
NUS MUSEUM

PROSPECTUS AY23/24

Collections as Academic Resource

museum.nus.edu.sg/prospectus



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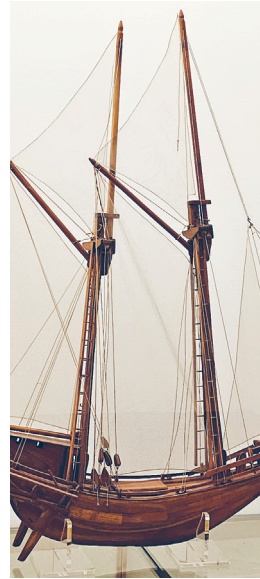
About NUS Museum



NUS Museum is a comprehensive museum for teaching and research. With a distinct focus on Asia, the Museum contributes to and facilitates the production, reception, and preservation of knowledge through collections development and curatorial practice. Our collection of more than 10,000 artefacts and artworks is divided across four main collections: the South and Southeast Asian Collection, the Lee Kong Chian Collection of Chinese Art, the Ng Eng Teng Collection and the Straits Chinese Collection.

Located at the University Cultural Centre, NUS Museum comprises nine galleries and additional ancillary spaces which host a wide range of exhibitions, course engagements and programmes that contribute to the cultural and interdisciplinary conversation within NUS and beyond.

What is *Prospectus*?



An initiative by NUS Museum, *Prospectus* recategorises the museum's four main collections into curated compilations organised by selected artists, collectors, mediums or themes. By creating these new entry-points and increasing accessibility into our extensive holdings, *Prospectus* aims to catalyse fresh perspectives and multidisciplinary trajectories that go beyond current displays and deepen academic engagements with Museum exhibitions, collections and archives for the purposes of learning, teaching and research.

Each *Prospectus* offers a quick look into a selected collection, alongside providing potential approaches and research questions to explore. Faculties are encouraged to get in touch with the Museum to develop course engagements and research collaborations, and gain access to the collections and archives based on *Prospectus*. Students are also invited to contact us if working on relevant long-term projects such as Final-Year Projects (FYP) or Independent Study Courses (ISC).

Museum as Resource

Since 2011, the NUS Museum has worked with a multitude of faculties and practitioners from various Institutes of Higher Learning. Within NUS, the Museum has worked with more than 20 disciplines, with collaborators ranging from the Departments of History, Geography, and Architecture, to the Division of Industrial Design, the NUS Business School, and the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music.



AH2101 Introduction to Art History had a full museum tour, a peek into the Paper and Scroll Store, and a mini curatorial activity in which students experimented with selecting and presenting sets of artworks according to ideas and themes.



AR5805 Museums Alive! joint studio brought together Architecture, Industrial Design and Engineering students in 3D-scanning sculptures to design sensorial and virtual reality experiences.



GL4881A Colonial, Anticolonial and Postcolonial Globalisations discussed decolonisation practices and explored the museum independently with a worksheet linking artworks to course readings.



RE2707 Asset and Property Management visited the Baba House for a conservation-specific tour to learn about the refurbishment and caretaking of a heritage house.

Course Engagements

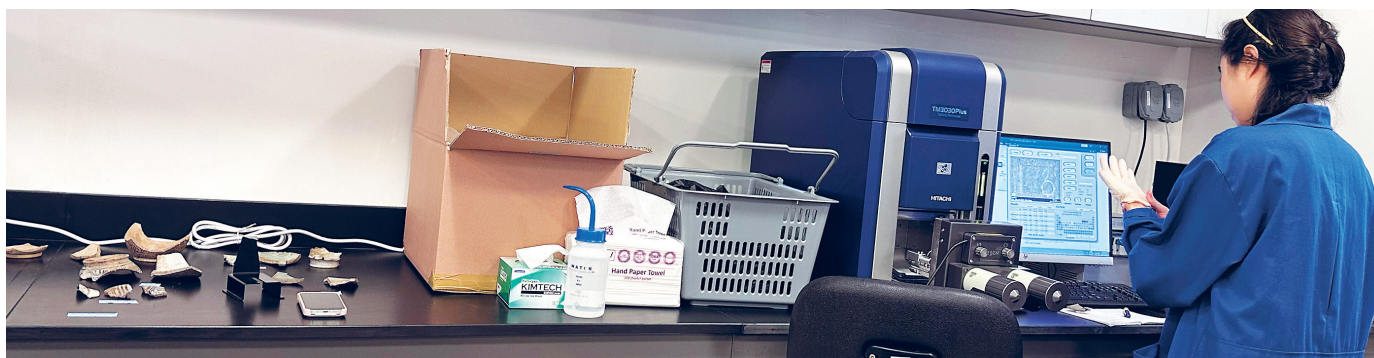
Taking museum exhibitions and collections as an anchor, museum staff work directly with faculties to conceptualise content that encourages students to simultaneously draw upon their disciplinary backgrounds while encountering knowledge and insights from other disciplines.

The following are some of the main types of course engagements that the museum undertakes.

- **Tours & Co-teaching**
Curated tours and museum-based activities tailored to specific learning objectives
- **Museum-based Assignments**
Essays, presentations, and other formats that can be co-designed and co-facilitated upon request
- **Guest Lectures**
Presentations by Museum staff on their ongoing curatorial and research interests
- **Object Study & Collections Access**
Artwork retrieval for object-centered pedagogical approaches or discipline-specific techniques
- **Curriculum Development**
Development and teaching of semester-long courses based on subject area specialisations and topics pertaining to museology and curatorial practice.

Research Collaborations

The NUS Museum and NUS Baba House's exhibitions, collections, and archives serve as inspiration and vital resource for new research projects across different academic disciplines. Museum staff are available to consult with faculties and students who are interested in getting access to these collections for further study.



Researchers from NUS College are undertaking a **Material Sciences study into the surface morphology and chemical compositions of a selection of the museum's early archaeological collections** to uncover their origins and production technologies.

Prospectus AY23/24

Collections as Academic Resource



01.
Charles Dyce Collection



02.
Malcom MacDonald Collection



03.
Woodblock Printing



04.
Nusantara Boats



05.
Straits Chinese Ceramics from
the Alice & Peter Tan Collection

01. Charles Dyce Collection

The Charles Dyce Collection consists of 35 watercolour paintings and 22 manuscript pages. The paintings depict different views of the Straits Settlements (Singapore, Penang, and Malacca) and Batavia (modern-day Jakarta) from 1842 to 1847, including urban settlements, waterfronts and natural landscapes. Made using watercolour paints, Dyce's landscapes are part of a genre of representations of island colonies in the "Far East" made by European traveller-artists during the nineteenth century. His manuscript was written at different points in 1847 prior to him leaving Singapore and broadly introduces Singapore as a developing colony to a foreign audience. With Dyce's primary audience likely being fellow Europeans who lived or had lived in the Straits, his depiction of the Straits presents a curated view as likely seen from, and possibly preferred by, the eyes of European viewers. Taken together the collection presents a vital piece of evidence for further understanding the histories, architecture and colonial gaze upon the Straits Settlements in the mid-19th century.

Possible research questions:

- By analysing the Collection as visual documentation, what can be understood about the colonial gaze?
- Can paintings effectively serve as documents of urban morphological changes and development?

Courses and projects that have utilised this collection:

- **AH2203 Empire and Art** explored the concept of the picturesque and how depictions of colonised places could be manipulated as tools of colonial power.
- **GL3201 Doing Visual Culture** referenced the collection in considering how different forms of visual materials can be read and understood in the context of their medium, genre and purpose.



Detail from Charles Dyce, *Singapore from Sandy Point*, 1842-1847.

■ **Reach out to us** for more details and a list of works in this Prospectus category



Currently on display at Radio Malaya: Abridged Conversations About Art

Top:
Charles Dyce, *The Esplanade, Singapore and Malacca from the Sea*, 1842-1847.

Bottom:
Charles Dyce, *Manuscript, Double-Sided, Introduction of Singapore*, 1816-1853.

02. Malcolm MacDonald Collection

Malcolm John MacDonald was the Governor General of the British territories in Southeast Asia from 1946 to 1948. As the roving representative of the UK government in Southeast Asia, it is speculated that MacDonald acquired many art pieces and artefacts from art exhibitions, personal acquaintance with artists, and from leaders of the countries he visited. After his Chancellorship at the University of Malaya (UM) ended in 1961, MacDonald donated pieces from his collection to the UM Art Museum. After the political separation of Singapore from Malaysia, the collection was divided between the UM and NUS, with the pieces remaining in NUS Museum forming the Malcolm MacDonald collection. It comprises works of Chinese ink on paper, Chinese ceramics and ceramic pieces from Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia, Indian sculptures, as well as Indian and Malayan contemporary artworks. Studying the collection deepens our understanding of the broad range of art styles and art movements across Asia and the functions of art in cultural diplomacy.

Possible research questions:

- What do the artworks reveal about the relationship between the British colonial administration and the local population?
- What do the pieces that Malcolm MacDonald collected reveal about his perception of local art and culture?

Courses and projects that have utilised this collection:

- **GET1019 Patrons of the Arts** discussed types of patronage, with their implications for the institutions and publics they serve.
- **Transcultural Imaginations: Revisiting the 1959 Donation from the Government of India to Malaya**, the NUS Museum's Anniversary Lecture for 2021, discussed the significance of Malcolm MacDonald.



Detail from Yong Mun Sen, *Three Figures Washing*.
Donated by Malcolm MacDonald in 1955.

■ **Reach out to us** for more details and a list of works in this Prospectus category



Currently on display at Gifts: A Prospectus

Top:
Wu Tsai Yen, *Willow and Cicada*, 20th Century.
Donated by Malcolm MacDonald in 1955.



Currently on display at the Resource Gallery

Bottom:
Aruna Seth, *Pine Trees*, 1960, Anjoli Devi, *Portrait of Lady*,
M. F. Husain, *Sketch of Malcolm Macdonald*.
Donated by Malcolm MacDonald in 1962.

03. Woodblock Printing

Central to this collection are contributions from Lim Mu Hue's estate in 2012, works from prominent artists like Foo Chee San, Koeh Sia Yong, and Tan Tee Chie, and contemporary additions by individuals such as Lucy Davis. Woodblock prints, or woodcut prints, signify more than artistic expression: they serve as visual chronicles of everyday life in Singapore, and are particularly affiliated with migrant Chinese artists of the 1930s-40s and second-generation NAFA students from the 1950-60s. Often integrated into mass media, these prints serve as conduits for socio-political narratives, distinctly portraying facets of Singapore's history divergent from contemporaneous artistic representations. Themes encompass social realism, community, nostalgia, and the industrial aspects of production and printing. The collection's significance lies not only in the artistry but in its potential for discursive exploration beyond its art form.

Possible research questions:

- How did woodblock prints circulate? Were they limited to and did they widely influence certain specific audiences?
- How did woodblock printing interact with other forms of artistic expression and mass media in Singapore, and what was its role in shaping public discourse and national identity?

Courses and projects that have utilised this collection:

- **SE2225 Forbidden Pleasures: Vices in Southeast Asia** discussed scenes of sex work and gambling circulated in 1950s newspapers.
- **NM2104 Qualitative Communication Research Methods** looked at how visual and contextual aspects of woodblock prints can function as signs.



Detail from Lim Yew Kuan, *After the Fire (Bukit Ho Swee)*, 1966.

■ **Reach out to us** for more details and a list of works in this Prospectus category



Currently on display at Radio Malaya: Abridged Conversations About Art

Top:
Lim Mu Hue, *Those who are not involved view the matter clearer*, 1966. Tan Tee Chie, *Persuading*, 1958.

Bottom:
Koeh Sia Yong, *Illegal Hawking*, 1957, *Night Hawker* 1958, *Missing Out from School*, 1957, Lee Kee Boon, *Street Scene*, 1959, Koeh Sia Yong, *Gambling*, 1957, Choo Keng Kwang, *Roadside Hawker*, 1955.

04. Nusantara Boats

This collection consists of 38 boat models formerly belonging to several institutions including the former Maritime Museum (commissioned by Eric Alfred between 1970-80s) and the Malay Heritage Centre. Most of the boats models are believed to have been made in reference to actual boats used by the various communities of maritime Southeast Asia and are a useful resource in establishing a typology of boats in the island and archipelagic cultures of the region. Locally, a subset of the boat models have direct reference to the kolek races of the past and the types of water crafts used by the indigenous orang laut communities. Serving multifaceted roles in trade, transport, and fishing, they embody the archipelago's maritime diversity. In light of the diminishing number of vernacular water crafts and expert boat builders in the community and the region, these boat models preserve boat making traditions of the past.

Possible research questions:

- How have the social lives of the boat models changed across their locale, from being objects in the Maritime Museum, to their role in the Malay Heritage Centre, to their current display at NUS Museum?
- How do the features of the boat models relate back to their places of origin?

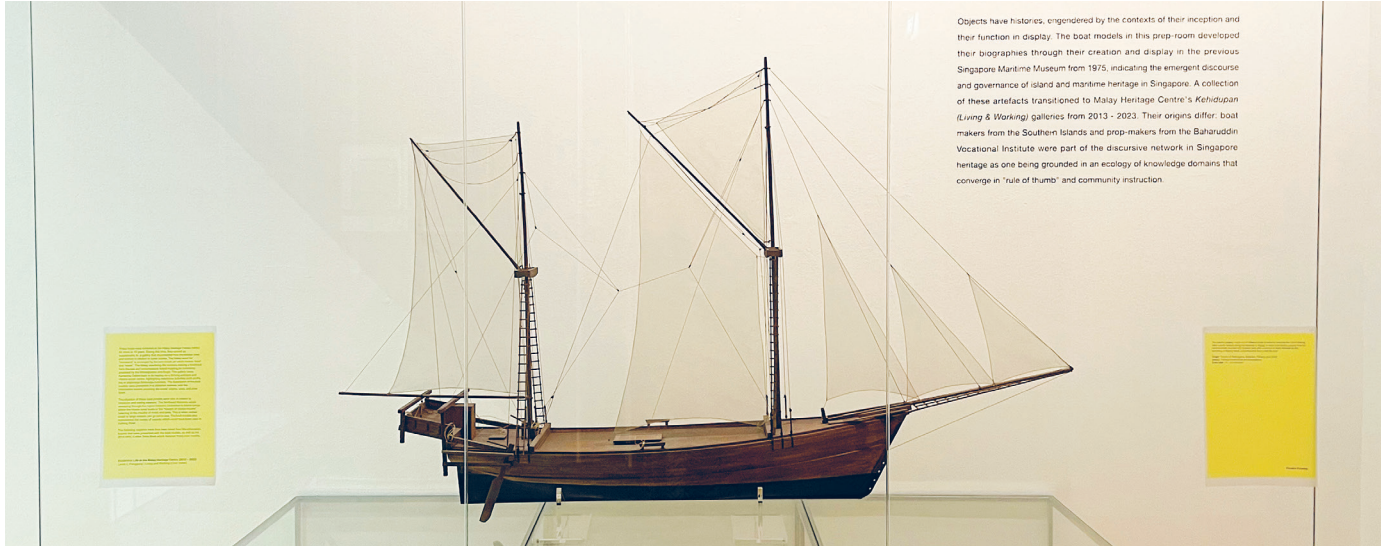
This collection was recently acquired by the Museum. Some suggestions for its utilisation:

- **Courses** that explore Southeast Asian culture and maritime histories. Academic research on the social, cultural, literary, spiritual and economic aspects of such maritime traditions.
- **Projects** that explore institutional histories, or how objects acquire meaning from their contexts of display and usage.



A selection of boat models on display at prep-room | the hull and the rig

■ **Reach out to us** for more details and a list of works in this Prospectus category



Currently on display at prep-room | the hull and the rig

Top:
Perahu Payang, donated by Malay Heritage Centre in 2023.

Bottom:
Golekkan and variations of Kolek, donated by Malay Heritage Centre in 2023.

05. Straits Chinese Ceramics from the Alice & Peter Tan Collection

The 577-piece Alice & Peter Tan Collection comprises 435 pieces of ceramics that can be typified as Straits Chinese ceramics. These were commissioned by the Straits Chinese living in the Straits Settlements region of Singapore, Melaka, and Penang during the late 19th to early 20th century, and were widely known to have been produced in Jingdezhen, China. The vibrant colours and visual motifs of these export wares from China reflect the preferences of a community that adapted Malay and Southeast Asian habits such as language and food preferences, even while retaining certain Chinese cultural traditions such as ancestor worship and its associated rituals. The collection's various vessel forms include those found in typical Chinese dining sets, items with ceremonial functions and forms found in Western tableware sets. This showcases the Peranakan community's hybridised tastes, and gives us insight into their conceptions of identity, their cultural affiliations and their place in the world.

Possible research questions:

- How did such ceramics contribute to the Straits Chinese community's world-making and identity formation?
- How has the role of Singapore/Malaya as a port or recipient in global and regional trade changed over time?

This collection was recently acquired by the Museum. Some suggestions for its utilisation:

- **Courses** that explore migration, material culture, taste-making, identity formation or nationalism.
- **Projects** that explore the Straits Chinese community, cultural hybridity, or transnational trade routes.



Large pink *kamcheng*. Donated by Alice & Peter Tan in 2023.

■ **Reach out to us** for more details and a list of works in this Prospectus category



Currently on display at *Gifts: A Prospectus*

Top:
Assortment of flat plates.
Donated by Alice & Peter Tan in 2023.

Preview of Collection

Bottom:
Assortment of covered jars known as *kamcheng*.
Donated by Alice & Peter Tan in 2023.

Museum Facilities

Classroom Space

The Celadon Room is located on the Concourse Floor. Directly adjacent to our galleries, it allows for easy movement between museum-based engagements and classroom teaching. It can accommodate up to 50 students in a multitude of different seating formats.



Resource Library

The Resource Library brings together materials pertaining to the Museum's collections, collecting interests and how these have developed. These materials include publications on Southeast Asian art and art histories, exhibition and auction house catalogues, and the T.K. Sabapathy archives. Access is by appointment only.



Search

[Simple search](#)

[Advanced search](#)

[Expert search](#)

Search in NUS Museum collection

Search



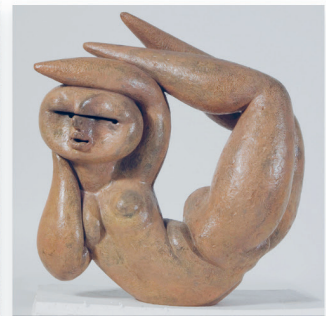
Lee Kong Chian Collection



South & Southeast Asian Collection



Straits Chinese Collection



Ng Eng Teng Collection

Collections Online

More than 2,000 artefacts from NUS Museum's four main collections can be viewed online through the Museum's Collections Online database along with reference and catalogue details. Learn more about our collections here: collectionsonline.nus.edu.sg

Get in Touch

Course Engagements

1. Discussion

Museum staff will consult with interested faculty and teaching staff to identify ways in which the museum and its collections can support course objectives and learning outcomes.

2. Content Development

Museum staff work with teaching faculty to design a wide range of museum-based programmes and curate content that is best suited to course learning objectives.

3. Course Visit



To learn more about **Course Engagements**, scan the QR code, or click [here](#).

Research Collaborations

1. Discussion

Museum staff will consult with interested students, faculty, and researchers on their proposed research project, and to explore ways in which the museum's collections and exhibitions can be mobilised for in-depth study.

2. Content Development

Museum staff work with students and researchers to facilitate access to museum resources and expertise as needed.

3. Project Realisation



To learn more about **Research Collaborations**, scan the QR code, or click [here](#).



This info-booklet serves to detail the inaugural NUS Museum Prospectus initiative. Should you consider its usage for research or teaching purposes, we would greatly appreciate a few minutes of your time in filling out our [feedback form](#). More coming soon!



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OPENING HOURS:

Monday: By appointment (*for schools/faculties*)
Tuesday to Saturday: 10:00 am – 6:00 pm
Sunday and Public Holidays: Closed