

MALAY HERITAGE CENTRE MEDIA FACTSHEET

ABOUT THE MALAY HERITAGE CENTRE

Officially opened by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in June 2005, the Malay Heritage Centre (MHC) showcases the history, culture and contributions of the Malay community within the context of Singapore's history and multi-cultural society.

Re-opening on 1 September 2012, MHC's refurbished permanent galleries will be home to a collection of interesting artefacts that support its new focus on Kampong Gelam's history as a bustling port town integral to the development of the Malay community as well as Singapore's connections to the region.

Through its exhibits, programmes and activities, MHC aspires to be a vibrant destination of historical and cultural significance for both Singaporeans and international visitors. It also hopes to honour the past of the Malay community while providing a means for the community's present-day expression.

The Malay Heritage Centre is under the management of the National Heritage Board in partnership with the Malay Heritage Foundation.

Vision

To establish a sustainable destination of historical and cultural significance for visitors and the community

Mission

To develop the MHC, a heritage institution managed by the National Heritage Board (NHB), into a leading heritage institution and a focal point for the community

Key Objectives

1. To establish the MHC as a respected heritage institution through museum excellence;
2. To connect and collaborate with key stakeholders to promote Malay culture and community rootedness;
3. To conduct research to promote a deeper understanding of the MHC and its values;
4. To establish strategic partnerships with regional and international counterparts.

Background of the MHC

Situated within the Kampong Gelam precinct, MHC was officially opened by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in June 2005 and offered a series of programmes which showcased the Malay community's traditions and customs, performing and visual arts, cuisine, history, family and belief systems. The centre also hosted important dignitaries from the region like HRH Crown Princess of Brunei and the Indonesian First Lady.

In 2008, MICA announced that MHC would be repositioned alongside Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall and the proposed Indian Heritage Centre as platforms to showcase key aspects of the respective communities and to highlight the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities' links to their wider cultures.

The repositioning of the three Heritage Institutions was conducted under a co-funding framework between the Government and the three communities, established under three memorandums of understanding (MOU) signed with the National Heritage Board (NHB) in 2009. It entailed the appointment of NHB as the operator of the three institutions in order to raise the standards of these institutions to those of the national museums under the newly established Heritage Institutions Division.

In April 2011, MHC was officially closed for redevelopment and upgrading works. During the closure of MHC for redevelopment works, the MHC team continued to organise off-site programmes to generate public awareness about the centre and to connect and collaborate with our key stakeholders such as the Kampong Gelam stakeholders, Malay Muslim organisations, educators and students etc.

The official re-opening ceremony for MHC has been scheduled on 1 September 2012 and the ceremony will be followed by the launch of MHC's *Malay CultureFest*, which will showcase Malay arts and culture through programmes and performances held over the month of September 2012. To commemorate MHC's re-opening, free entry for the public will be offered throughout the month of September 2012.

New Focus of the MHC

The new MHC will feature updated permanent galleries that focus on Kampong Gelam as a port town and leverage on Kampong Gelam as a starting point to explore and highlight the Malay community's rich history, culture and heritage as well as Singapore's connections to the wider Malay region.

GALLERIES AND CONTENTS

MHC's Revamped Permanent Galleries

The new MHC will feature six permanent galleries spread over the two levels of the *istana*. The galleries will showcase a new storyline and artefacts from both Singapore's national collection as well as contributions from the community displayed for the first time.

The artefacts support MHC's new focus on Kampong Gelam's historical significance as a thriving port town prior to Raffles' arrival in 1819 and serve as evidence of an increasingly urban and cosmopolitan nature of Singapore Malay society. For more information on MHC's artefacts, please refer to the table below:

Total No. of Artefacts at the Revamped MHC: 337			
Total No. of Artefacts Displayed for the First Time:	No. of Artefacts from the National Collection:	No. of Artefacts from the MHC Collection:	No. of Artefacts on Loan:
289	32	234	71
(86% of artefacts)	(10%)	(69%)	(21%)

The first Istana Kampong Gelam was a traditional timber structure built on stilts, and in honour of the *istana*'s original layout, visitors will commence their tour of the permanent galleries from the upper level and end their visit on the ground level. In the traditional layout, the upper level is called the *panggung* which serves as the main living and sleeping quarters of the house, while the *kolong* at the ground level is typically used as storage, work or service areas, and even as a children's play area.

The permanent galleries are organised along two axes: *dagang* (trade) on the *panggung* (upper) level, and *budaya* (culture) on the lower level.

Please refer to **Annex A** for the floor plans of the revamped permanent galleries.

i. **Dagang (Trade) Theme on Panggung (Upper) Level**

Dagang is the Malay term for trade but it also means “travel”, a necessary consequence of trade. Both these activities have a long history in the Malay world, and in some Malay communities, have taken on cultural significance, where a boy’s coming of age is determined by his first journey away from his place of birth to seek his fortune.

Together, the galleries on the upper floor examine the maritime nature of the Malay world as encompassed by island Southeast Asia, the activities associated with trade and industry as and honours the Malay individuals and groups who left their hometowns, braving the seas and monsoons to build new lives in Singapore.

- **Gallery 1: *Anjung* (Arrival)**

Anjung, which refers to both the reception area of a Malay house as well as a boat’s bowsprit (implying a vantage point), will introduce Kampong Gelam as an important port town. This gallery will situate Kampong Gelam (and Singapore) as an important trading and cultural hub within the *Nusantara* (Malay Archipelago) even before the arrival of Raffles in 1819. It will also establish the maritime nature of the Malay world and highlight the connectivity between the many islands within the region, and between the region and the world.

- **Gallery 2: *Perintis* (Pioneers)**

- 2a. *Masyarakat* (Community)**

- 2b. *Budaya* (Culture)**

Perintis runs along the lengths of the two upper and lower corridors of the *istana*, and serves as a connecting spine between the two floors. This gallery traces the paths forged and the contributions made by local pioneers (i.e. individuals, groups, organisations and institutions). *Perintis* is divided into the upper section, *Masyarakat*, which features the community pioneers including Kampong Gelam pioneers, while the lower *Budaya* section features selected cultural and intellectual pioneers of the Malay community.

- **Gallery 3: *Kehidupan* (Living & Working)**

- 3a. *Tanah* (Land)**

- 3b. *Air* (Water)**

- 3c. *Bersembang di Warung Kopi* (Coffeeshop Talk)**

Kehidupan (Living & Working) comprises three sub-galleries. Two of the sub-galleries focus on the concept of *tanah air* (“homeland” in Malay) with one sub-gallery highlighting various land-based activities and the other, showcasing sea-borne activities. The two sub-galleries casts Kampong Gelam back in its heyday as a thriving entrepôt and vibrant social centre with the *haj* or pilgrimage brokerage businesses as a key industry. The third sub-gallery

provides an immersive multimedia experience reminiscent of a *warung kopi* (coffee shop). Within this gallery, visitors are able to “tune in” to discussions on various historical events important to the Malay community.

ii. **Budaya (Culture) Theme on Kolong (lower) Level**

The word *budaya* is actually a combination of two important elements, *budi* (knowledge and sense) and *daya* (initiative and effort). The galleries on the lower level showcase the intellectual, artistic, literary and musical traditions and contributions (or efforts) of the Malay community.

- **Gallery 4: *Pustaka* (Language, Literature & Publishing)**

Pustaka focuses on the development of the Malay language, Malay literature as well as publishing industry, and showcases the prolific output of the printing business in Kampong Gelam. This gallery examines the role and influence of Kampong Gelam’s printing presses in the production and dissemination of knowledge and critical discourse from the mid-19th century until the latter half of the 20th century.

- **Gallery 5: *Kesenian* (The Arts)**

- 5a. *Bangsawan & Film* (Bangsawan Theatre & Film)**

- 5b. *Muzik* (Music)**

Kesenian comprises two sub-galleries which highlight Singapore as a pre-eminent regional artistic node by showcasing the Malay community’s contributions to music, *bangsawan* (Malay opera) and films. The sub-galleries also explore the notion of popular entertainment for the Malay community and, through the use of artefacts, film snippets and interactive stations, provide insights into Malay society up till the 1960s.

- **Gallery 6: *Finale***

The *Finale* gallery features video-based commissions by three contemporary filmmakers: Ghazi Alqudrcy, Abdul Nizam bin Abdul Hamid and Isazaly bin Mohamed Isa. The commissions are created in response to the galleries and serve as the filmmakers’ attempts to connect the past to the present through interpretations of Malay identity and cultural heritage.

Other Revamped Facilities

- **Façade, Surroundings and New Visitor Services centre**

The compound wall along Kandahar Street has been removed to increase the visibility of the revamped MHC and its garden compound from Kandahar Street and Muscat Street. In addition, a dedicated visitor services centre has been created to serve as a ticketing counter and information point.

- **Learning Garden**

The new MHC will feature a learning garden showcasing the herbs and spices used in Malay cooking, medicine and culture. The garden will function as a learning space for students and visitors, and serve as a “living” extension of the permanent galleries.

- **Auditorium**

The existing auditorium of the MHC has been transformed into a flexible performance space. The new space will be used by MHC for a variety of purposes including film screenings, plays, dance performances, seminars and workshops.

- **Multimedia Displays**

MHC’s permanent galleries will feature multimedia displays which will provide a more immersive experience for visitors to the centre.

- **Two Temporary Exhibition Galleries**

The two exhibition galleries will play host to travelling exhibitions and will enable MHC to curate and/or showcase other exhibitions that will complement the permanent galleries. The two galleries will also provide the venues for future exhibition collaborations between MHC and its regional counterparts.

MHC’s first temporary exhibition will focus on Malay songs from the 1950s to the 1980s and the details are as attached below:


Special Exhibition



Title: Lagu-Lagu Kita



Duration: 1 September 2012 to 30 September 2012

Venue: Temporary exhibition space, level 1, MHC

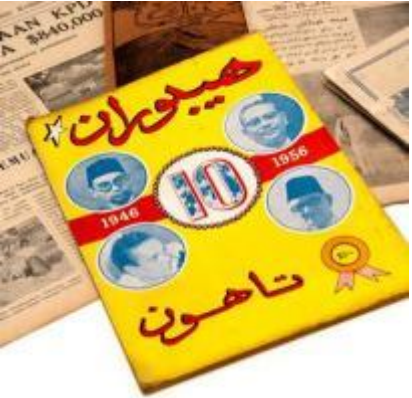

10 STAR ARTEFACTS OF MHC


Artefact and Image	Gallery	Significance	Credit Line / Source
<p data-bbox="165 373 730 440">Archaeologically recovered Mark III rifle c.1942 – 1945</p> 	<p data-bbox="795 373 958 440">PERINTIS (Pioneers)</p> <p data-bbox="795 485 981 587"><i>Masyarakat (Community)</i> section</p>	<p data-bbox="1081 373 1881 587">Three rifles used by the Malay Regiment were unearthed at the rear entrance of Istana Kampong Gelam on 2 August 2003. The rifles were probably short-magazine Lee-Enfield Mk III models with sword bayonets manufactured by James Paris Lee at the Royal Small Arms Factory in Enfield, England.</p> <p data-bbox="1081 632 1881 772">This particular model was the main firearm used by the military forces of the British Empire and Commonwealth up till 1957. They were also the firearm supplied to the Malay Regiment (<i>Askar Melayu</i>).</p> <p data-bbox="1081 817 1881 957">Formed in 1933 at Port Dickson, Malaya, the regiment was renowned for its bravery and loyalty in the Battle of Pasir Panjang during the Japanese occupation of Singapore in 1942.</p> <p data-bbox="1081 1002 1881 1104">Istana Kampong Gelam served as shelter for some of the surviving Malay Regiment soldiers and their families during and after the war.</p>	<p data-bbox="1906 373 2051 513">Malay Heritage Centre Collection</p>

Artefact and Image	Gallery	Significance	Credit Line / Source
<p><u>Archaeologically recovered coins issued by different authorities</u> c. 1700s – 1900s</p> 	<p>KEHIDUPAN (Living & Working)</p> <p><i>Air (Water)</i> section</p>	<p>These are coins recovered from the archaeological digs which took place at four different locations around the MHC compound between 2000 to 2003.</p> <p>The coins include examples of currency from the Straits Settlements, Dutch East Indies, Chinese-stamped coins and a Malay coin of <i>satu keping</i> (i.e. “one piece”) denomination.</p> <p>The origins of these coins ranged from the first decade of the 18th century to 20th century, and the variety and dating of the coins point to the vibrant trading activity that could have taken place in Kampong Gelam.</p>	<p>Malay Heritage Centre Collection and On loan from Professor John N Miksic (NUS)</p>
<p><u>Other archaeological finds (ceramic fragments and shards)</u> c. 1700s – 1900s</p> 	<p>KEHIDUPAN (Living & Working)</p> <p><i>Tanah (Land)</i> section</p>	<p>These are shards unearthed from the archaeological excavations at Istana Kampong Gelam, and they originated from various countries such as England, Netherlands, Scotland and even Germany.</p> <p>Some of the shards bore two stamps, for example of the European manufacturer and the <i>pegon</i> script of the Javanese family/household who may have ordered/commissioned the fine china. Such details reveal the cosmopolitan and urbanite character of the Malays and others in the Nusantara (i.e. the Indo-Malay archipelago) who have had a long history of trading with regional and international partners.</p>	<p>On loan from Professor John N Miksic (NUS)</p>

Artefact and Image	Gallery	Significance	Credit Line / Source
<p><u>Serving plate</u> Early 20th century.</p> 	<p>KEHIDUPAN (Living & Working)</p> <p><i>Tanah (Land)</i> section</p>	<p>This plate bears the stamp of “Tengku Mahmud bin S. Aley” which refers to Tengku Mahmud, the younger son of Sultan Ali. Sultan Ali was the son of Sultan Hussain Shah, the Sultan of Singapore.</p> <p>The building adjacent to the <i>istana</i> currently known as Gedung Kuning was built for Tengku Mahmud around 1840s as a <i>Rumah Bendahara</i> (Chief Minister’s house). His elder brother, Tengku Alam Shah (1846-1891), headed the Istana Kampong Gelam while both of them were originally heirs to the Sultanate of Johor although subsequent historical events resulted in the <i>temenggung</i> (vizier) line taking over and founding the modern Johor Sultanate.</p>	<p>Malay Heritage Centre Collection</p>
<p><u>Gerengseng (cooking pot)</u> 20th century</p> 	<p>KEHIDUPAN (Living & Working)</p> <p><i>Tanah (Land)</i> section</p>	<p>The <i>gerengseng</i> is a type of traditional crockery which would have been used in the kitchens of urban Malay households around the 19th and 20th century.</p> <p>Fashioned out of brass and cast iron, the cooking pot would have been manufactured or sold in the Kampong Gelam area (such as at the smaller quarter of Kampong Tembaga) which used to be at the lower end of today’s Bussorah Street.</p>	<p>Malay Heritage Centre Collection</p>

Artefact and Image	Gallery	Significance	Credit Line / Source
<p><u>Songkok with hatbox from H. M. Ali Department Store</u> c. 1950s – 1960s.</p> 	<p>KEHIDUPAN (Living & Working)</p> <p><i>Tanah (Land)</i> section</p>	<p>H. M. Ali Department Store was located along 124 Arab Street with a second branch along the same street, and another store along 974 Geylang Road.</p> <p>The store contributed to the urbanscape of Kampong Gelam as a trading and shopping centre for Malays in Singapore. It also provided essential sundry items from Singapore such as leather sandals, money belts and the velvet covered headgear, <i>songkok</i>, worn by Muslim Malay men.</p> <p>The store imported goods from neighbouring countries as well to meet the demand of the increasingly affluent Malay community in Singapore.</p>	<p>Singapore's National Collection</p>
<p><u>Utusan Melayu 10 Tahun</u> 1936 – 1946</p> 	<p>PUSTAKA (Language, Literature & Publishing)</p>	<p><i>Utusan Melayu</i> was the first Malay newspaper to be owned, financed and staffed entirely by ethnic Malays. In this commemorative edition, Yusof Ishak, in his early career as a journalist, recounts the formative days of the newspaper where he had to travel all around Singapore to sell shares to start up <i>Utusan Melayu</i> as a wholly Malay-owned enterprise.</p> <p>The edition also highlights the hardships faced by the staff in the daily operations of the newspaper which included risking their lives as bombs were dropped along their newspaper route during the Japanese occupation where they operated under a different name, <i>Berita Malai</i>.</p>	<p>Malay Heritage Centre Collection</p>

Artefact and Image	Gallery	Significance	Credit Line / Source
<p><u>Hiboran 10 Tahun</u> 1946 – 1956</p> 	<p>PUSTAKA (Language, Literature & Publishing)</p>	<p>A commemorative publication of a seminal magazine published by Royal Press which combined both current affairs articles with coverage on films and other forms of entertainment.</p> <p>The feature article in this issue was written by the late Za'ba who detailed the changing nature of writing the Malay language in <i>Jawi</i> to Romanised script.</p>	<p>Malay Heritage Centre Collection</p>
<p><u>Portrait bust of Zubir Said</u> Artist: Chua Mia Tee Year: 1960</p> 	<p>KESENIAN (The Arts)</p> <p><i>Muzik (Music)</i> section</p>	<p>The bust was sculpted by Chua Mia Tee, one of Singapore's pioneer artists who has painted portraits of other prominent individuals like the late Yusof Ishak. He is also known for his realist approach to art and captured significant moments in Singapore history.</p> <p>The portrait bust of Zubir Said was Chua's first effort in this form and reaffirms the national importance of Zubir Said. On the bust, it is inscribed "Sdr. Zubir Said" which includes the respectful salutation of <i>saudara</i> (comrade/brother) typical during the period when the Malay language was championed as the national language.</p>	<p>On loan from the family of Zubir Said</p>

Artefact and Image	Gallery	Significance	Credit Line / Source
<p><u><i>Pertunjukan Lagu-lagu Nasional</i></u> Concert Booklet 1957</p> 	<p>KESENIAN (The Arts)</p> <p><i>Muzik (Music)</i> section</p>	<p>This programme booklet accompanied a concert held at Victoria Concert Hall which featured compositions by Zubir Said and others. The booklet contains the scores and lyrics of songs written for the Singapore community-at-large at a crucial moment in the country's history.</p> <p>The songs were of a nationalist fervour and reflected a time when the hearts and minds of the local population were attuned to the struggles for independence which gripped Southeast Asia after the Second World War.</p>	<p>On loan from the family of Zubir Said</p>

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MHC'S PROGRAMMES

Despite its temporary closure since April 2011, MHC continued to develop and introduce exciting new programmes that complement the contents of the centre's new permanent galleries, as well as showcase Malay heritage and culture, and the history of the Kampong Gelam precinct.

They include offsite programmes that leverage on the heritage and cultural excitement of Kampong Gelam, such as the popular *Neighbourhood Sketches* featuring Malay arts and cultural performances along the streets of Kampong Gelam, 'Lap-Lip – a display of light installations and artistic reflections of the Hari Raya decorations around the precinct, and a heritage hunt for children that involves the Kampong Gelam stakeholders.

These new programmes were developed based on inputs from MHC's focus group sessions through which the MHC team sought public and stakeholders feedback for the centre's programming directions and content. MHC will also continue to collaborate with its stakeholders and the community to co-develop new programmes where possible.

Up and Coming Programmes

MHC will continue to extend its programmes beyond the confines of the centre as part of its community outreach efforts. For instance, the centre will add vibrancy to the streets of Kampong Gelam with its second edition of *Neighbourhood Sketches*. These "sketches" will showcase traditional Malay art forms at various locations around the Kampong Gelam precinct from January to March 2013. The centre will also work with NHB to launch a new Kampong Gelam Heritage Trail to highlight the history of the precinct and its historical landmarks.

In addition, to commemorate the re-opening of MHC, the centre will launch its inaugural *Malay CultureFest* with programmes showcasing the best of local talents and cultural organisations. Held throughout September, MHC's *Malay CultureFest 2012* will feature performances, workshops, lectures and family-friendly activities for visitors to the centre.

For more information on *Malay CultureFest 2012*, please refer to MHC's programme booklet in the media kit.

MHC'S INAUGURAL MALAY CULTUREFEST

September Free Entry to Revamped Malay Heritage Centre, and Launch of Malay CultureFest 2012

Venue: Malay Heritage Centre (85 Sultan Gate, Singapore 198501)

Date: 2 to 30 September 2012 (Closed on Mondays from 10 September 2012)

Time: 10.00am to 6.00pm

Free admission in September, with free guided tour available on selected timings

Tel: +65 63910450

Website: www.malayheritage.org.sg

Email: NHB_MHC_Programmes@nhb.gov.sg

To commemorate its official re-opening this September, the Malay Heritage Centre (MHC) will be launching its inaugural *Malay CultureFest* with an array of activities for everyone! The month-long celebration in September will showcase a mix of traditional and contemporary programmes by local and overseas performers. In addition, visitors can also enjoy Malay folk stories and games, or take their pick from a variety of workshops, lectures, concerts and cultural performances.

In conjunction with the festival, MHC will also offer free entry for visitors to its revamped permanent galleries, which will feature a new storyline focusing on Kampong Gelam's history as a bustling port town and its significance to the Malay community.

For enquiries, please email NHB_MHC_Programmes@nhb.gov.sg

Selected Highlights of Malay CultureFest 2012

Production: *Rebab Berbisik* (Whisper of the strings)

Thursday to Saturday, 20 to 22 September 2012, 8pm to 10pm

\$30 (adult), \$25 (Student, Senior citizen, NSF)

Conducted in Malay with English subtitles

Workshop: *Rebab Berbisik* (Whisper of the strings)

Saturday, 22 September 2012, 3pm

\$20 per person

Limited to 20 participants

Conducted in Malay and English

Rebab Berbisik is the first theatre production to be presented at MHC's new auditorium and chronicles the trials and tribulations of Paksu Mat, an aging *makyung* practitioner. In this production, Paksu Mat grieves over the death of his wife (the celebrated Primadona Arwah Mek Ning); the state of the Makyung art form (an ancient dance-theatre of Kelantan); and the lack of successors in his two sons.

* There will be a post show discussion with the cast and artistic team after each performance. For enquiries on tickets, please email NHB_MHC_Programmes@nhb.gov.sg

Outdoor screening: Movie Nights with P. Ramlee

Friday, 7 September 2012, 8pm to 10pm (screening *Hang Tuah*)

Saturday, 8 September 2012, 8pm to 10pm (screening *Seniman Bujang Lapok*)

Admission to programme is free

MHC Lawn (Free sitting)

Have a picnic under the stars at our outdoor screenings of classic Malay films starring the unforgettable P. Ramlee. Bring your friends and family to witness the loyalty of the legendary Malay warrior, Hang Tuah, and enjoy the comedic treats of *Seniman Bujang Lapok*, which chronicles the trials and tomfooleries of three aspiring actors. For enquiries, please email NHB_MHC_Programmes@nhb.gov.sg

Performance: Bunga Tanjung (*cultural*)

Saturday, 15 September 2012, 8.30pm to 10pm

Admission to programme is free

Relive this exuberant Malay cabaret made popular between the 20s to the 60s. Playing ronggeng and asli tunes interspersed with cha-cha and rumba, these high-energy performances will have you off your feet!

Performance: Mat Bawah Kolong (*contemporary*)

Sundays, 9 and 16 September 2012, 8pm to 10pm

Admission to programme is free

Join us at the house installation, or *kolong*, built by the Malay Heritage Centre and relax to an intimate session of live unplugged music featuring local musicians.

Performance: Meniti Zaman (*contemporary*)

Friday, 28 September 2012, 8pm to 10pm

Admission to programme is free

A concert featuring two singers of different generations, Rahimah Rahim and Imran Ajmain, the audience will hear stories and challenges they face throughout their musical careers.

Performance: Afternoon with Gamelan (*cultural*)

Saturday, 15 September 2012, 2pm to 3pm

Admission to programme is free

Revel in the mystical serenade of the Gamelan (a traditional musical ensemble), and be enthralled by accompanying *silat* demonstration and *kuda kepang*, a horse dance that originated from Java.

Please refer to the programme booklet for the full listings of *Malay CultureFest 2012*.

DETAILS OF THE MHC

Malay Heritage Centre, Istana Kampong Gelam

Address: 85 Sultan Gate, Singapore 198501

Hotline: 63910450

Opening hours: 10am - 6pm, Tuesdays to Sundays, Closed on Mondays.

Admission Fee: \$4
Free admission for local¹ senior citizens 60 years old and above, local¹ students, full-time National Service men (NSFs), and children below 6 years old.

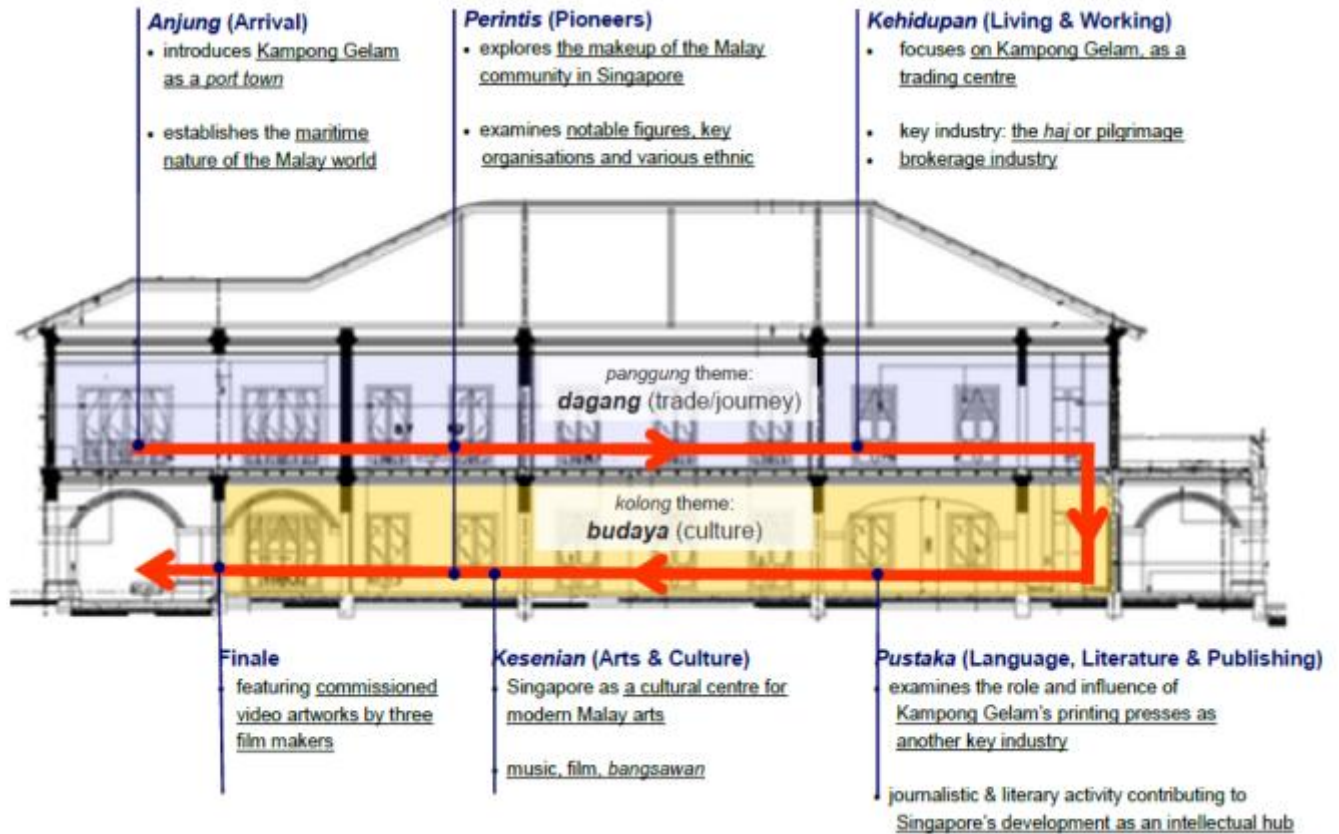
Website: www.malayheritage.org.sg

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¹ Local senior citizens and students refer to senior citizens and students who are Singaporeans and Permanent Residents.

Floor Plans of the Revamped Permanent Galleries

Profile view (to show route through galleries)

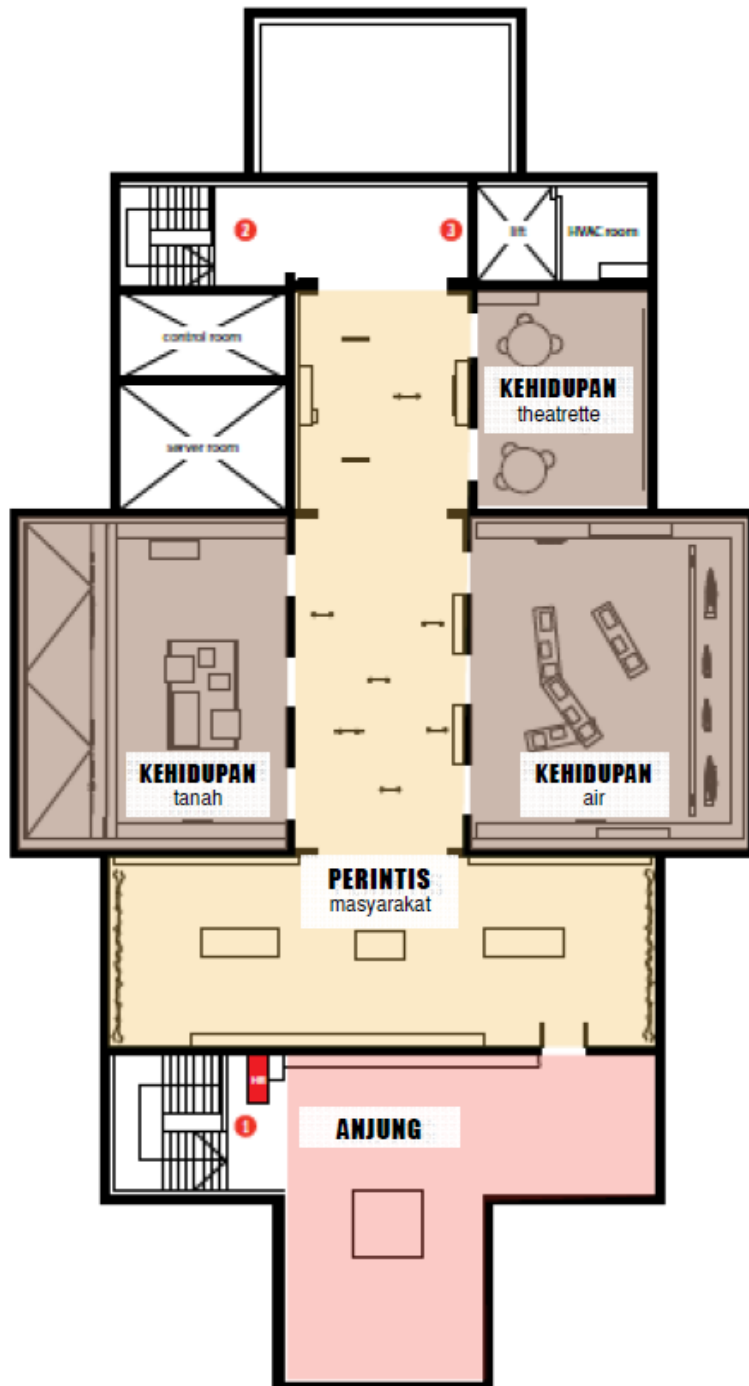


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Plan view

panggung (upper) level

theme: *dagang* (trade/journey)



apore

Plan view

kolong (lower) level
theme: *budaya* (culture)

