



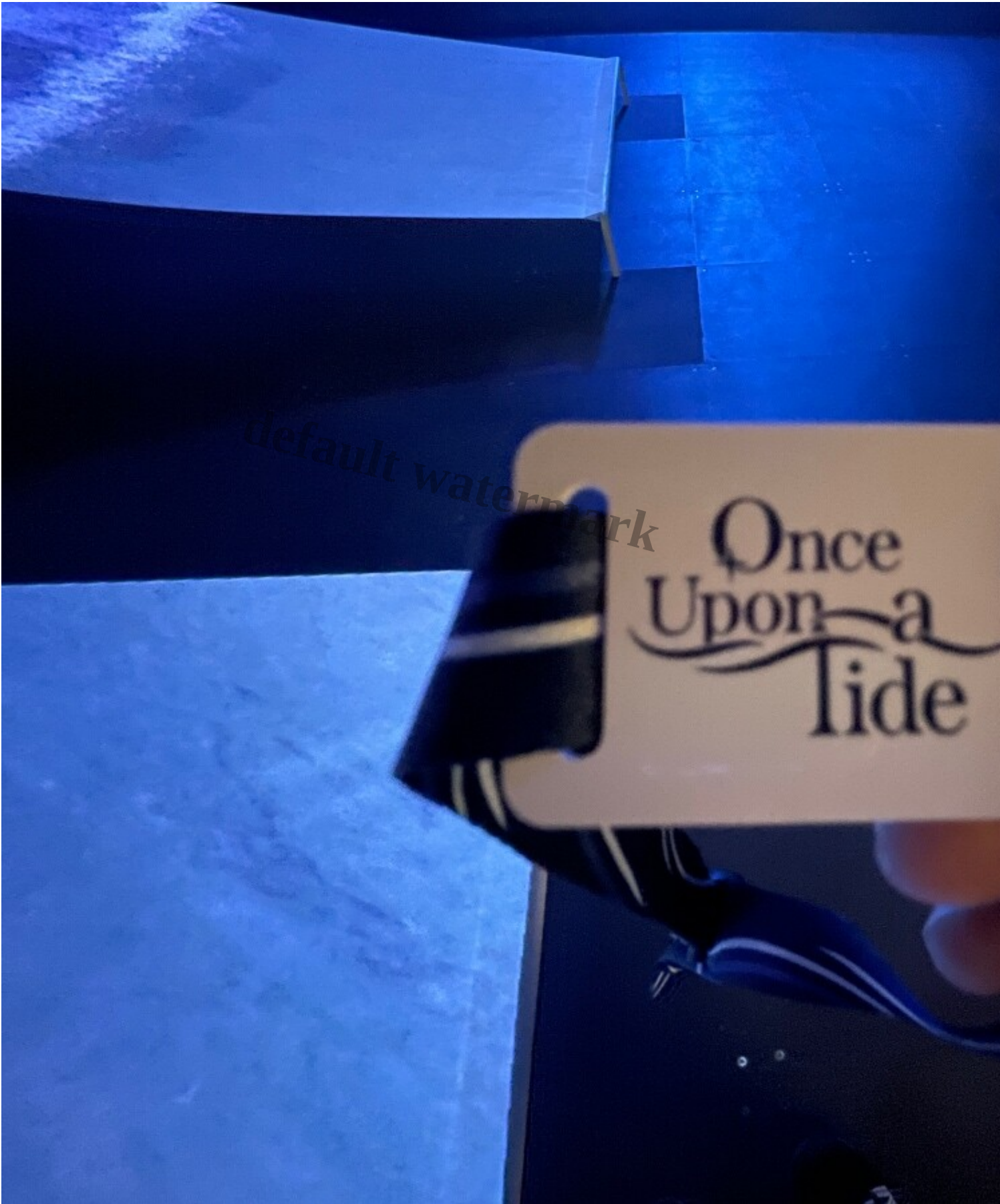
Once Upon a Tide: Singapore's Journey from Settlement to Global City

Description

The latest exhibition, Once Upon a Tide at the National Museum of Singapore is nothing short of spectacular. I was very impressed by the design and the overall visitor experience. In short, it's a blockbuster-tier production.

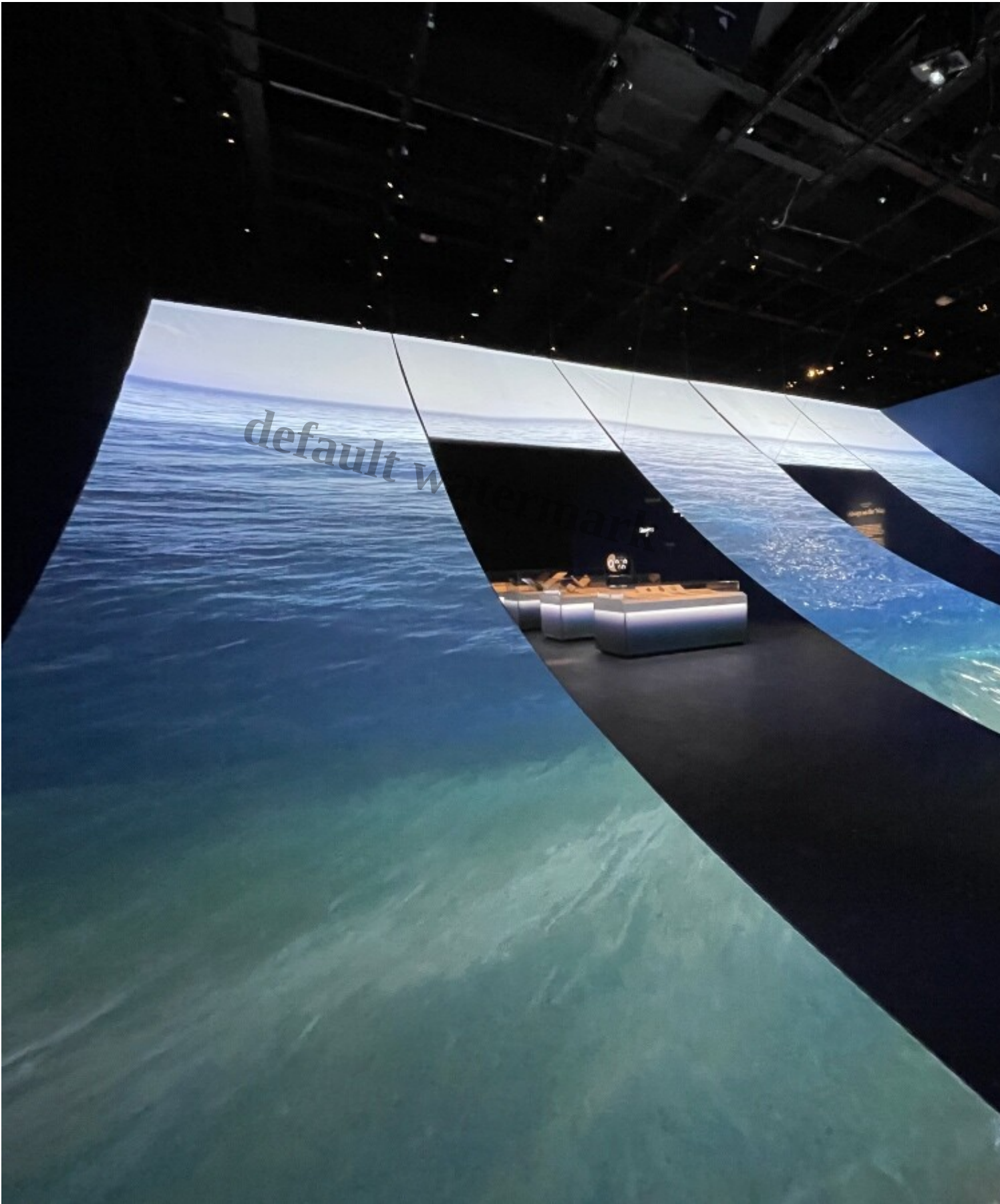
The process of creating this exhibition involves many stages. It includes research, curatorial development, artifact acquisition or preparation, design, fabrication, and installation. Mr Daniel Tham, the lead curator of this exhibition, together with his team gave a media preview this week and I was fortunate to be one of the attendees.

Before we begin, we each have a wrist tag that we will use during our interactive tour.



The first exhibit upon entering is well-thought and all out visually captivating. It was assembled by a series of long panel screens that display the sea waves projections from the projectors above at precise angles. The story of Singapore begins nowhere but from the exploration of seas. Explorers who ventured beyond their territories and by chance or fate, discovered our tiny plain island.

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Here, as you enter the exhibition hall “from the sea”, you leave the ocean body behind you. You step into Singapore, or Temasek, as it was known before it was renamed Singapura. Temasek means “Sea Town” in Old Javanese and this was the name used primarily during the 14th century.

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Chapter One: Always on the Map

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CHAPTER

Always on

Has Singapore always existed? That "Singapore" and trace its origins. Could in 1965, Singapore is a 60-year-old nation considered its longer histories – where years ago, or a British East India Company or a Malay kingdom more than 700 years

The question can be approached by been mapped. Maps and charts show location, and illustrate how a place came its surroundings. In this opening display and Southeast Asia as a starting point of Singapore's early existence. What name where was it located?

Has Singapore's early history matter to you?



No, what's more important is how we are playing relevant today and in the future

The exhibition unfolds as an immersive saga, thoughtfully divided into five captivating chapters. Your journey begins in Chapter One, designed to evoke a sense of anticipation. The hall's dim, dusky twilight deliberately mirrors the pre-dawn uncertainty faced by early adventurers. Strategic spotlights illuminate key treasures, each beam cutting through the gloom.

Published in 1732 by Ibrahim Muteferrika, this hand-colored engraving of Sumatra offers a glimpse into historical geographical ambiguity. The map, from the 17th-century Ottoman scholar Katib Celebi's "Kitab Cihannuma," highlights the prevailing uncertainty regarding Singapore's precise location then. "Singapur" (in Arabic) is imprecisely identified on the map as the entire southern Malay Peninsula, south of the Muar River.

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Major P. D. R. Williams-Hunt found stone adzes on Pulau Ubin's western side, near Tanjong Tajam beach. These adzes, possibly basalt, potentially date 3,000 – 5,000 years (Hoabinhian-Neolithic); early people likely fashioned them. Williams-Hunt collected these prehistoric tools in the late 1940s/early 1950s, and they offer insights into early Singapore. At the time, he was Malaya's Acting-Director of Museums and an active field researcher in Southeast Asia.

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Singapore is labeled in this map as "Singapura" and located on the southernmost tip of the Malay Peninsula, making reference to its Malay name. The map was produced by Jan Huygen van Linschoten, a Dutchman who spent five years in the service of the Archbishop of Goa, which was under Portuguese rule at the time. During his employment, Linschoten obtained information from Portuguese sources on sailing routes in the East Indies, publishing them in his 1596 book *Itinerario* which included this map.

2 Base of a Chinese export ware dish
Circa 16th period (1573-1623)
Blue-and-white porcelain
JCS-03254
Gift of Mr. Lee Gook Kai

This base of a Chinese export ware dish was reportedly recovered from the Johor Shoal off Andok at the intersection between the Straits of Singapore and Johor. It was part of a group of similar blue-and-white porcelain sherds dredged from the Kallang River basin, which collectively point to the location of a shipwreck or harbour master in that area during the 16th century.

3 Photograph of Malay village at Pulau Brani
G. R. Lambert & Co.
Late 19th century | Reproduction print
1961-2007

This photograph shows the extent of the Orang Laut ("sea people") in Malay settlement at Pulau Brani off the Old Straits of Singapore by the late 19th century. Orang Laut assisted with navigation around the Straits since at least the 16th century, and were likely to have guided the Portuguese, whose sailing instructions for what is today Reppel Harbour were published by Linschoten.

The exhibits that contain these early maps are not merely representations of land, but cryptic parchments bearing the hopes and fears of their creators. Observe the compasses, primitive yet profound instruments that once held the fate of expeditions. But these aren't just artifacts; they are silent storytellers.

The button and ball controller are for you the explorer to find Temasek!

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EPISODE ONE

FROM ANCIENT

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Which is the oldest map to feature Singapore? That depends on how certain you are about Singapore with places in a similar name. It could bear similar sounding names. It possibly be traced to the 2nd century by the astronomer and cartographer Ptolemy in his mapping of the Malay Peninsula. The earliest appearances of Singapore on maps were produced from European voyages in the 16th century. But the question is, was Singapore during this period? What was known about it at that time?

Every narration etched onto the walls is an invitation—a challenge. It is a carefully crafted prompt designed to ignite your inner sense of adventure. You will instinctively question and piece together fragments of information, while searching for the elusive clues hidden in plain sight. You will embody the early explorer, grappling with the same enigmas, facing the same vastness, and feeling the thrilling pulse of discovery with every step.

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EPISODE TWO

AT THE CROSSROADS OF ASIA

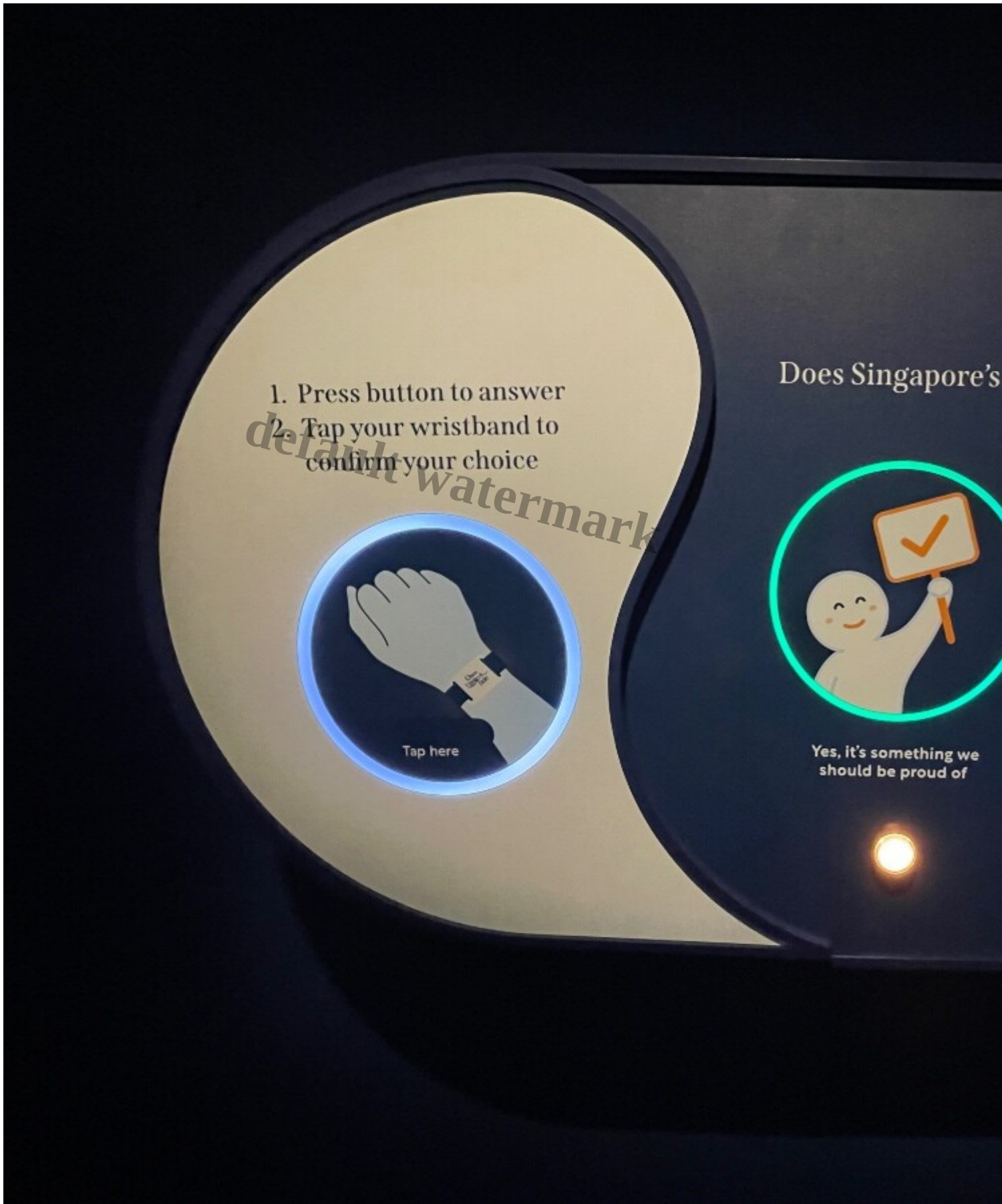
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Singapore has never existed in a vacuum. Contrary to popular belief, it has always been a crossroads of politics, empires and world trade and culture. This was true of Asia, given Singapore's part in the regional network since the 14th century. It was one of the capitals and key ports of the Malay world. Such a region can be seen in the maps in this section.



With the wrist tag, you can engage in interactive QnA throughout the exhibition. Does Singapore's early history matter to you? Share your answers in the comment box below.

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Chapter Two: The River Road

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We moved on the Chapter Two, which predominantly highlights Singapore's geographical location and how it strategically sits along the shipping routes that links trade from the East to the West.

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1. Chinese Stoneware Jars (14th Century) (top): Archaeologists found these “small-mouthed bottles,” which people called *xiaokouping*, near Singapore’s Old Parliament House; these items were common Chinese storage jars. People originally used these jars for liquids like mercury. Later, they reused them for items such as wine or betel lime. The discovery of these jars, along with many other 14th-century trade goods near the Singapore River, indicates significant past settlement and trade in the area.

2. Chinese Celadon Plate (14th Century) (bottom left): A 14th-century Chinese celadon plate found in Singapore, on loan from the Asian Civilisations Museum.

3. Ming Dynasty Chinese Vase (1573-1621) (bottom right): This Ming vase and other similar blue porcelain pieces found in the Kallang estuary suggest that the Kallang River, not the Singapore River, was the main trade route in the 16th-17th centuries. Both the Kallang and Rochor Rivers remained important for trade and shipbuilding during colonial Singapore.

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EPISODE ONE

COLONIAL ENTRY

On 28 January 1819, a squadron of British East India Company (EIC) ships, led by Stamford Raffles on board the *Indiana*, anchored at St John's Island near mainland Singapore. Accompanied by Major William Farquhar and a musket-bearing sepoy (soldier), Raffles travelled by boat to the banks of the Singapore River to meet with the local chief, Temenggong Abdul Rahman.

The ensuing negotiation for control of the island was inherently unequal, given the EIC's status as a formidable global trading, governance and military entity. After reaching an agreement with the Temenggong, Raffles arranged for Sultan Hussein Shah of Johor to be brought from Riau to Singapore, where the three parties signed the official Treaty of Friendship and Alliance on 6 February 1819.

Having claimed Singapore as a British settlement, the EIC swiftly established a free trade port welcoming surrounding sea traffic and mercantile activity. Farquhar was appointed as Singapore's first Resident and Commandant. Under his administration, the Singapore River rapidly transformed into a bustling hub for travellers and traders of all nationalities.



4. Daguerreotype of Boat Quay (1844): This early photograph, taken from Government Hill, shows Singapore's commercial hub at Boat Quay. Singapore's success as a trans-shipment center meant new technologies, like daguerreotypy (invented just five years prior), arrived quickly.

5. Print of Singapore River & Presentment Bridge (1830): This print illustrates early Singapore River crossings by boat before the 1823 Presentment Bridge (later Elgin Bridge). It also depicts the diverse population drawn to Singapore for trade and work, seen moving cargo by the river.

6. Italian Postcard of North Boat Quay (Early 20th Century): This postcard features Boat Quay warehouses, including Boustead & Co., and advertises Italian soaps and perfumes.

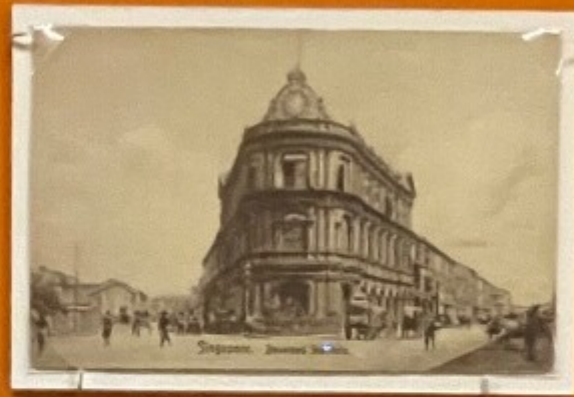
7. Logbook of the *Charles Grant* (1834-1835): This logbook details the voyage of the former British East India Company ship *Charles Grant*. In 1834, it arrived in Singapore from Bombay, then departed for China, and also visited St Helena and England. The log records goods loaded in Singapore, such as pepper, betel nut, and rattan.

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A mid-20th century jute cushion (above), worn around the neck, protected cooliesâ?? backs or shoulders from heavy, sharp-edged loads. The 1964 photograph â??Working in Unityâ?• by Loke Hong Seng (top right) depicts a labourer using a similar cushion while cooperatively loading rubber bales at Clarke Quay.

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IDENTIFICATION CARD

No. of Service Record Book 2028

Department No. SRC No. 5749

Name in Chinese Lee Chin Chin

Name in Phonetics Lee Chin Chin

Nationality Chinese

Date and Place of Birth 1920 Fuzhou (China)

Height 5' 7 1/2"

Particular Marks

PHOTOGRAPH

FULL FACE SIDE FACE

LEFT THUMB RIGHT THUMB

IDENTIFICATION CARD

No. of Service Record Book 2005

Registered No. 1/10 2005

Name in Chinese 李振齊

Name in Phonetics LEE CHIN CHEE

Nationality SINGAPORE

Date and Place of Birth 4.6.1920

Height 5' 7 1/2"

Particular Marks SMALL SCAR ON FOREHEAD

PHOTOGRAPH

FULL FACE

LEFT THUMB

IDENTIFICATION CARD

Name in Chinese 王金良

Name in Phonetics NG KIN LEONG

Department Dept

IDENTIFICATION CARD

Name in Chinese 黃照

Name in Phonetics CHENG CHAO

Department ENGINE



The Suez Canal transformed global maritime trade routes in the late 19th century, and Singapore was perfectly positioned to capitalise on this transformation. It was critical to Singapore's initial survival and establishment as a major port, and it remains fundamental to its ongoing success as a global trade, logistics, and maritime powerhouse. The Suez Canal is a man-made waterway connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea, and it has been profoundly critical to Singapore's survival and enduring success as a global trade and maritime hub since its opening in 1869.

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This 1844 daguerreotype (above) by Alphonse-Eugène-Jules Itier, one of Asia's earliest surviving photographs, shows Boat Quay and the Singapore River from Government Hill (now Fort Canning Hill). Captured just five years after the daguerreotype process (which creates unique, reversed images) was invented, its presence in Singapore—then a thriving transshipment hub—highlights how quickly new technologies reached the well-connected port.

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Introduction

Mission

Answers



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Did you match
the clues to the
correct boat?



The exhibition has 11 interactive “Waves of Wonder” (above) lift-the-flap captions for children 4+. These easily identifiable, three-page captions (info, task, answers) help kids connect with artefacts and support self-guided tours. They are a collaboration between the National Museum of Singapore and My First Skool educators.

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British autistic artist **Stephen Wiltshire** drew the “Singapore Panorama” (2014, pencil and ink) (above) from memory after a single hour-long helicopter ride. He masterfully depicted the cityscape, including the Singapore River and Marina Bay, using his extraordinary talent to raise autism awareness and charity funds.

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Visitors can take on the Sampan Challenge in Chapter Two: The River Road

For extra fun, try the “Sampan Challenge”: row a sampan across the Singapore River, skillfully avoiding other vessels and weathering challenges to deliver your passengers safely. For adults only.

Chapter Three: Expanding Horizons

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“Expanding Horizons” complements the main narrative by highlighting Singapore’s innovative land planning to overcome its small size. This section includes artifacts like a letter from Raffles on town planning and a 1976 skyline panorama. Visitors can also use a digital slider map to see Singapore’s coastline changes over centuries, tracing land reclamation efforts back to colonial times.

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This late 19th-century travel desk (above) belonged to Angus Sutherland, a colonial surveyor in Singapore (1890-1894). He received it in 1886 from Lord Kitchener, with whom he had mapped Cyprus. In Singapore, Sutherland lived on Beach Road and trained surveyors at a new school established to meet the colony's development needs, teaching theory in the mornings and fieldwork in the afternoons.

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To
Captain Davis
Scribner
George Benham } Equine
M^r. J. Johnston } Members
Gentlemen,

The extent of the Indian population which has been accumulated at Singapore, and the rapidity with which it daily increases, renders it expedient that in providing for the accommodations and attention should be paid to its future regulation with reference to the immixtion of the people and the peculiar character and Institutions of the several Classes of Inhabitants of which the Society will be composed.

It has been observed by the Singapore Government that in the event of Singapore being permanently retained there seems every reason to believe that it will become a place of considerable importance, and it is

This 1822 letter (above left) from Sir Stamford Raffles to his town planning committee (C.E. Davis, S.G. Bonham, A.L. Johnston) stressed the urgent need to regulate Singapore's rapidly growing population. To achieve his vision of Singapore as a place of "magnitude and importance," Raffles' plan included allocating land for government and commerce, and controversially, creating ethnic enclaves.

In this May 1823 letter (above right), Raffles reprimanded Alexander Laurie Johnston—an early settler, founder of A. L. Johnston & Co., and President of the town planning committee—for building a large godown without permission, viewing it as undermining his town plan. It's unclear if Johnston received the letter or stopped construction.

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This 1830 hand-coloured engraved sketch (above) of Singapore Island, featured in Lady Sophia Raffles's memoir, closely follows Captain Franklin's 1822 plan but adds more detail on coastal vegetation, nearby hills, and an expanded view of the Straits of Singapore. (Gift of Capitaland)

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J. T. Thomson's 1843 hand-coloured lithograph (above) is Singapore's earliest known printed map. Based on a government survey, it shows the town's inland expansion, road construction, and hill details when the population reached 50,000. The map, owned by Captain James Best who proposed military fortifications, reflects this period of development.

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Lai Kui Fang's 1977 oil painting (above), "Skyline of Singapore in 1976" (on loan from Istana Art Collection), vibrantly details the city centre's increased density and height within Singapore's first decade of independence. It portrays ongoing development, including the early reclamation of Marina Bay for Marina Centre.

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The young kids are having a creative session of drawing and colouring guided by their teachers.

Chapter Four: Flows of People

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CHAPTER FOUR

Flows of People

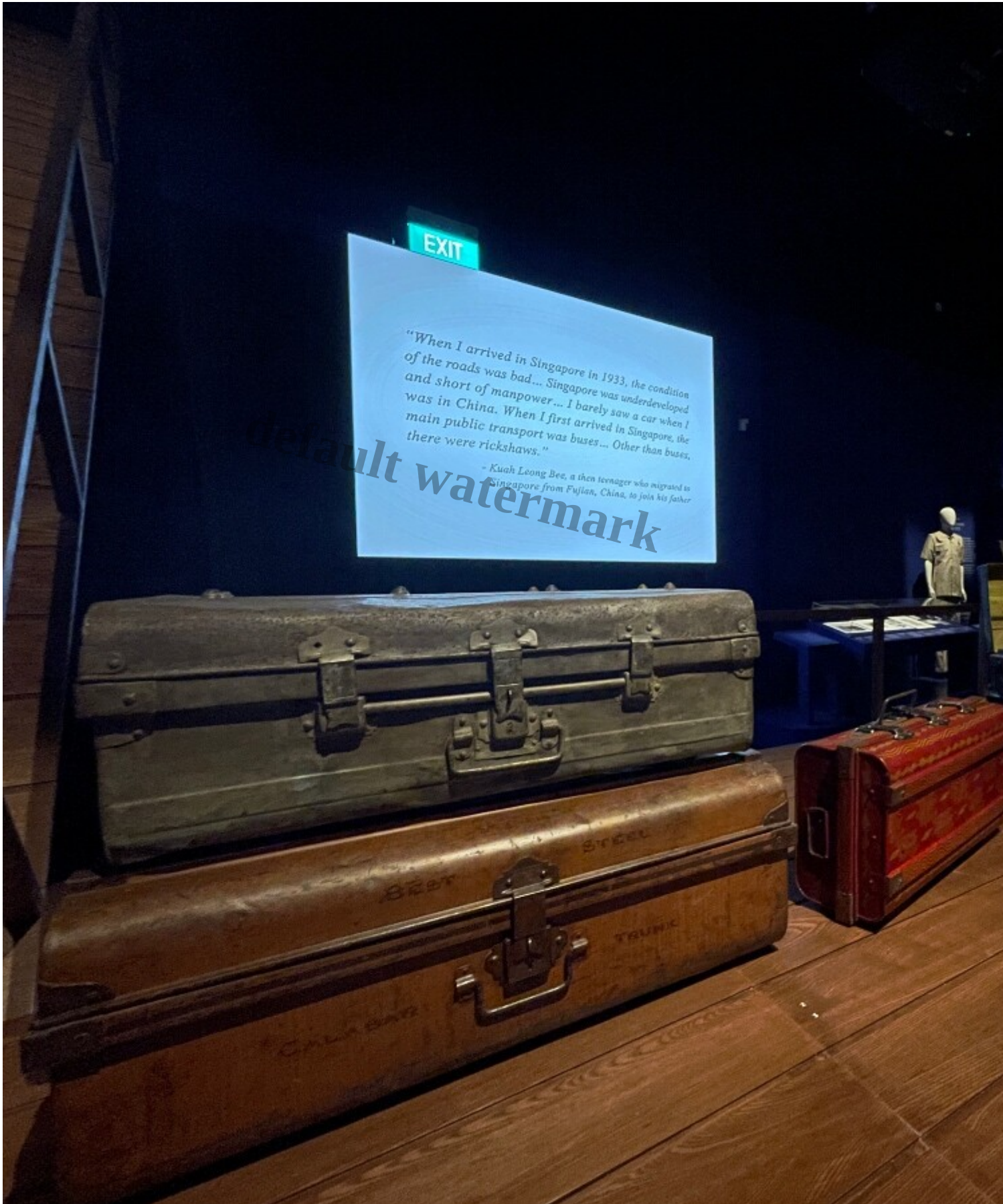
Who built Singapore and made it into what it is today? To answer this is to acknowledge local communities who were already here in the 19th century, as well as the diverse waves of people who arrived from around the world to these shores, and the descendants of those who settled here.

Singapore's location at the crossroads of global trade routes and its relative prosperity attracted people from all walks of life seeking better opportunities. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, many arrived via sea routes at either Johnston's Pier or Keppel Harbour. While some had travelled here in luxury first-class cabins, the majority were steerage or deck passengers who brought little with them beyond a few clothes and their hopes for a better future. Regardless of status, the newcomers contributed their labour, skills and dreams towards developing the country and keeping it running and progressing.

The stories of the first-generation migrants presented here span from the 19th century to the present. These individuals have, through their everyday lives and work, collectively shaped Singapore's unique physical landscape and multicultural social identity.

Chapter Four honors individuals, from early settlers to today's workers, who shaped Singapore's multicultural identity. It explores their diverse experiences and roles in nation-building through personal stories, photos, and mementos. The chapter also connects past and present occupations, showing how essential roles continue to evolve in Singapore's history.

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Immigrants brought these steel and rattan trunks to Singapore as their sole keepsakes from home, often retaining them for decades to store personal items.

During this era, manufacturers robustly built travel trunks, typically of wood or steel. They equipped these trunks with strong locks, often waterproofed them, and added external protection like bolts for stacking (as seen on the Jones Brothers & Co trunk) to help the trunks withstand rough ship, rail, and road journeys. In the late 19th century, designers also created lighter, more fragile rattan suitcases, which they intended for hand-carrying and often included an inner pocket for shirts; these suitcases also emerged during this period.

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people were carrying charcoal, their entire
were covered in soot, and I knew I was dead.
on the ship, I was thinking about how I had to
much work in Singapore... At that time, I was just a
nager... I knew my life will be arduous in this place."

- Ng Teow Yhee, a 15-year-old jobseeker who migrated
to Singapore from Fujian, China via Hong Kong





In the 1860s, August Sachtler produced carte de visite portraits (above) that aimed to capture “types” of people in Singapore. These photographs, used as visiting cards or souvenirs, offer a view of Singapore’s diversity through an European lens. Sachtler’s firm also published “Views and Types of Singapore,” an early photo album.



This diorama vividly portrays a “coolie keng” from 1900s Chinatown, revealing the harsh living conditions of early laborers. These densely packed rooms featured multi-tiered wooden bunks. Each cubicle rented for \$1.50 to \$4.50 monthly, often shared by workers on alternating shifts. The scene captures coolies at rest, eating, or consuming opium. While opium provided temporary escape from their physical and mental suffering, its addictive nature frequently led to them losing their jobs and homes.

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EPISODE THREE
**TRAVERSING
THE CITY**

Early migrants who were willing to operate labour-intensive forms of transport helped to the 19th-century town convenient to get around. Gharries (horse-drawn carriages) and rickshaws were the primary modes of land transport at the time. Rickshaws were the most affordable and easily available choice for many commuters, and were hired by businessmen and hawkers to transport goods. Trams were introduced in the late 19th century and public buses only in the early 20th century.

These various options contributed to an increasingly connected and robust local transport system, supporting business and commercial activities as well as facilitating day-to-day commutes as the city developed and expanded.

This mid-20th century fabric bus driver's uniform and a 1930-1945 metal bus driver's badge (above) are from the Singapore Traction Company (STC).

Historically, Singapore's earliest buses were small, unlicensed seven-seater "mosquito buses," mostly operated by Fujian immigrants. The British-owned Singapore Traction Company, established in 1925, came to dominate city centre trolley and motor bus operations before World War II, pushing mosquito buses to the outskirts. However, the STC suffered heavy losses during the Japanese Occupation and struggled by the 1960s. It eventually closed in 1971, with other companies taking over its fleet.

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This early to mid-20th century fabric police constable's uniform (above) exemplifies officer attire in Singapore at the time. Until the 1960s, patrolling constables wore khaki uniforms featuring shorts, a practical adaptation for the tropical climate. The elite Sikh Contingent, established in the 1880s, enforced strict physical standards for its recruits, requiring a minimum height of 175 centimetres and a chest measurement of at least 96.5 centimetres, reflecting the demanding nature of their duties.

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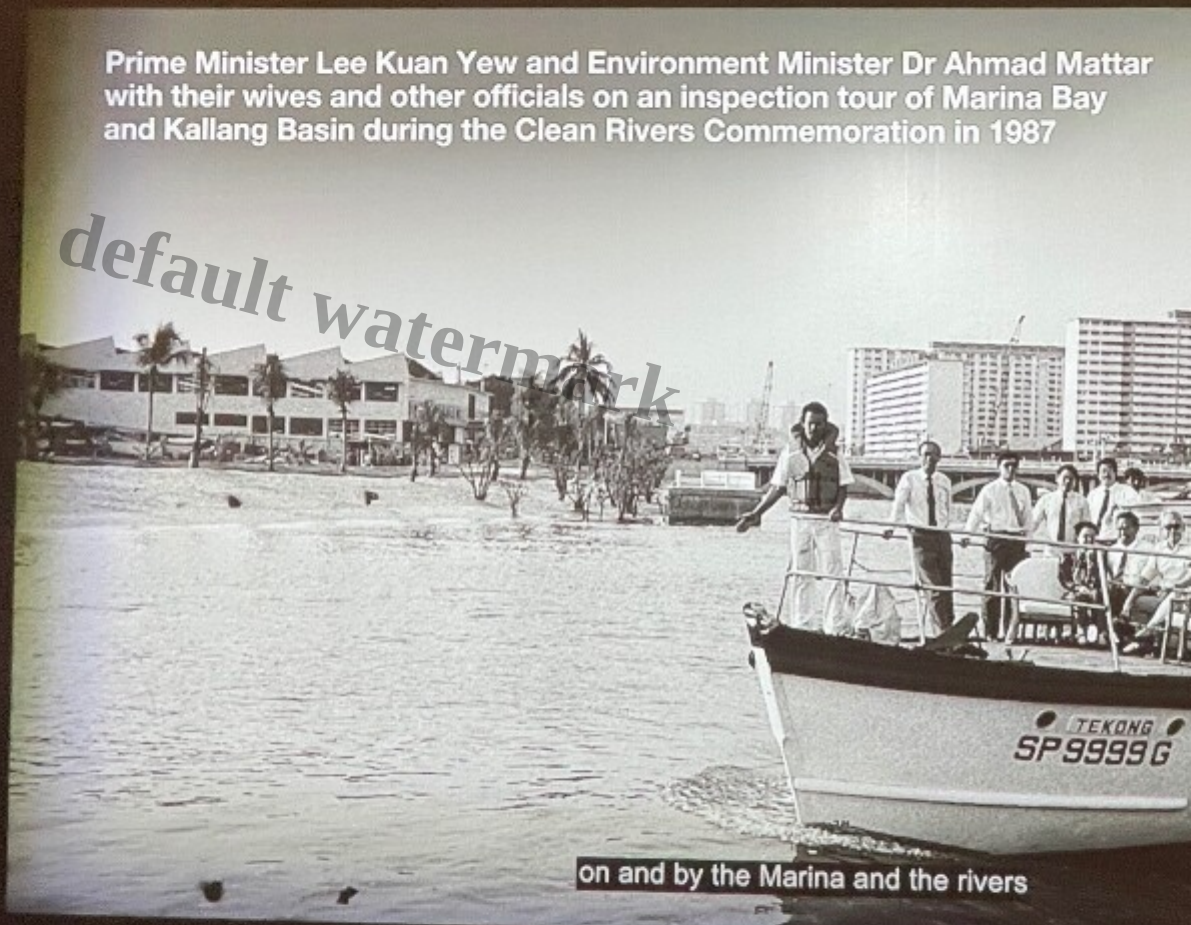
This mid-20th century cotton and silk samfoo (above) belonged to Majie Leong Kun Toh. Most female domestic workers (amahs and majies) in early to mid-20th century Singapore were from Guangdong, China. Back then, poverty is widespread with a declining silk industry. They were recognisable by their simple black-and-white samfoos. More on Majie Leong's story is available near her displayed comb and hair clip. (Gift of Dr Mark Lu)

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No Jobstreet or Skillsfuture then, no problem

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In 1987, Singapore's Clean Rivers Commemoration celebrated a decade-long effort to clean its polluted Singapore River and Kallang Basin. Previously, waste from industries, hawkers, and squatters choked these rivers, turning them into open sewers posing health risks. The government initiated the ambitious clean-up in 1977, resettling people, diverting waste, and dredging the polluted rivers. More than cleaner water, this 1987 event symbolised national triumph, environmental commitment, and improved quality of life for Singaporeans. It marked a visible turning point in how Singapore viewed and managed its urban environment.

Chapter Five: Making Waves

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CHAPTER FIVE

Making Waves

Throughout its history, Singapore has consistently punched above its weight as a tiny island. As the exhibition has shown up to this point, this sterling track record is attributable to how it has been historically connected to a wider world, with the Singapore River as its central artery of trade, commerce and culture. Singapore has also consistently sought to expand its physical horizons despite its small size, and in its openness, welcomed flows of people who have built Singapore and made it what it is today.

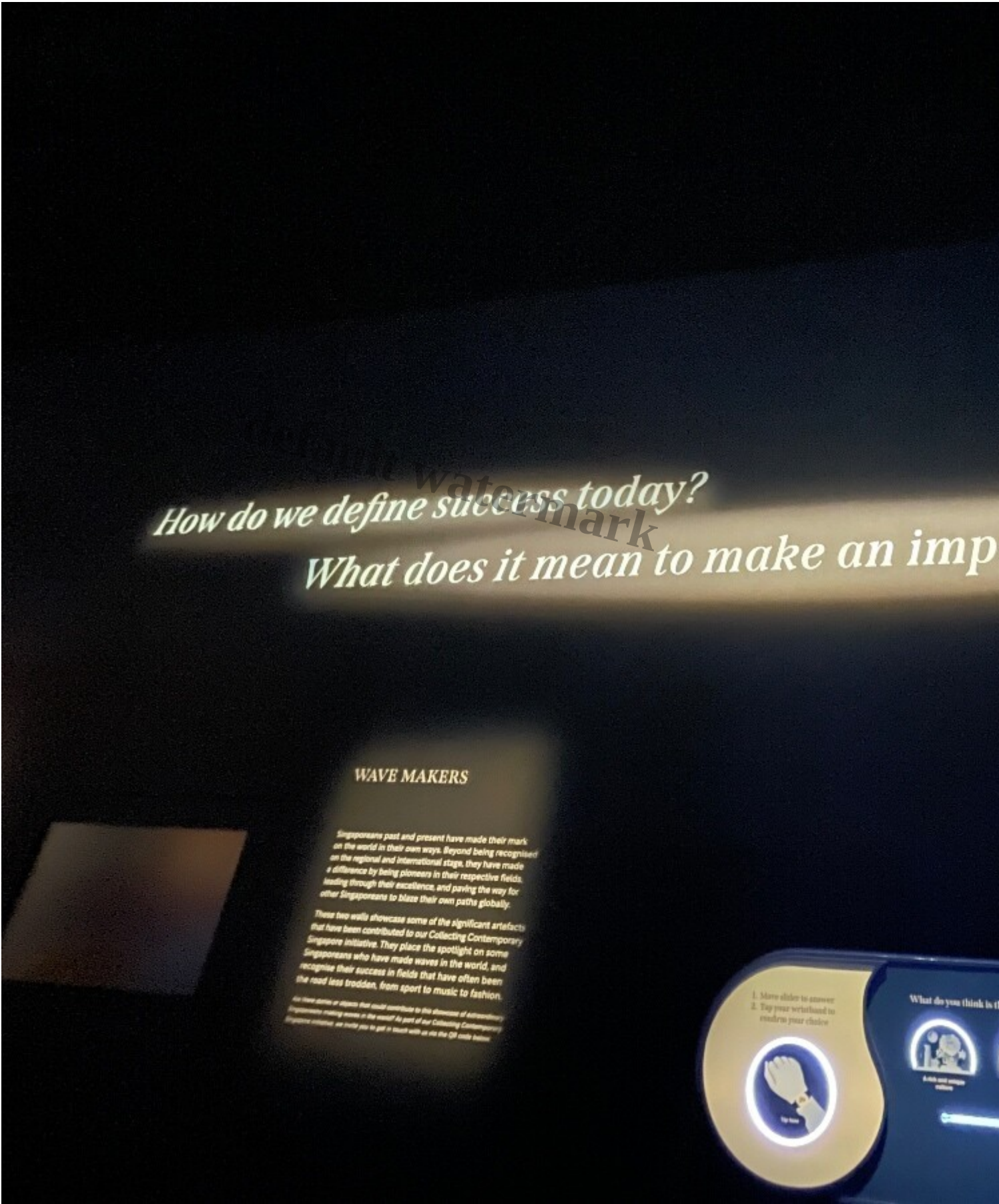
Yet, the Singapore story is one that is characterised by its post-independence growth and development. In this final section, we explore how Singapore as a global city-state, with Singaporeans as cosmopolitan citizens, has impacted the world, making waves regionally and internationally.

This concluding chapter, titled “Making Waves,” celebrates Singaporeans and local entities that have achieved significant global recognition. It highlights their impactful contributions across diverse fields like diplomacy, humanitarian endeavors, and technological innovation. The section also showcases Singapore’s role in developing key international hubs since its independence in 1965.

The exhibition shares inspiring stories of these trailblazers who have profoundly shaped Singapore’s global identity. It proudly spotlights unique local expressions that have gained worldwide acceptance, such as the inclusion of “Singlish” in the esteemed Oxford Dictionary. Furthermore, the chapter recognises local cuisine for its widespread international acclaim, reflecting Singapore’s rich culinary heritage. Visitors can also engage with an interactive quiz to test their knowledge of Singlish phrases and their meanings.

Singapore’s Global Achievements: Scaling Heights

This 1998 rayon Singapore flag (above right) holds significant historical value, as it was proudly planted atop Mount Everest. The flag was placed there by Singaporean climbers Edwin Siew and Khoo Swee Chiow, signifying their monumental achievement. Their successful ascent marked the first time a Singaporean team conquered the world’s tallest mountain, reaching the 8,848-meter summit. This momentous event, occurring at 8:30 am Singapore time, powerfully showcased Singapore’s ambitious determination to scale global heights.



Singapore’s Global Achievements: Humanitarian Efforts

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EPISODE TWO

HEART WORK

In times of global health crises and natural disasters, Singapore has made an impact locally and internationally in caring for those affected, including through humanitarian efforts.

In 12 June 2018, Singapore hosted the historic meeting between American president Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Both leaders vowed to establish new relations between Washington and Pyongyang. Singapore was chosen as the venue because of its security management and high-level international relations.

- 1 Courage Star
2003 | Silver
2004-00487
Gift of National Healthcare Group

A total of 1,715 of these "Courage Star" silver medals were presented in 2003 to recipients of the Courage Award (now known as the Healthcare Humanity Awards) – healthcare workers in Singapore who had tended directly to severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) patients, a majority of whom were from Tan Tock Seng Hospital. Through their brave frontline efforts, these healthcare workers helped with the local and, in turn, global control of the SARS epidemic.

- 2 Vial previously containing the Pfizer-BioTech COVID-19 vaccine, administered to (left) the first Singaporean recipient on 30 December 2020, and (right) then Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong on 29 January 2021
Glass, metal, paper
2021-00715, 2021-00776
Gift of Ministry of Health

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, the first vaccine to be approved in Singapore was that by Pfizer-BioTech. The first dose administered to a Singaporean was on 30 December 2020. During the same period, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong actively lent a hand to his fellow citizens by queuing for a vaccine. He was the first to be vaccinated, what he termed "leading by example".

Dr. Ang Seng Bin wore this particular 2004 armband (above), featuring the Singapore flag (41cm x 21cm), during a critical humanitarian mission. He participated in Operation Flying Eagle, a major relief effort following the devastating tsunami. Dr. Ang, a family physician at KK Women's and Children's Hospital, was holidaying in Penang when the December 26, 2004 tsunami struck nearby. Deeply moved by the crisis, he immediately volunteered his medical expertise with Mercy Relief. He was then deployed to Banda Aceh as part of a medical team. The team diligently treated over 300 patients daily within a makeshift classroom. (Gift of Dr. Ang Seng Bin.)

Singapore's Global Achievements: Innovation in Crisis

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The Infrared Fever Screening System (IFSS)(above) was a groundbreaking invention from 2003, developed by Singapore's Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA). This innovative system was specifically designed to combat the urgent SARS crisis by enabling rapid, mass fever detection. It was quickly co-developed with ST Electronics, utilising a military-grade camera, and a functional prototype was remarkably ready within just 36 hours. The IFSS was swiftly deployed at

Changi Airport within a week, significantly reducing the manpower needed for temperature checks. This efficiency greatly accelerated the isolation of potential SARS cases, helping to contain the outbreak. This world-first system garnered international recognition, notably by Time Magazine as a top invention of 2003. Its success paved the way for the widespread mass screening technologies we see today. This artifact is on loan from DSTA.

Singapore's Global Achievements: Sporting Triumphs

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These autographed Nike Air Zoom Maxfly shoes (above), crafted in 2023 from synthetic materials, foam, carbon fiber, and rubber, were a generous gift from Singaporean athlete Shanti Pereira. Wearing this exact pair, Pereira achieved an historic victory in the women’s 200-meter final. This momentous win occurred at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou on October 2, 2023, securing Singapore’s first athletics gold medal since 1974. This remarkable accomplishment followed just five weeks after she made history as the first Singaporean to reach the semi-finals of the Athletics World Championships.

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These autographed Mizuno GX Sonic III swimming shorts (above), made of nylon and Lycra in 2016, were famously worn by Joseph Schooling. He wore them when he became Singapore's first-ever Olympic gold medallist. Competing in the men's 100-meter butterfly final at the Rio de Janeiro Summer Olympics on August 12, 2016, Schooling achieved a truly historic victory. His winning time of 50.39 seconds not only secured gold but also established new national, Asian, and Olympic records. (Gift of Joseph Schooling)

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Terry Hee and **Jessica Tan** wore these 2022 synthetic Li Ning jerseys during their triumphant Commonwealth Games performance. They became the first Singaporeans to secure a gold medal in badminton mixed doubles. In Birmingham on August 8, 2022, the husband-and-wife team celebrated a hard-fought victory. They triumphed over England's Marcus Ellis and Lauren Smith in the final, following a crucial win against Malaysia's top seeds, Tan Kian Meng and Lai Pei Jing, in the semi-finals. (Gift of Terry Hee and Jessica Tan)

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This impressive gold medal, crafted from metal and nylon, was won by Remy Ong. He earned it at the 2006 WTBA World Tenpin Bowling Championships in Busan, where he also secured the prestigious all-events title. Since this significant 2006 victory, Ong has consistently held the record for the men's singles six-game series at these championships. As a leading Singaporean bowler, he also notably captained the men's team at the 2002 Asian Games in Busan. In that competition, he impressively won three gold medals across the singles, trios, and masters categories. (Gift of Remy Ong)

Singapore's Global Achievements: Cultural Impact

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The 1997 Cannes Film Festival screening of Eric Khoo's *12 Storeys* marked a pivotal moment for Singaporean cinema. It was the first time a film from Singapore achieved this prestigious international recognition. Khoo's groundbreaking work significantly invigorated the local independent film scene, especially from the 1990s onward. His success created a vital pathway for future generations of filmmakers to achieve similar international acclaim. This led to subsequent successes like Boo Junfeng's *Sandcastle*, which premiered at Critics' Week at Cannes in 2010. Furthermore, it paved the way for Anthony Chen's *Ilo Ilo*, which earned Singapore its first Caméra d'Or at Cannes in 2013, solidifying Singapore's presence in global cinema.

Once again, the team at National Museum of Singapore has made this a not to be missed event this June holidays. You can spend easily 2-3 hours to truly appreciate the work put into this production. Thanks to Daniel and his team!

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Daniel Tham (left), Principal Curator (Pre-colonial and Colonial Singapore) at the National Museum of Singapore, was appointed Assistant Curator in 2010. In 2011, he curated the new Goh Seng Choo Gallery, featuring the William J. G. S. Natural History Drawings.

Date Created

23/05/2025

Author

willietan

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