

 <p><i>Image courtesy of Ho Tzu Nyen</i></p>	<p>THE NAMELESS</p> <p>Dir: Ho Tzu Nyen Singapore / 2015 / Mandarin (with English subtitles) / PG13</p> <p>Appropriating scenes from 16 different films featuring Hong Kong actor Tony Leung Chiu-wai, such as Hou Hsiao-hsien's <i>City of Sadness</i> (1989), Ang Lee's <i>Lust, Caution</i> (2013), Wong Kar Wai's <i>In the Mood for Love</i> (2000), and John Woo's <i>Bullet in the Head</i> (1990), Ho Tzu Nyen's <i>The Nameless</i> re-contextualises such scenes to tell the story of Lai Teck, a real-life triple agent operating in post-war Malaya.</p>
 <p><i>Image courtesy of Charles Packer</i></p>	<p>WHITE GORILLA</p> <p>Dir: Charles Packer Singapore / 2017 / English / PG</p> <p>Film-maker Charles Packer chronicles his grandfather's life and experiences as a British marine stationed in Singapore during the 1960s. Through photography, home videos, interviews, writing as well as footage taken while following in his grandfather's footsteps, Packer creates a unique work of portraiture that explores how we remember our departed loved ones.</p>