



[Media Release] Step into Play: Date, a world of playful nostalgia centred on toys and play

Description

When looking back on our fondest childhood memories, there is bound to be one related to a favourite toy – be it playing with dolls, racing with mini-cars, or being engrossed in gaming consoles. Starting 5 July 2024, the National Museum of Singapore (NMS) invites visitors to relive and connect over these nostalgic memories in a new toy-themed experiential pop-up titled Play: Date – Unlocking Cabinets of Play.

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Play: Date – Unlocking Cabinets of Play.

The pop-up was developed as part of the Museum's Collecting Contemporary Singapore initiative, which aims to showcase and collect memories and objects from recent decades. In line with this, the Museum worked with local toy collectors and artists to co-create this

immersive showcase comprising large-scale artworks, extensive toy displays, and interactive experiences to tell the fascinating stories behind some of these beloved playtime icons of the past and trace their evolution over the years.

Chung May Khuen, Director of the National Museum of Singapore, said, “Toys are often our first teachers and helped shape our identities in our formative years. As they play such an important role in our lives, using toys as a focal point in this showcase creates a light-hearted way for visitors to connect over their shared memories. We hope this will bring out the collective memories we share of toys across the eras in Singapore, and instil deeper appreciation for toys and play as treasured facets of our combined cultural heritage and the Singapore story.”

Artists spreading the joys of play to new spaces inside and outside the museum

Departing from the traditional exhibition experience of a museum, Play: Date activates various parts of the Museum to create a unique and immersive storytelling experience, including the temporary spaces and hoardings installed as part of the Museum’s ongoing restoration and upgrading works.

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Murals on the hoarding at the Museum's facade



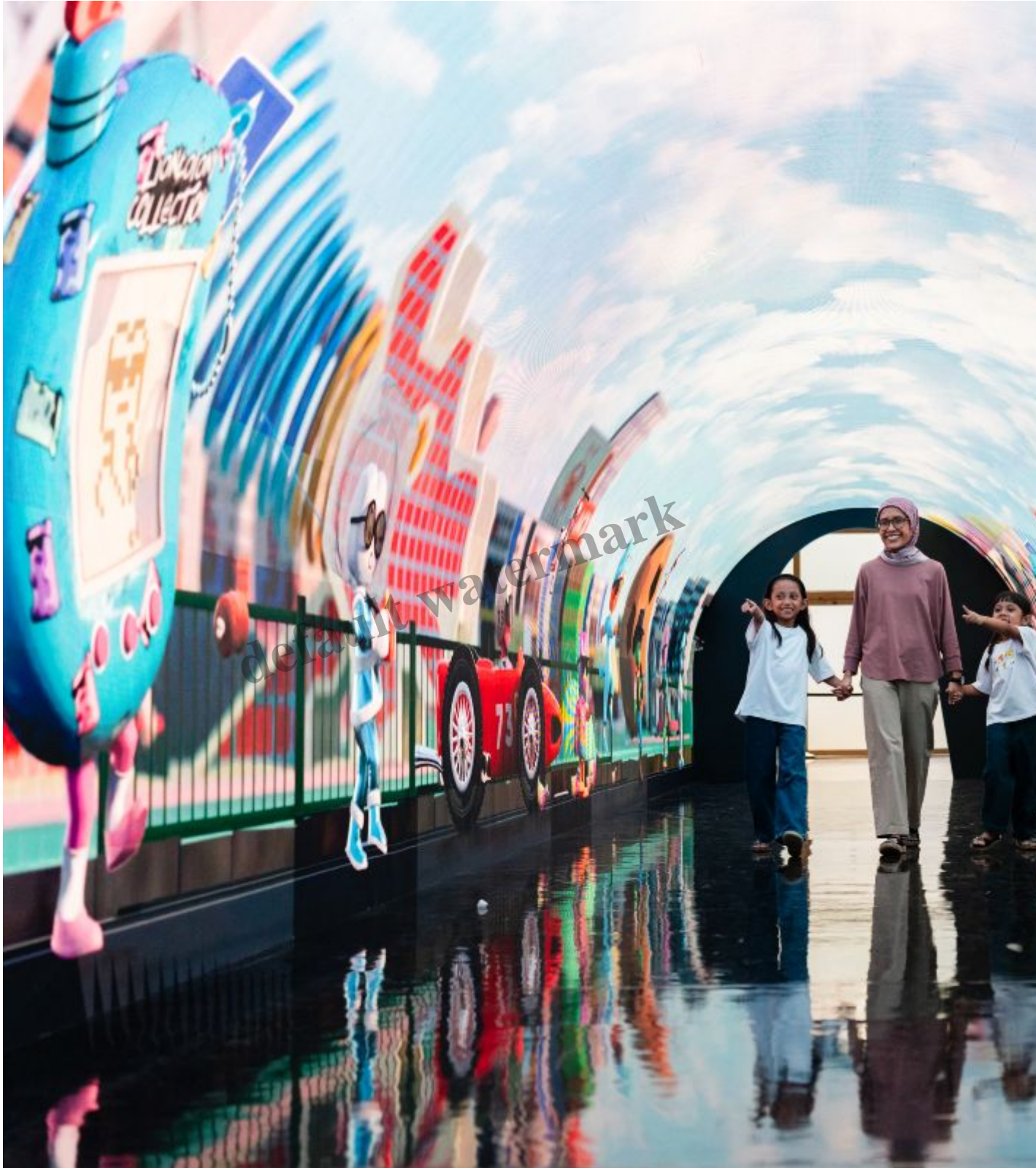
Five large-scale, interactive artworks by local artists adorn the Museum's facade.

The showcase begins from the moment visitors lay eyes on the Museum's exterior. Serving as a prelude to the showcase, the hoarding around the Museum's facade has been decorated with five large-scale commissioned artworks by five local artists that take visitors on a journey of collecting and

the joy of toys in our lives.

Both Tiffany Lovage (Night Shift) and Candice Phang (Joy in the Making) illustrate the process of bringing toys into reality, either through a sculptor's meticulous touch or as part of a factory line. Shian Ng (Playtime Pandemonium) and Muhammad Izdi (Flea-ting Moments), capture the excitement of people getting their hands on toys, with the latter paying homage to flea markets in Singapore, a hotspot for hobbyists. Ending the series is Kristal Melson's When I Was Big, which encapsulates how toys cement themselves among our fondest memories as we grow up. Each of the artworks features interactive and tactile elements, aiming to stimulate one's innate curiosity and kickstart the process of learning through play.

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Step into an immersive portal featuring artist Lioncolony's iconic 'Gman' character as various toy figurines

As visitors step into the museum, they are greeted by the entrance to Play: Date – a tunnel housing a digital parade of toy figurines by local artist Lioncolony, also known as Oh Jia Hao, which are modelled after his iconic Gman character. These characters are inspired by a selection of

toys from the 1950s to the 2000s from our National Collection and local collectors and provide a precursor to the showcase's overarching narrative of local and global social histories.

Jonathan Goh, Senior Assistant Director of the Museum's Strategic Marketing and Communications department, who is overseeing the showcase shared, "The restoration works on our National Museum monument building can be challenging for us to continue to engage people to visit us. However, we decided to quite literally think outside of the box and purposefully transform these otherwise static and functional spaces into creative canvases that not only draw visitors in but also enhance the experiences of our other offerings within the museum and foster deeper engagement with the public."

A showcase displaying a collection of toys from local collectors

Featuring an eclectic array of over 250 locally and globally recognisable toys largely from the 1980s to the present day, Play: Date collectively highlights the socio-historical significance of toys in the Singapore story, told through the lens of local toy collectors and organisations, and allows visitors to uncover the stories of their favourite toy brands.

The collection comprises three main sections that tell the stories of the featured toys and their collectors' journeys in toy-collecting:

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Section 1 – It's A Small World

- It's a Small World: The showcase kicks off with a selection of miniature character figurines from instantly recognisable brands that have captured the hearts of children around the globe. Visitors can take a trip down memory lane with a series of local McDonald's

toys – including the popular Mr Kiasu figurines – from avid collector Tay Swee Hock, and a recreation of the iconic ‘Fillet o Fish’ ride from the 1980s, as well as a collection of Barbie dolls from Jian Yang, which includes unique collaborations with local brands and a series made from recycled ocean-bound plastic. This section also highlights collectible culture in Singapore from ActionCity, with locally-designed figurines for global companies such as POP MART and Disney. They include the Pucky Rose Knight, the first Singapore-exclusive figurine designed to commemorate the opening of Southeast Asia’s first POP MART official store in Singapore and the first-ever art collectible designed by Singaporean sculptor Daniel Yu inspired by Mickey Mouse and the Jiangshi, a vampire character in Chinese folklore.

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Section 2 – Drive-Through Time

- Drive-Through Time: This section invites visitors to recall their childhood pastime of emulating car races and thrill-seeking adventures with familiar brands such as Hot Wheels, Tamiya, and Matchbox from the collections of Clarence Tan, Jeffrey Wong, Ian Goh, Ridzal Ajis and

Muhammad Noor Farhan. Not to be missed in this section is a remodelled Tamiya Rover Mini Cooper, painted in the style of the British sitcom character Mr Bean's iconic green car, that was personally autographed by Tamiya's CEO Mr Shunsaku Tamiya. Toy enthusiasts and casual fans alike will be awed by The Original 16, the first-ever collection of cars released by Hot Wheels in 1968. Another highlight of this section is the iconic yellow Matchbox cars with vehicles ranging from trade lorries and trailers to helicopters and emergency vehicles.

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Section 3 – Batteries Included

- Batteries Included: Capturing the shift from tactile toys to digital ones, this last section features retro game consoles that serve as a nostalgic reminder of the days before touchscreen technology. On display are iconic digital games of the past like Tamagotchi from Rachel Liew's

collection, which includes various rare designs as well as popular characters such as Gudetama, Hello Kitty and Pac-Man. Visitors can also view collector Tony Saw's classic and special handheld consoles by Nintendo and Casio, including a unique calculator that allows students to play a boxing game under the guise of hitting the books. More recent experiences include the recreation of Sentosa on popular digital games Animal Crossing and Roblox.

Creating personalised play experiences

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Play our arcade-inspired games and customise your digital avatar in 'Discover your Play-sonality'.



Discover Your Play-sonality

Apart from toys and artworks, Play: Date also features several immersive and interactive experiences inspired by old-school gaming arcades. Visitors can purchase tokens to participate in a Memory Match game, where they are challenged to memorise a sequence of simple objects displayed on a screen, or

a Roadblock Highway game, in which they race to the finish line while collecting coins and avoiding obstacles. Complementing the nostalgic vibe of the showcase, visitors will also be able to view a 'live' camera image of themselves via an '8bitfy screen', featuring a retro 8-bit filter layered over the screen.

In a playful finale, visitors are invited to design their personalised avatar at the 'Discover Your Personality' section, which was created in collaboration with local artists together with ActionCity. Visitors can choose from a selection of four digital toy avatars with different personality types and physical appearances to create their very own 'Play: Mate'. For a small fee, visitors can accumulate points by playing the on-site digital games, and exchange these points to customise their avatar with a variety of Singapore-themed accessories. They can then head over to the accompanying photo booth to take photos of themselves with their 'Play: Mate', or opt for a physical photo printout with a donation to the museum.

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Snap a picture with your 'Play: Mate' at our photo booth!

As part of an open call for the National Museum's Collecting Contemporary Singapore initiative, an ongoing effort to enhance the National Collection with more recent social history items, visitors are also invited to share their own toy stories and to donate their toys dating from the 1980s to

the present day. Some of these donations could potentially be displayed in the Museum's galleries in the future.

Experiences running in conjunction and admission details

Alongside the showcase, MUSEUM MARKET by ABRY is partnering with old-school Holland Village party shop Khiam Teck to bring nostalgic and traditional toys and games to visitors of the National Museum. A beloved local establishment that drew its shutters in May 2024 after over 80 years of business, Khiam Teck has been given a new lease of life with ABRY within the Museum's walls, where customers can relive their nostalgic memories of buying old-school knick-knacks.

Visitors can also look forward to the opening weekend of Play: Date on 6 and 7 July, where they can expect a series of games, both familiar and unexpected. There will also be additional programming in line with the Singapore Night Festival, which coincides with the theme of the play.

Play: Date – Unlocking Cabinets of Play is a free showcase and will run until 5 January 2025. Separate fees apply for the digital gamified experiences within the showcase.

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