



PRESS RELEASE

Embargoed till 3pm, Friday, 9 April 2010

SINGAPORE'S HERITAGE AND MUSEUMS GO VIRTUAL WITH A PACKAGE OF ONLINE INITIATIVES

SINGAPORE (9 April 2010) – Singaporeans can view treasures housed at our national museums in specially created three-dimensional (3D) virtual galleries, tour past exhibitions, be enchanted by 14th Century Singapore, and surf the web during their visit to the museums. With a slew of online initiatives announced today, NHB hopes to engage the younger net-savvy generation, increase awareness of heritage and inculcate a greater museum-going culture amongst the public.

Exhibitions Online

2 To reach a wider audience locally and internationally as well as to lengthen the display period of its shows, NHB plans to digitise and archive past exhibitions at the museums. Kicking off the initiative is the virtual tour for last year's well-received *Land of the Morning: The Philippines and its People* exhibition at the Asian Civilisations Museum. NHB is also currently working on digitising *Thrice Upon A Time: A Century of Story in the Art of the Philippines* exhibition held at the Singapore Art Museum which will be launched very soon. These virtual archives will allow the public to view these past exhibitions in the comfort of their homes from computer screens anywhere. They will also be able to learn about each individual artefact at the click of a mouse.

SGCool

3 Launched in 2007, NHB's Singapore Collections Online (SGCool), an online repository of artefacts and artworks from the board's collection, will see a six-fold increase of items by the end of April 2010. A total of 38,000 artefacts and artworks will be available online for public viewing. The public can view artefacts, artworks and iconic pieces from the national collection and even items which are currently not on display at the museums.

Museums are now Wi-Fi enabled

4 Beginning April 2010, all NHB museums are also Wi-Fi ready and visitors can enjoy surfing the Internet for free at our museums. Schools visiting the museums are also able to conduct their lessons and research online.

Cybermuseum

5 Developed to promote the use of interactive digital media in the heritage sector, *Cybermuseum* is positioned as a software tool which allows the public to experience virtual museum spaces. This industry-driven project is developed by Visual Factory Pte Ltd and supported by National Heritage Board and the Interactive Digital Media R&D Programme Office (IDMPO) which is hosted by Media Development Authority (MDA). *Cybermuseum* makes use of Visual Factory's proprietary 3D immersive engine, MagicStitch™, and is supported by digital media content such as animation, movies, audio and video clips, and other 3D data objects. This affords users, the likes of curators, museum designers and even students, an immersive experience of navigating through museums and browsing 3D digital artworks and artefacts on display.

6 Working with the NHB, Visual Factory has created virtual galleries showcasing iconic artefacts from six museums, Asian Civilisations Museum, Memories at Old Ford Factory, National Museum of Singapore, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore Philatelic Museum and Reflections at Bukit Chandu. Other institutions and organisations such as the Cape of Good Hope Art Gallery, Grassroots Heritage Centre, Nanyang Technological University Art & Heritage

Museum and National Community Leadership Institute, as well as other government agencies have also 'gone virtual'.

Museums R Us competition

7 Organised to promote *Cybermuseum* as an e-learning tool is the *Museums R Us* competition. Introduced in October 2009 to drive greater interest among the young in Singapore's museums and heritage, *Museums R Us* saw 22 teams of students from tertiary institutions creating thematic virtual galleries populated with 2D or 3D images. Besides learning to use the *Cybermuseum* tools, participants were also trained in curatorial practices by a NHB curator. The top four projects – *ECO3*, *19th & 20th Century Shophouses in Singapore*, *Uncovering Antiquity* and *Travelling through Time* – are available for viewing through the *Cybermuseum* platform.

Preview of World of Temasek

8 In the pipeline, Magma Studios, with support from NHB and IDMPO hosted by MDA is producing a virtual world/role playing experience re-creating 14th Century Singapore entitled *World of Temasek*. This project will bring alive Singapore's historically significant places such as Fort Canning, Singapore River and the Raffles landing site. This first-of-its-kind heritage virtual world will appeal to gamers and the internet savvy generation by taking features from the most popular online game worlds and implementing them in a non-fiction educational context. It will also allow teachers to plan and set customised 'quests' related to the curriculum for their students.

Industry Partnerships

9 Working with industry partners such as Visual Factory and Magma Studios who have the domain expertise, have enabled NHB to leverage on new technology to bring museums and heritage alive. These partnerships will spur the growth of our heritage eco-system and provide dynamic platforms to harness the creativity of the young and strengthen their affinity to Singapore's museums and heritage.

10 “NHB has constantly been at the forefront of new media and it is encouraging to note that the Board has leveraged these channels to its advantage. I commend the Board for involving the private and education sectors, as well as other government agencies and institutions in developing and promoting the use of platforms such as Cybermuseum and “World of Temasek”. The growth of this ecosystem has allowed us to move forward together to create innovative services and rich experiences,” says Mr Lui Tuck Yew, Acting Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts.

Please refer to the annexes attached for more information.

- The End -

About the National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) champions the development and promotion of a vibrant cultural and heritage sector in Singapore. It makes heritage enriching, relevant and accessible to all through staging innovative programmes and forging collaborative partnerships. NHB leverages on technology and refreshing new approaches to make heritage more dynamic, alive and exciting for different audiences. It also manages both national and public museums, the National Archives of Singapore, Heritage Conservation Centre and Preservation of Monuments Board.

For media queries, please contact:

Kimberly Shen

Manager (Corporate Communications)

National Heritage Board

Email: kimberly_shen@nhb.gov.sg

DID: 6332 3286

Mobile: 9728 8278

Lynn Xu

Manager (Corporate Communications)

National Heritage Board

Email: lynn_xu@nhb.gov.sg

DID: 6332 3623

Mobile: 9108 3691

NHB'S OVERALL E-ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

NHB has continuously strived to find new ways to engage Singaporeans to take greater interest in our local heritage and culture. Through various new media initiatives, NHB has been able to reach out to the younger, net-savvy generation and further encourage a museum-going culture.

Yesterday.sg

NHB's *Yesterday.sg* was designed to engage the online community and interest them in all things heritage-related and to give the common man a platform for sharing their thoughts of growing up in Singapore and their memories of days gone by to be shared with a younger generation. Since its launch in March 2006, Singapore's first museum blog, *yesterday.sg*, has done well and was even named fifth museum blog in the world in 2007.

In February 2009, *yesterday.sg* was re-launched as a comprehensive social media portal which promises better and more exciting content. Given the phenomenal success of online videos, NHB also started Heritage TV, a series of self-produced video clips showcasing the various faces, places and quirky bits of Singapore's culture and history. The site was ranked third top museum blog worldwide in the same year.

www.yesterday.sg

MyStory.sg

MyStory.sg is a one stop portal for public and schools to learn and share about all things heritage in Singapore. The portal, which also consists of *heritagetrails.sg*, *heritagefest.sg* and *heritagecalendar.sg*, is dynamic, content-rich, user friendly and encourages social media networking, sharing and interaction amongst users. Learn more about heritage landmarks and historical sites and organise your own trail at leisure. Write and share your heritage stories, photos and videos online, find out the latest educational happenings at our museums or discuss online about heritage subjects and join our occasional heritage competitions to win attractive cash prizes.

www.mystory.sg

Access to Archives (a2o)

To meet the increasing demand for on-line research and to remain relevant in the Knowledge Age, National Archives of Singapore (NAS) developed Access to Archives Online Singapore (a2o), a one-stop portal site on heritage information dating back to 17th century. a2o was launched in 2000. It allows users to seamlessly search information across NAS' various independent databases and view selected photographs, maps and plans, listen to oral history interview samplers and watch snippets of audio-visual recordings, round the clock. In addition, a2o also provides information on online and travelling exhibitions, how to access our archival collection as well as student programmes. NAS won the "E-Culture" category award in the 2004 Stockholm Challenge for the implementation of a2o.

www.a2o.com.sg

SGCool

Singapore Collections Online or *SGCOOL* is the first online repository of artefacts and artworks in Singapore which makes available highlights from National Heritage Board's collections to the public. Visitors from Singapore and the world can now view cultural treasures and historical artefacts from the comfort of their own homes.

SGCOOL's extensive collection of images spans centuries of cultural development. It provides an invaluable resource for researchers, art aficionados and enthusiasts alike. They include iconic pieces like leading artist Tan Swie Hian's *Humming Birds Racing*; a century-old, highly valued portrait of Sir Frank A. Swettenham by celebrated artist John Singer Sargent as well as the Kushana Buddha, one of only six such sculptures in the world.

www.sgcool.sg

NHB'S LATEST HERITAGE AND MUSEUM ONLINE INITIATIVES

Exhibitions Online

Yesteryear's history now comes face to face with today's technology, as the National Heritage Board (NHB) brings a fresh, digital take to museum tours. Through the creation of a cyber-archive of exhibitions, NHB has created an online space for all to visit, learn about and enjoy the vibrant richness our world's heritage has to offer. A perfect fit of the old and the new, the tours serve as an ideal way to "preserve" the NHB's various exhibitions, archiving them digitally for posterity while at the same time bringing them much closer to the public.

All this is made possible through state-of-the-art 360-degree rotating panoramic photography, which captures vivid images from running exhibitions and showcases them on the current museum websites. Visitors to the individual websites would then be virtually placed right in the middle of the exhibition, where they will be able to freely explore its various sections. Within each, visitors are able to click on some of the artefacts/ artworks exhibited to get a closer view and learn more about the provenance behind each piece.

The public may view the *Land of the Morning: The Philippines and its People* exhibition at the Asian Civilisations Museum here:

<http://www.nhb.gov.sg/eo/acm/lotm/>

Wi-Fi readiness at our museums

Working with local wireless infrastructure provider iCELL Network, all NHB museums are now Wi-Fi enabled and visitors may enjoy surfing the internet for free during their visit.

Availability of Wi-Fi at NHB museums and facilities from 1 April 2010:

- Asian Civilisations Museum
- Memories at Old Ford Factory
- National Archives (Reference Room)
- National Museum of Singapore
- Peranakan Museum
- Reflections at Bukit Chandu
- Singapore Art Museum/8Q at SAM
- Singapore Philatelic Museum

World of Temasek

World of Temasek (WoT) is a virtual world/role-playing experience of distant 14th century Singapore. Produced by Magma Studios in partnership with the National Heritage Board (NHB), and drawing on the knowledge of the leading subject matter experts, WoT meticulously recreates the Singapore river with the Singapore Stone, the markets full of trade goods and the palace on the Forbidden Hill, all populated with warriors, nobles, monks and sea gypsies, and of course the foreign merchants that made Singapore their home 700 years ago, as they still do today.

As the development team strives for historical accuracy they are also making sure WoT is much more than just an academic 3D graphical reconstruction. WoT will be the first educational virtual world that thoroughly appeals to the online gaming generation by borrowing features from the most popular Massive Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) and repurposing them for an educational, constructivist learning context. Although the purpose of the world is to entertain and educate the general populace, WoT is also being developed with the pedagogical needs and tools required by Singapore's educational system.

About Magma Studios

Magma Studios combines the best of online games, rich media and social networks to create exciting and engaging educational games and virtual worlds for the emerging 3D web, as well as virtual reality installations for museums and other clients with an educational mission.

Our executives have conceptualized and produced internationally-distributed video games for the XBOX, Sony Playstation, Nintendo Wii and PC online, as well as award-winning television documentaries, animations and short films for the BBC, Discovery, Disney and others. This unique combination of experience allows us to develop highly entertaining effective educational interactive 3D content that is truly world-class.

Our design philosophy is that our interactive immersive experiences must excite a generation of youth raised on video games and animation and offer them a cognitive and compelling experience that goes beyond what traditional media and hands-on experiences can easily achieve. We collaborate closely with each our clients to realize a unique solution based on their aesthetic vision, technical parameters, audience, and educational goals.

Cybermuseum

Introduction

Developed in 2009 by Visual Factory Pte Ltd, *Cybermuseum* provides a "Lego-like" system which allows amateurs, curators and private collectors to create their own 3D virtual museums without the need for IT programming skills. These virtual museums can showcase digital media assets such as audio and video clips, descriptive metadata, as well as 2D and 3D digital artefacts. Users will also be able to navigate and interact with these digital artworks and artefacts.

Key features include:

- Templated virtual galleries, showcases and avatars
- Drag-and-drop 3D objects, change lightings and wall-papers
- Events triggering, search and location-based applications
- Game-like tools
- Social networking tools such as instant messaging, video, images, VoIP, text chat and video chat
- Admin module to manage your 3D collections and scripts

Cybermuseum is implemented and operated on a public-private-people integration (3PI) partnership model. The Media and Development Authority contributes to the R&D funding whilst the National Heritage Board (NHB) serves as the demand driver by supporting development and operating costs. Visual Factory Pte Ltd, a technology start-up, was identified as the *Cybermuseum* 3PI partner.

Benefits

- Allow museum designers, curators, private collectors and amateurs to create their own 3D virtual exhibitions without the need for IT programming skills
- A productivity and e-learning tool for various groups of individuals:
 - For amateurs and private collectors – showcase collections
 - For students – as an integrated e-learning tool marrying IDM technologies with knowledge of the arts and heritage
- A marketing tool for museums and commercial art galleries
- Support e-engagement with schools, communities and public end-users
- Promote the use of IDM/virtual world technology in museums and heritage institutions

Virtual Museums

The *Cybermuseum* team has completed development of a set of prototype galleries for NHB. This project pulls together curatorial support from across NHB to select iconic artefacts and propose gallery themes consistent with the museums' respective identities. In addition to 2D images, selected artefacts have been converted into 3D format.

The virtual galleries are intended to be an enticing introduction to the museums and will allow users to explore some of NHB's iconic collections. Besides NHB's virtual galleries, *Cybermuseum* has worked on other commercial art galleries, non-NHB museums as well as several government agencies.

The following virtual galleries are accessible on the *Cybermuseum* platform:

- **NHB Virtual Galleries**
 - Asian Civilisations Museum
 - National Archives of Singapore (Memories at Old Ford Factory & Reflections at Bukit Chandu)
 - National Museum of Singapore
 - Singapore Art Museum
 - Singapore Philatelic Museum

- **Culture, Recreation and Sports 3D.0 Virtual Galleries**
 - Museum Roundtable
 - National Arts Council
 - National Library Board
 - National Parks Board
 - People's Association
 - Singapore Sports Council
 - Singapore Tourism Board

- **Museums R Us Galleries**
 - Entries from Polytechnics and Arts Schools

- **Other Museums/Galleries**
 - Cape of Good Hope Art Gallery
 - Grassroots Heritage Centre
 - National Community Leadership Institute
 - NTU Art & Heritage Museum

For more information, please visit www.cybermuseum.sg

About Visual Factory Pte Ltd

Visual Factory is an interactive digital media (IDM) startup company founded in Singapore and started its operation in early 2008. Visual Factory has developed its own base technology - MagicStitch™, which is a complete 3D immersive social network platform. This new and innovative technology allows fast deployment of virtual communities in a complete 3D environment. It supports multi-platform, variety of data formats, location based services, interactions and payment services. Using MagicStitch™, the company is launching a suite of products and services to allow professionals and non-professionals to create launch and monetise virtual worlds.

The company's technologies and products aim to redefine 3D community immersive tools by setting the standards for 3D assets deployment, interoperability and delivering content that engages people anywhere, at any time. Visual Factory is positioned as an "enabler" and works with market leaders in the selected domains by bringing them to the next level as Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 players.

Museums R Us

Introduction

Organised to promote *Cybermuseum* as an e-learning tool is the *Museums R Us* competition. *Museums R Us* was introduced in October 2009 to drive greater interest among the young in Singapore's museums and heritage. *Museums R Us* saw 22 teams of students from tertiary institutions – five Polytechnics and two art schools – creating thematic virtual galleries populated with 2D or 3D images. 1000 images from NHB's vast collection were made available for their use. Besides learning to use the *Cybermuseum* tools, participants were also trained in curatorial practices by a NHB curator.

Of the 22, 10 teams were shortlisted. Three teams were then selected and the winner of the competition will be announced by Guest-of-Honour Mr Lui Tuck Yew, Acting Minister for the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts.

Looking ahead, Visual Factory will continue to explore further opportunities to engage schools. Up to 5,000 free images will be made available for students to create online exhibitions using the digital images and gallery templates provided. Schools can also choose to create their own customised “virtual school museums” at a special price of \$3,500 per school which covers both set-up and maintenance fees.

Museums R Us aims to spur innovative ideas in the application of *Cybermuseum* for virtual exhibition curation, as well as gather valuable feedback on the usability of key features.

Profiles of winning teams

Project Title	ECO 3 (1 st prize winner)
Theme	This gallery showcases green building technology.
Team Members	Ryan Ricardi Japsephine (Leader) Wayne Wu Tai En
Polytechnic / School	Department of 3D Design, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts
Supervisor	Jerry Soo

Project Title	19th & 20th Century Shophouses in Singapore (1 st runner-up)
Theme	This gallery focuses on the evolution of shophouses from colonial times to late 20 th century Singapore. It also allows the visitor to have an understanding of how the occupants lived and worked in these buildings.
Team Members	Justin Liw Wai Keong (Leader) Tan Eng Sing Amber Teo Khim Poh Chu Choon Hui Lee Sheng Min
Polytechnic / School	Temasek Design School, Temasek Polytechnic
Supervisor	Thomas Tow

Project Title	Uncovering Antiquity (2 nd runner-up)
Theme	This gallery showcases the olden times when Chinese immigrant settle in Singapore
Team Members	Willie Teo Wei Sheng (Leader) Aw Yee Ping Yang Yue
Polytechnic / School	Department of 3D Design, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts
Supervisor	Jerry Soo