Heritage is something that is inherited, transmitted from the past, or handed down by tradition. One of its most visible forms is built heritage and this includes buildings, structures or sites from our past. This contributes to a better understanding of our history, gives cultural value to an area, helps to define a sense of place, and informs us about our identity and how our society has developed over time. Signs of ‘home’ should be everywhere, to remind us of who we are and the values we hold.

A collective inquiry into the making, gatekeeping and safekeeping of Singapore’s built heritage will help citizens understand the importance of a country’s built heritage in providing shared experiences and developing a national identity. This seminar will also highlight the different perspectives and opinions educators and students have of Singapore’s built heritage and heritage spaces.

The seminar is free but registration is required due to limited seating: [https://www.eventbrite.com/event/6629277347](https://www.eventbrite.com/event/6629277347)

Conveners
Ms Junaidah Jaffar, jun.jaffar@gmail.com
Mdm Karen Chan, karenchanoikhum@gmail.com
Dr Christina Loong, christina.loong@gmail.com

Programme

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**Abstracts**

**Panel 1: What is “home” to us?**

**Chow Huiru, Sinéad Tan Jia Na, Syahirah Bte Abdul Aleem, ‘Forgotten Places’**
Raffles Girls’ School (Secondary)

Huiru, Sinéad and Syahirah are Secondary 4 History students in Raffles Girls’ School (Secondary).

As Singapore’s identity transitions into that of an increasing modernised society, a majority of Singaporeans may be keen to sever ties with their roots and heritage, particularly those that are grim and unsavoury in nature, in favour of modern conveniences and features of foreign or global cultures.

Nevertheless, it is indisputable that these places played a vital role in shaping Singapore into the nation that she is today. Their project endeavours to investigate historical sites that possess cultural value to Singapore. The most prominent example occupying the darker side of Singapore’s past would be WWII and its horrors. They will be focusing on Forgotten Places of great cultural significance during the war, which have not fallen into disrepair and/or neglect due to public disinterest (e.g. Old Changi Hospital). Some of the questions they will be examining include:

- How do we define a Forgotten Place?
- What are the criteria which make a Forgotten Place worth preserving?
- What are some Forgotten Places in significant need of renovation/preservation?

**Lee Jun Jie, ‘Learning Journeys for our Heartlands’**
Fuchun Secondary School
Jun Jie is a Geography, History, Social Studies teacher in a government secondary school.

In our attempt to educate our students on the history of Singapore and instill national pride, Learning Journey has been conducted by many schools to popular heritage sites such as Kampong Glam, Little India and China town. It is however, a missed opportunity that many schools do not conduct Learning Journey in heartlands where they are located in. Using the example of Woodlands, Jun Jie wishes to present the rich history and numerous learning opportunities offered by our Heartlands as valuable heritage sites, with the hope that it will inspire and encourage educators to conduct similar Learning Journeys in other Heartlands.

Adrian Wang Xinting, Chan Zhi Wei Jeremy, ‘The Disappearing “mama shops”’
Raffles Institution (Secondary)

Adrian and Jeremy are Year 3 Students in Raffles Institution. Adrian is from the Raffles Academy class and Jeremy is from the Raffles Academy History class.

Their project is on the stark decrease in the number of “mama shops” in Singapore, with various interviews conducted with a variety of shopkeepers around Singapore. In this presentation, there will be extensive research regarding the history and the trends of “mama shops” since their very beginning.

Quek Jun Hui, Desiree Tan, Samantha B. S. M., ‘Playgrounds: The Heritage of the Heartlands’
Greendale Secondary School

Jun Hui, Desiree and Samantha are Secondary 3 Express students who are interested in historical inquiry and want to learn more about Singapore.

Our heartlands are rich with history and heritage. The older generation of Singaporeans have been known to treasure and protect the customs and heritage of Singapore. Jun Hui, Desiree and Samantha will be sharing about the majestic and historical playgrounds in Singapore. The younger generation of Singaporeans would say that a playground is a place where they would play catching and play on the slides. These modern playgrounds are nothing when compared to the majestic playgrounds which could be seen everywhere during the seventies to the nineties. Ranging from “dragon” playgrounds filled with sand to unique “dinosaur” playgrounds, “watermelon” playgrounds, “rabbit” and “pelican” playgrounds and many more. What happened to these playgrounds?

Sadly, many were demolished due to health and safety concerns. You might ask how this relates to the heartlands. Well, many of these unique playgrounds were located in the heartlands. “Dragon” playgrounds in Toa Payoh, “pelican” playgrounds in Dover, and “watermelon” playgrounds in Tampines. These playgrounds are our heritage because they contain so much history and memories. Over the years, these playgrounds have been visited by hundreds of Singaporeans. Many of whom spent their childhood creating memories and friendships at these spaces.

The team wants to explore these memories and the historical value these playgrounds hold. They will be using internet sources (blogs, websites etc), library books as well as records from government agencies. They want to know what value these playgrounds hold for Singaporeans and explore the possibility of preserving these places before they disappear from Singapore forever.
Panel 2: How do our youths see our home?

Syazwani Amrun, “‘No One Icon”: Secondary Students’ Judgments of Significant Representations of Singapore

Raffles Girls’ School (Secondary)

Syazwani Amrun is a History teacher at Raffles Girl’ School (Sec) with four years of experience. This presentation is based on her research assignment as part of the Masters module at the National Institute of Education, History Education: Teaching for Historical Understanding, conducted by Prof Keith C. Barton, Indiana University.

Her presentation is a sharing of the main findings derived from interviewing 14 Secondary Three students, on what they deem as things significant enough to represent Singapore as an icon. Students are tasked to choose 10 out of 30 cards of images that are typically said to represent Singapore. Images include personalities such as Former PM Lee Kuan Yew, Former President Yusof Ishak, Speaker of Parliament Mdm Halimah Yacob; historical landmarks such as Statue of Sir Stamford Raffles, Sultan Mosque; celebrities such as Taufik Batissah; and other aspects of Singapore such as multiracial society, meritocracy, hawker centres, shopping. Through their selection, students then explain reasons why their selections are icons of Singapore.

Faith Ng Shi-en, Gu Anxing, Josephine Sitorus, ‘How to make Singaporean cultural sites more appealing to younger generations,

Raffles Girls’ School (Secondary)

Faith, Anxing and Josephine are Year 4 History students in Raffles Girls’ School (Secondary).

Singaporean culture is losing its hold on the younger generations today. Youths are apathetic towards our cultural history and heritage. To remedy this, the students propose this project to increase the appeal of cultural sites in Singapore to attract youths to learn more about our heritage.

They would first identify the necessary requirement that allows a place to be considered as appealing to youths. They would then assess and select places of cultural significance to Singapore, as well as evaluate its appeal to youths. Lastly, they would propose methods that allow these locations to be improved to attract the younger generations.

Jaishree Jaybalan, Cheong Luan Lin, Jovita, Leow Hui Lin and Jarel Ang, ‘Preserving Singapore’s colonial past through the Civic District – a Necessity?’

Nan Hua High School

This presentation is based on the experiences of three Secondary Two Students who had researched on Civic District for the school’s annual RICH Fest exhibition. The students were expected to research and present on the past, present and future aspects of the Civic District so and put up a class booth exhibition showcasing their research. Also, individually, students had to write an essay answering the main inquiry question. Through the different components of informal assessment, this project
task aims to cultivate a sense of awareness of Singapore’s heritage sites as well as to evoke students’ sense of belonging to the country and her past.

The Civic District is known as the historic birthplace of modern Singapore, yet not many are aware of how the buildings of Civic District have helped to shape Singapore’s past and the socio-cultural significance of the Civic District. This leads us to then question, how much of the area is still significant to Singaporeans of today? Or are the buildings of Civic District merely in existence simply to add to Singapore’s skyline?

Through a presentation of their findings and research that the students had done for their class booth set-up during the school’s Realising Innovation and Creativity in the Humanities (RICH) Fest exhibition on 25th July, the group will address the main inquiry question – Do you agree that the colonial legacy in Singapore is part of our colonial past that is worth preserving? By examining the past and present aspects of the Civic District, the group will present on the significance of the buildings in Civic District today and the value of preserving the buildings so as to show the purpose and necessity of preserving buildings that form the landscape of Singapore’s built heritage.

The group will also share their opinions and reflections on how through this school project task, they were given an opportunity to make a connection with the otherwise forgotten Civic District, that is often of little relevance to the fourteen year olds of today’s population. The personal sharing component of this presentation aims to provide insight on the issue that has been long debated by heritage enthusiasts and government bodies dealing with heritage preservation – Have the gazetted heritage sites in Singapore been effective in promoting a sense of belonging among Singaporeans?

Heng Yi Ming Jonah, Heng Yi Xin, Khaw Faye, Ma Ruolin, ‘HeritAGE Keepers’
Hwa Chong Institution (College Section)

After deciding to work on the topic of heritage for our A level Project Work, Jonah, Yi Xin, Faye and Ruolin have been embarking on this journey of discovery for the past 6 months. They posed themselves questions about heritage conservation along the way and hope that this seminar would provoke deeper thought, by allowing them to gain new insights. As youths, they are especially interested in how the value of heritage can be passed on to the next generation.

They would look into how youths can be better engaged in choosing to visit heritage sites. They are adapting Simon Thurley’s, chief executive of English Heritage, concept of the heritage cycle in Singapore's context. The heritage cycle is the concept introduced by the five-year plan of English Heritage’s chief executive, Simon Thurley. It depicts the process of heritage conservation in four steps, namely: enjoyment, understanding, valuing and caring.

Understanding the significance of heritage sites in anchoring national identity, they are proposing to adapt heritage sites into study sites for youths, as well as places in which youths can hang out in. They aim to seek a balance between adaptive reuse of the sites and the retaining of its original value.

After youths effectively acquire these sites, they aim to look into how the stories and values that these heritage sites hold can be transmitted to youths. This brings into discussion the best ways in
which relevance of heritage sites can be maintained, the tension between conservation and development, as well as how heritage sites can be acquired by younger generations.

The method of investigation includes a street poll to discover youth’s opinions on heritage, as well as a trial to test out methods through which the significance of Hwa Chong Institution’s heritage can be appreciated by its students. The evaluation of this trial would allow the students to gauge responses on the effectiveness of their proposed ideas above.

Panel 3: Who makes decisions about our home?

Chong Ee Hsiun, Leong Weng Yin Issac, Sean Ong Zhi Han, Martin Lim, Ernest Goh, Joshua Wong, Brian Yen, ‘Heritage and Conservation in Schools’
Raffles Institution (Secondary)

They are a group of 7 students from Raffles Institution who are passionate about the heritage in Singapore, believing that it is a field that should be given much more attention. They recognize heritage to be an integral part of each individual’s shaping of his own cultural identity and that it is a very personal interaction that allows an individual to form a strong emotional connection with the heritage in focus. They are all History students and understand the importance that heritage plays in their lives, extending beyond cultural identity. Heritage, being a component in the study of History, also serves as a platform to elucidate and rationalize. They started this project as part of the History curriculum, hoping to contribute our ideas and hopefully make a difference in heritage studies.

The Policy Paper done by the participants focused on the issue of Heritage and Conservation in Raffles Institution and Schools in general. They intend to present their findings and recommendations during the presentation session. This paper was guided by four key questions: Why Conserve? What to Conserve? How to Conserve? How to involve stakeholders? Their paper served to analyse the current heritage policy used in Raffles Institution, and seek to provide adjustments and improvements with the ultimate purpose being to bring heritage to a wider audience and making it more relevant and impactful. They recognized a key dialectical balance between the glorification of key events for the purposes of justifying a legacy and pride-evocation among the audience (termed by this paper as the Great Man Approach), and the more normalized approach towards heritage that seeks to embody the everyday culture of the school and perhaps instil a sense of nostalgia among the audience (termed as the Common Man Approach).

The research process for the paper involved research, interviews with professionals in the field, teachers, as well as a survey amongst 200 respondents.

Crafted by them in the capacities of students of Raffles Institution itself, their policy paper has the distinct advantage of offering the students’ perspectives on the conservation effort. This is a diversion from the staff-initiated conservation efforts of past, and they hope to offer their unique vantage point as students to progress the heritage preservation movement. This is in line with Young Peoples Participation launched by the World heritage center and the associated schools project network (aspenet), UNESCO education sector, promoting and preserving world heritage amongst youth. On the whole, they are very much aware that the recommendations they give are far from perfect. However, they hope that the framework they attempt to provide will give schools the platform to build their conservation efforts on and ultimately contribute towards the preservation of school heritage for future generations.
Wong Shao Wei Keith, ‘Owners and Audiences – How Does Heritage Interact As a Space In Our Lives?’
National University of Singapore

Keith is a Year 4 History Major at NUS.

He wants to open his presentation by briefly discussing the relationship between three different forms of heritage – the global (tourism), local (grassroots and top-down), and examine how their aims and means interact and differ. To do this, he will attempt to differentiate between the various organizations that are involved in heritage; in particular, URA, STB, the Singapore Heritage Society as well as the MyQueenstown society. He will draw out each society’s primary objective – their mission statements as well as a brief analysis of how their actions have borne out their intentions, and compare the similarities and differences that they have, thereby being able to understand the measure of impact that the various forms of heritage organization bring to bear. In comparing top-down heritage to its bottom-up grassroots variant I also aim to discuss whether their relationship is a dialectic one or one that is defined by clashing goals.

The main focus of his presentation will be in addressing the issue of the application of heritage in broader society, not just among heritage enthusiasts, but also in shaping a national identity, in terms of the Singaporean personal identity, down to each individual. In addressing the importance of heritage, he want to draw similarities between the field of cultural studies and the fieldwork of heritage; in particular, between Roland Barthes’s “Rhetoric of the Image” and popular notions of heritage, particularly as constructed in Kampong Glam, with Arab Street and the Sultan Mosque, as well as with the use of repurposed urban heritage sites in Tiong Bahru, Rochester and Haji Lane, by discussing subtexts to the narratives in those areas.

One application of heritage to society at large is in the idea of heritage as cultural power; not simply as within the dimensions of the tensions and struggles that define and are part of the process of heritage itself, but also in the effects and world-building ability that heritage holds, particularly with the notion of heritage as not merely confined to districts, but as all-encompassing and everywhere.

Heritage plays a role in the writing of cultural codes, which are found not merely in built heritage, but also in mass media, festivals and in the happenings of daily life. To discuss this point, he will conduct interviews with shop-owners at Tiong Bahru to find out how much the heritage of their area is a concern to their business model, and how much it matters for its inherent value. he will also conduct surveys among a broader sample to find the measure of heritage awareness among the population in order to discuss the impact of heritage and urban conservation on both active and passive levels. To expand on this, he also plan to briefly discuss heritage in other more day-to-day examples.

Goh Jin Han, ‘Recovering Memories From Our Built Heritage’
National University of Singapore

Jin Han is Year 4 Geography Major at NUS.

Urban conservation is as much an attempt to preserve our built heritage as it is a valuable tourism asset. In all honesty, urban conservation did emerge out of a desire to preserve enduring landmarks
of the city that would link the present to the past, whilst contributing to the cultivation of a national solidarity, identity and pride. But it is as well the case that urban spaces are conserved in response to tourism’s increasing cultural disposition, and not least for the fact that “conservation” has become a buzzword within this new cultural tourism regime. In this vein, “heritage” does not, all the time, fittingly re-present the embodied social meanings and memories. It does not because heritage has become very much a commodity that is fastidiously selected, packaged and sold to the hordes of tourists eagerly anticipating an authentic Singaporean experience.

As he inquired into the history of the Peranakan Museum, he realized that its status as a gazetted conservation site is not so much a celebration of its heritage (former Tao Nan School) as the fact that such a label conveniently enhances its physical allure as a museum. Architecturally, the Peranakan Museum is a rightful apotheosis of Singapore’s built heritage. His investigation confirmed that the building’s integrity was largely preserved. In retrospect however, little of its actual heritage as an educational institution is readily apparent, much less deliberately presented. The only source of information (an information board) that revealed its history is unceremoniously set up in an inconspicuous part of the exterior facade. For museum guide May Seah however, the museum continues to retain some meaningful associations with its historical function as an educational institution. The question then is: How may we harness the knowledge of gatekeepers such as May Seah to enhance the process of heritage preservation beyond a superficial conservation of the building architecture?

Alvin Tan, ‘Monumental Considerations: The Development-Conservation Tension in post-Independence Singapore’
Raffles Girls’ School (Secondary)

Alvin is a history teacher and Subject Head of Learning Technologies at RGS.

This presentation traces the history of the Preservation of Monuments Board over thirty-four years from its long gestation (1958 onwards) to its establishment (1970) up till the point it sought to re-define and reorient itself in a drastically changed operating environment (1992). It explores the inherent tensions between the necessity of historical preservation/conservation and the developmental needs of the state. The consequences of this tension in shaping our collective memories will also be explored.

Kelly Koh Qian-Wen, ‘StateofBuildings.sg’
NUS Architecture Graduate, Co-founder of StateofBuildings.sg

What StateofBuildings.sg is:
The website StateofBuildings.sg is an online repository of information and memories related to buildings and places in Singapore.

How it works:
The website integrates Google Maps to form an up-to-date cartographic resource. Information is curated and updated via public user contributions and materials from the editorial team.

Educational Potential:
As a stimulus to exploratory learning; as a receptacle for the safekeeping of thoughts, knowledge, and memories of the built environment; as a platform for a holistic understanding of our surroundings in relation to our time and people.

Potential Influence on the Built Environment?

Panel 4: How do we create a sense of “home”?

Tan Xing Long Ian, ‘Evoking Our Shared Memories: Preserving our Heritage through Singaporean Poetry’
CHIJ St Nicholas Girls’ School (Secondary)

Ian teaches English Literature at CHIJ St Nicholas Girls’ School (Secondary). He proposes to show how Singaporean poetry contributes towards our understanding of heritage and history by evoking sites of physical and social memory through language and images, and offering a critique of how modernisation and urbanisation cuts off our link to the past and undermines our connection to it.

In his presentation, he will first show how Literature and poetry is important in evoking a sense of time and space that may have been forgotten or neglected in our cultural consciousness. Next, he will explore 4 Singaporean poems – ‘Old House at Ang Siang Hill’ by Arthur Yap, ‘Singapore River’ by Lee Tzu Pheng, ‘Void Deck’ by Alfian Bin Sa’at and ‘Wet Markets Drying’ by Desmond Sim – to show how they (re)create places of social memories through language and literary techniques. The tension between preserving our sense of heritage and the needs of modernisation is a common theme that runs through these poems, and I will also be exploring this tension and how these poems offer a critique of the erasing of our connection with our past and heritage through change/development and urbanisation. Pictures of the places featured in the poems will also be shown alongside my reading of the poems to give the audience a visual representation of the themes of the poems.

He will conclude by urging the audience to think about how Literature is important in preserving our heritage by evoking and examining feelings of nostalgia and regret towards our past and the places connected with it. He will emphasize how language can be a powerful tool in connecting us to our cultural heritage. He will end off by encouraging members of the audience to write and explore how through writing, memories can be preserved for the benefit of future generations.

Presentation format will be Powerpoint, with handouts of the poems to be given to the audience. He will invite questions and feedback from audience members.

Tricia Seow, ‘Geographical field inquiry in heritage areas: unpacking contested landscapes through landuse surveys’
National Institute of Education
Nanyang Technological University

Ms Tricia Seow is a lecturer with the Humanities and Social Studies Education Academic Group, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University. She is currently the programme co-ordinator for Geography Curriculum Studies and her scholarly interests include teachers’ subject conceptions and practice, Geography education and Geographical field inquiry
This presentation focuses on the value of using geographical field investigation methods like landuse surveys as a means to help students unpack the social, economic and political values that have framed and undergirded the conservation of areas deemed to have ‘historic’ or ‘cultural’ value in Singapore. In particular, it highlights to students how ‘heritage sites’ are sites of contestation between various users and stakeholders who have different interpretations of and relationships with a space/place. Such understandings can then enrich students’ geographical conceptions of both heritage and tourist spaces.

Mevin Chan, Samuel Wee, ‘The Heritage’s Craft: Toolbox in designing the heritage programme’
Ping Yi Secondary School

Mevin and Samuel are teachers at Ping Yi Secondary School who oversee the History, Social Studies and National Education subjects and programmes.

As educators, they hope to inspire and instil the importance of heritage to the younger generations. However, there needs to be a balance between diving into the complexity and comprehensiveness of heritage studies to that of designing heritage programmes pitching to the intellectual, moral and emotional levels of the audiences accordingly.

In Ping Yi Secondary School (PYSS), they sincerely believe that the study of and discourse on heritage is for every student. Hence, it is vital that students are being provided with the right environment and tools in carrying out heritage investigation.

In this sharing, the educators and students of PYSS will provide insights into the strategies, frameworks and structures offered and/or designed by the school for her heritage program. This ranges from aligning the program towards the school’s motto and vision [systemic approach] to that of adopting various disciplinary approaches to the teaching and learning of heritage [systematic approach]. Issues related to the built heritage such as relevance and perspective-taking will be incorporated and addressed throughout the presentation.

Omar Basri, ‘Caught on Camera: Using Camtasia Studio and the Flipped Classroom Model to Augment Lessons beyond the Classroom’
NUS High School of Math & Science (Secondary / Pre U)

Omar Basri graduated with a First Class Honours from the National Institute of Education in 2012. He was also awarded the prestigious NTU Koh Boon Hwee Scholars’ Award, the Top History Student Award (Jurong Shipyard Book Prize), and the Best Student Award (Rotary Club 75th Anniversary Gold Medal). His achievements in the academic and leadership fields in the Malay community were also recognised when he was awarded the Mendaki Excellence Award in 2012. He is currently the Module Coordinator for the Integrated Humanities subject in NUS High School of Math & Science, and he is also finishing his Masters in Southeast Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore.

This presentation is useful for those who are interested to know how to effectively record, edit and upload their lectures online using Camtasia Studio. This is a component of a Flipped Classroom model, and a brief discussion on its roots - examined via existing academic literature – would be highlighted too.
With this knowledge, participants are then introduced as to how this innovative pedagogy can and has been integrated into a Learning Journey lesson in NUS High. Briefly as well, participants would also be able to see how it can be used for other subjects and how to use it as a form of assessment as well. Lastly, its effectiveness in a local classroom setting would also be touched on.

The lesson incorporated a trip to the Old Ford Factory Museum and students were made aware of how a once forgotten place is now woven into the fabric of discourse in learning of Singapore’s past. However, in the retelling of the stories of the war, are we able to get a well-rounded perspective in assessing the Syonan Years? As such, could the deliberate processes of ‘packaging’ of a heritage site lead to the silencing of some, while only giving voice to particular others?

Abdul Rahim bin Abdul Hamid, ‘From Polytechnic to University: Inculcating the sense of the Built Heritage in our Youths’

Abdul Rahim is currently a PhD Candidate (Architecture) and Teaching Assistant for the module called Singapore Urban History and Architecture Department of Architecture, NUS. Formerly a lecturer for the Diploma of Landscape Architecture, Division of Architecture, School of the Built Environment, Singapore Polytechnic from 2007 to 2009, he has taught and managed the third year module called Urban Environment and Society. He holds a certificate in Teaching (Higher Education) from Singapore Polytechnic 2009 and has been awarded the Journal of Teaching Practice Award, Singapore Polytechnic 2009. He also has a Master of Landscape Architecture from the University of Melbourne 2002.

He had a hand in crafting the curriculum for the module at Singapore Polytechnic. The person in charge of the course and him wanted to bring in certain aspects of Singapore’ history that is related to landscapes and urban spaces because past students lack that connection with the local context when they did their design projects. Not everyone does Singapore history for their GCE ‘O’ levels. The key learning outcome was that students understand the concepts associated with urban history such as collective memory, sense of place, authenticity and sensitivity to cultural context.

At the university level, he was more of a tutor so he does not have a hand in crafting the module. However, he tried to go further than what he did for the students at the diploma level in the sense of taking a critical approach to understanding and acquiring historical data. He shall elaborate on some of the questions and issues brought up during class in relation to the adopted approach. Some of the strategies and resources used in class will also be discussed. Since the students come from all faculties in it being a cross-faculty module, there has been mixed responses in terms of ability to handle the subject matter but nonetheless, most students appreciate the depth and breadth that the module brings into what they know about the built heritage of Singapore.