



the peranakan

ISSUE 2 • 2013

SHADES

f INNS

TALKING FASHION 
OUR TRIO OF
STYLE MEISTERS
WEIGHS IN

**NYONYA RE-
INTERPRETED**
TWO
SINGAPORE
DESIGNERS
TAKE ON THE
KEBAYA



PRARA

TTON

LIGHT BITES 
SMALL
PORTIONS
THAT PACK A
PERANAKAN
PUNCH

菱

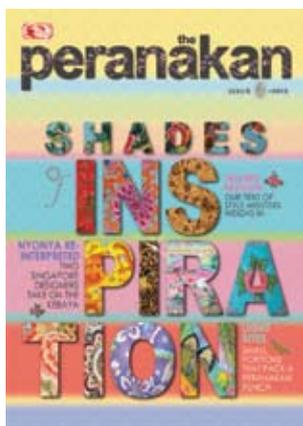
Foundation
Jewellers
FINE PERANAKAN DESIGN



EXCLUSIVE FINE EMERALDS & DIAMONDS NECKLACE

Emeralds set in 18K white gold diamonds necklace and earring | Emerald (oval shape) 12 pcs - 32.79 Cts | Total weight of diamonds 65.46 Cts
ONE OF A KIND , DESIGNER ITEM

11 Cavenagh Road #01-03/04/05, Holiday Inn Orchard City Centre, Singapore 229616
Tel: 65 6732 6141 / 6738 3151 Fax: 65 6399 0061 Email: enquiry@foundationgems.com.sg



THE
PERANAKAN
ASSOCIATION
SINGAPORE

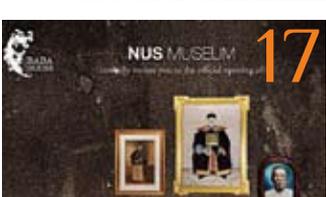
www.peranakan.org.sg

Contents

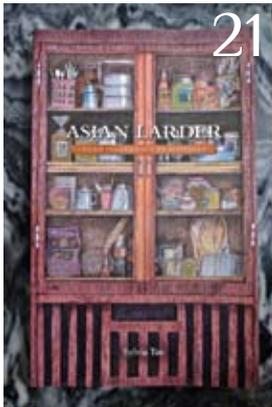
ISSUE 2 • 2013



4



21



14



22

18

3 EDITORIAL

In Good Fashion

FEATURES

- 4 Hits, Misses & Mish-mashes
- 13 In Fitting Form
- 14 Infusing Peranakan
- 16 Took a Hit?

CHAKAP CHAKAP

- 9 In, Out or Downright Odd?

MUSEUM

- 17 Baba, Baba on the Wall
- 18 Muse on These
- 19 Wedding Garment

BOOKS

- 21 Asian Larder Raid

DALAM DAPOR

- 22 Petite Portions

THEATRE

- 25 Chap Goh Meh in Penang
- The Chair: A Peranakan Tapestry
- Lion-hearted

NOTICEBOARD

- 27 Peranakan Associations in the Region
- New Members, AGM Notice

28 DIRECTORY

The Peranakan Guide, Singapore

THE PERANAKAN ASSOCIATION SINGAPORE *President:* Peter Wee • *First Vice-President:* Alan Koh • *Second Vice-President:* Bebe Seet • *Honorary Secretary:* Lim Geok Huay • *Assistant Honorary Secretary:* Ee Sin Soo • *Honorary Treasurer:* Chan Eng Thai • *Committee Members:* Linda Chee, Angeline Kong, Emeric Lau, Edmond Wong, Alvin Yapp • For enquiries please contact Lim Geok Huay at 6255 0704

THE PERANAKAN MAGAZINE *Editorial Advisers:* Lee Kip Lee, Peter Lee • *Editor:* Linda Chee • *Assistant Editor:* Emeric Lau • *Art Editor:* John Lee • *Designer:* Michelle Yap • *Advertising Manager:* Alvin Sng • *Administrative Manager:* Low Whee Hoon • *Circulation Coordinator:* Lim Geok Huay • *Editorial & Photography Committee Members:* Colin Chee, Ee Sin Soo, Edmond Wong, Jason Ong • *Webmaster:* Claire Seet • For advertising, please contact Alvin Sng at 9839 8188
The Peranakan is published by The Peranakan Association Singapore, Raffles City PO Box 1640, Singapore 911755, Tel: 6255 0704.
Printer: Lithographic Print House Pte Ltd.

MICA (P) 075/10/2011



Straits Chinese Jewellery MUSEUM

Peranakan Jewellery is fascinating and mesmerizing, embracing the cultures and history surrounding it. Chinese, Malay and Indo-European form, design and motifs are featured in the jewellery, sometimes all of these in one singular piece.

Jewellery, worn and loved by the Peranakan Chinese Nyonya women are usually fashioned using diamonds, intan, rubies, sapphires, pearls and jade. These are radiantly set in gold, silver or sausa.

The halcyon days of Peranakan jewellery is surrounded by beauty and wealth. Individual pieces are skillfully crafted to highlight the beauty of the design, and enhancing the comeliness of the nyonya. It gives as much pleasure to the owner as serving to delight the audience. The jewel collection of the nyonya also reflects on her family's wealth and status.

The timeless beauty of these exquisite, rare and treasured pieces, each item with its own secrets and story, is once again paraded in all its extravagance at the Straits Chinese Jewellery Museum.

FOR ENQUIRIES & RESERVATIONS
KINDLY CONTACT US AT

108, JALAN TUN TAN CHENG LOCK
75200 MELAKA, MALAYSIA
TEL: 606-281 9763 FAX: 606-281 6099
EMAIL: sejewellerymuseum@gmail.com
WEBSITE: pinangperanakanmansion.com

VISITING HOURS
Daily from 10am to 5pm
(Open on all public holidays unless
notified by the management)

ADMISSION
ADULT : RM15.00
STUDENT : RM10.00
(Child below 6yrs-Free)

Managed by Straits Chinese Jewellery Museum Sdn. Bhd. Company No. 1007893-M



IN GOOD FASHION

I am in a mood for reflection. As I type this, barely a week has passed since the association received the upsetting news that our Hon. Secretary Lim Geok Huay, or Geok as many of us know her, had suffered a stroke and had to undergo an emergency operation to remove a blood clot in her brain. For over 20 years, Geok has devoted much of her time and energy to administering association matters. It is a small comfort to know that she is receiving the best medical care available, coupled with love from her devoted husband and family. We wish Geok a most speedy recovery.

Life is indeed a precious and fragile gift, and it is unpredictable. We must cherish the good times and remember to have fun. On that note, we've put together a humorous look at the evolution of Peranakan fashion, which is the theme of this issue. I entreat you to have a chuckle at some of the new-age interpretations of the sarong kebaya, even as we ponder the issue of its relevance today and into the future. There's no excuse for sloppy dressing, and Baba Raymond Wong has stepped in to inform us on what comprises a properly fitting kebaya. We also check in with a trio of style meisters for their thoughts on Peranakan dressing and view some bold new kebaya-inspired creations from two up-and-coming young designers. If you're watching your figure to make sure you can slip into a size-zero kebaya with ease, be sure to see Jeremy Cheok's recipes in Dalam Dapor for light bites that still pack a Peranakan punch!

In other news, we are thrilled that the Peranakan Museum has collaborated with the National Museum of Korea to bring an exhibition, *The Peranakan World: Cross-Cultural Arts of Singapore and the Straits to South Korea*. The showcase from 19 March to 19 May,

Arts LIFE | D5

THE STRAITS TIMES

The Babas go to Korea

Peranakan items such as textiles and jewellery will be shown at a museum in Seoul from March 19

Shawna Shetty
Art Correspondent

The vibrant Peranakan culture is on the move. A special exhibition of its rich Chinese artefacts heads to South Korea next month, following its debut in Singapore.

The Peranakan World: Cross-Cultural Arts of Singapore and the Straits, introduced to the public last year, got a boost and will be the Peranakan Museum's exhibition opening.

The idea of the exhibition was pitched when the museum's director, Dr Elin Frazar, met Asian Civilisations Museum's chief curator Dr Pedro Pablo Kuczynski at a conference in Beijing last July.

In Cambodia, she also co-edited the exhibition in tandem with the Peranakan Museum's Jackie Young, said Loh. "We wanted to show the diversity, dynamism and cross-cultural aspects of Peranakan culture."

She said visitors will be able to see a five- to six-foot and three inches tall but have been influenced and paid by elements that are Western values, beliefs and traditions.

The exhibition from Sarawak, priced

as a set of handwoven textiles made with one cotton thread and an early 19th-century hand-loomed silk. A Peranakan wedding fan will also be shown.

Eight kebaya and 12 batik are on loan from the collection of Mr and Mrs Lee Rip Lee. Their son - curator, collector and writer Peter Lee - said he was "inspired and delighted" when he found out about the exhibition.

"Inspired because the Korean museum was interested in an exhibition focused on Peranakan culture, and delighted because we got another chance to show that we have been influenced and shaped by so many cultures," said the 66-year-old.

In 2010, for the first time, the Asian Civilisations Museum, which houses the Peranakan Museum, presented a Peranakan show at Paris' Quai Branly Museum.

Dr Alan Chan, director of the Asian Civilisations Museum, remarked, "Peranakan art is an important example of multicultural contact, which remains Singapore's a multicultural state, linked by activities of trade, immigration and cultural exchange."

Called this a "landmark cultural exchange" new which would strengthen "mutual understanding and knowledge."

Through exchanges such as the Peranakan exhibition in Seoul, Koreans are able to appreciate these diverse cultures when at the same time, Korean culture and arts are coming forward to reach these international audiences," he said.

This year, several other works from the National Heritage Board's national collection will travel internationally.

Following the Peranakan exhibition in South Korea, the Singapore Art Museum will send its artworks to two museums in Japan and present works of home-grown artists of European museum in Belgium and France.

The Asian Civilisations Museum will take the Tang Treasures to Hong Kong later this year.

Outgoing National Heritage Board chief executive Michael Koh, 74, called these collaborative steps of "linking the Singapore story we are all proud of with one that's shared around the world."

at peranakanmuseum.org

Mr Peter Lee and his father Lee Rip Lee, seen here with their wedding diadem, 21 PHOTO: LIM SHI THAI

Tracing their Chinese heritage with local influences, the Peranakans began to try a blend of Malay and Chinese influences prepared with local ingredients and techniques. The fabric and sewing influences on other cultures and arts are coming forward to reach these international audiences."

News of the Peranakan exhibition going to Korea, ST Life, 26 February.

features many of the items that were a part of the Quai Branly Museum's *Baba Bling* exhibition in Paris three years ago. Korean Ambassador Oh Joon has called this a "landmark cultural exchange".

Once again, our culture is garnering attention at an international level. This is rather apt, considering that Peranakan culture itself has international sources; things have really come full circle. ❖

Emeric Lau
Editor for Issue 2, 2013

LETTERS

From Betty Tan, Singapore:
I refer to the notice titled Sambot Taon Baru Ular Peranakan Mass on the Editorial page of Issue 1, 2013. Has the Peranakan magazine become a Christian magazine? I strongly suggest that the editors be sensitive to the multi-religious character of our culture and stick to being a strictly secular magazine.

Editor's response:
We thank Ms. Tan for her feedback. We believe in giving fair coverage to all religions practised by Peranakans. In previous issues, we have carried articles covering traditions such as Ti Kong and the Wangkang Festival. As a cultural magazine, we are proud to present our readers with information on religious practices significant to the Peranakans. The same principle applies to notices we carry. We invite our readers to contribute announcements to the magazine about Peranakan language services for any religious groups.

Play Postponement

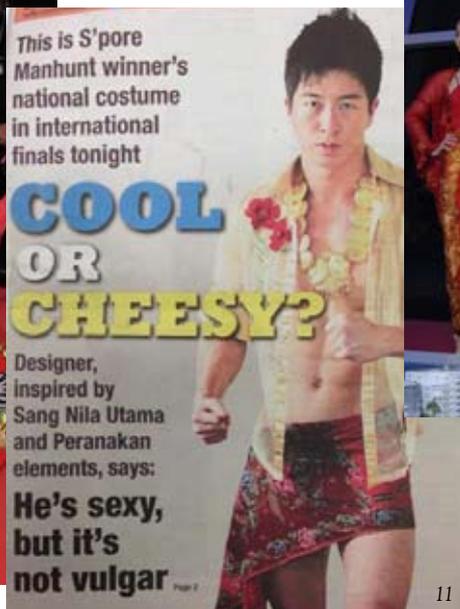
We regret to announce that the play *Tua-Ee/Ee-Chik* is postponed till further notice.

Copyright is by the publisher. All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher. The Peranakan magazine and The Peranakan Association Singapore disclaim all responsibilities in the articles herein, and state that the views expressed in them, if any, are those of the writers and not theirs. They assume no responsibility for unsolicited materials or articles published herein and state that the writers are wholly responsible for the veracity and authenticity of their articles.



FEATURES

HITS, & MISH- MASHES



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

1. A nyonya from Java dressed in an unusual cotton kebaya fastened with five small buttons with a Pekalongan batik sarong, 1921. Photo courtesy of Peter Lee.

2. A kebaya-inspired shirt from Paul Smith.

3. The iconic Singapore Girl in her kebaya. Image from a Singapore Airlines postcard, early 2000s.

4. Many top fashion designers, including Dries van Noten, love to include ethnic accents in their collections.

5. An orchid-inspired dress on show at a beauty pageant. Photo from ohnotheydidnt.livejournal.com.

6. A recently manufactured Cheribon batik shirt.



MISSES

Baba Emeric Lau muses on the relevance of Peranakan fashion



7. Two guests at the annual Peranakan Ball in their interpretations of ethnic dressing.

8. Vintage kebaya paired with contemporary silk sarongs. Photo courtesy of Bebe Seet.

9. Penang nyonya in a silk brocade baju panjang and unusual dark silk sarong, seated in front of a man in western jacket and trousers, 1930s. Photo courtesy of Peter Lee.

10. Kebaya-inspired fashion. Photo courtesy of Bebe Seet.

11. This controversial Manhunt outfit was apparently Peranakan-inspired. Cover image, *The New Paper*.

12. Fan Bingbing's white crane dress caused a sensation.

In these times of instant enlightenment, we start our quest by deferring to the almighty automation most commonly known as a Google search – the easiest way to call up all manner of information; a chance, literally, to “go ogle” practically anything you might fancy! Search term: “Peranakan fashion”. Web results: approximately 390,000 instances. Images found: an overwhelming collection of ladies all dressed in that iconic technicolour combination of voile and batik we know as the sarong kebaya. Google searches, however, only reflect what a web-savvy generation associates with a term. For in-depth discourse, we seek the knowledge of disciplined specialists.

History

To arrive at a deeper understanding of Peranakan fashion, it is necessary to look back to history. Much has already been documented on the evolution of the sarong kebaya and batik. The Peranakan Museum staged the exhibition *Sarong Kebaya: Peranakan Fashion and its International Sources*, made possible by a donation of

outfit to make a play as local fancy dress. Singapore-born fashion designer Eugene Lin terms this phenomenon ‘souvenir Orientalism’ and is quick to dismiss the notion that his origins mean that he ought to design ‘Asian clothing’. In an interview with *Her World* magazine, he states, “I am very proud to be Singaporean, but my work has been described by buyers and press as firmly Euro-centric – combining the edgy prints London is known for with the sophistication of garment construction that Paris loves. One does not see Alexander Wang or Philip Lim making ‘Asian’ clothes, do they? This brings into the conversation a discourse of what Asian clothes are in this day and age ... I believe my work is not bound by geography or cultural lines, as good design has an international audience.”¹

Lin’s words really herald the end of the line for modes of dressing particular to geographic regions and peoples. In the 21st century, what does the future hold for ethnic or ‘cultural’ dress?

In Singapore, whether for religious reasons or sheer force of daily habit, many locals continue to don clothing

When we recognise the sarong kebaya in the context influences, Peranakan fashion reveals itself to be a tastes, available materials and resources and references

historic garments and textiles from our Honorary Life President Baba Lee Kip Lee, Mrs Lee and benefitting from the curatorial expertise of Baba Peter Lee. For more information, see “Frugality, Opulence or Magic”, *The Peranakan*, Issue 2 2011 and also online coverage at <http://www.fom.sg/Passage/2011/05peranakan.pdf>

When we recognise the sarong kebaya in the context of attire that has, as its origins, numerous global influences, Peranakan fashion reveals itself to be a hybrid mode of dress, incorporating prevailing tastes, available materials and resources and references both idiosyncratic and cultural.

Contemporary Interpretations

In 1972, Singapore Airlines launched the now iconic *Singapore Girl* marketing campaign formulated by Batey Ads. French haute couture designer Pierre Balmain was roped in to put his spin on the sarong kebaya and the resulting two-piece figure-hugging uniform comprising a scoop-necked blouse and pencil skirt rendered in a printed batik motif has been a part of SIA legend ever since.

Today, shops in the tourist district that passes for Singapore’s Chinatown sell knock-off Singapore Girl uniforms to amused foreigners who gamely don the

synonymous with traditional practice. Visit the markets of Tekka Mall and Geylang Serai to discover over a hundred vendors at each location selling iterations of *baju kurung*, headscarves, saris and embroidered dhotis all going for between \$10 and \$50. Clearly, the business of traditional clothing continues to thrive in certain quarters.

Parents merrily outfit their children in ‘ethnic’ clothing for Racial Harmony day. Traditional dress has evolved to become a form of instant identikit to show one’s affinity for culture. A much more controversial application of traditional attire is its merit as a National Dress. The late Mr Ong Teng Cheong the former President of Singapore, mooted the idea of rendering our national flower, the Vanda Miss Joaquim in batik, and then tailoring shirts and dresses from the fabric to be donned by Singapore’s political and business elite at state functions. The idea never quite took off, but orchid-motif clothing has become de rigueur attire for many Singapore tour guides and front-line hospitality staff. These days, critics savage practically every interpretation of national costume trundled out at beauty pageants. Recently, many members of our Peranakan community expressed outrage at a costume designed by Mr Heath Yeo for Singapore Manhunt

winner Jason Chee². This costume was apparently inspired by both ‘Peranakan elements and Sang Nila Utama’³. I recommend a Google image search for “Singapore National Costume” to provide a gallery of attire at once amusing and bizarre.

Not an Everyday Fashion

While Singaporeans’ conservatism has been described by the Discovery Channel as being “almost Victorian”⁴, thankfully, our everyday clothing is anything but! Tee-shirts. Bermudas. Flip-flops. Our tropical weather and fast-paced lifestyles demand attire that is comfortable, easy to don and off, and easy to maintain. On a typical day, you’ll hardly see any nyonias in tighter-than-thou kebayas or babas in stiff batik shirts. Still, one item that continues to have its diehard advocates is the humble sarong. Baba Colin Chee often wears a sarong at home, and swears that there’s nothing quite like it for sheer “convenience”!

Peranakan fashion nowadays really occupies the realm of occasional dressing. “We plan the colours of our kebayas,” says Nyonya Angeline Kong of the Peranakan

demands the touch of a skilled hand throughout.

With a resurgence of interest in things handmade – we have lost count of the number of ‘artisan’ bakeries that have recently opened – at least we can be certain the techniques that go into making a sarong kebaya will not be forgotten soon, and there is hope that designers will find fresh ways of applying them.

Cross-Cultural Googling

Whether it is the much-mocked music video that is Ho Yeow Sun’s *China Wine*⁵ or the Rihanna-Coldplay collaboration *Princess of China*⁶, cross-cultural fascination continues apace. Call it the Pinkerton Syndrome, Eastern exoticism or Souvenir Orientalism if you must, there’s just no avoiding the fact that ethnic culture will continue to be a source of inspiration. At its best, clothing is spectacular, with symbolism and even controversial: just check out the reactions to Fan Bingbing’s white crane dress for Cannes.⁷ The same applies for Peranakan fashion, whatever form it may take – long may it continue to captivate and embody the mystical mass of its numerous historical sources. ❖

of attire that has, as its origins, numerous global hybrid mode of dressing, incorporating prevailing both idiosyncratic and cultural.

Voices. “This ensures that the choir always turns out in a spectrum of rainbow hues. It won’t do if too many of us show up in the same shade for a performance.” Indeed, Peranakan fashion, especially for the Nyonias, has long been about showing oneself off. A kebaya’s elaborate embroidery and bright hues coupled with brooches, bracelets and hairpins all rendered in gold and studded with *berlian*, ensures the wearer will be looked at. To quote Harry Winston, “People will stare. Make it worth their while.” Every Nyonya certainly knew the value in committing those words to heart if she wanted to snare a good husband!

A Cherished Couturier’s Art

Also very fortunately, it is the painstaking, labour-intensive art that goes into making a good sarong kebaya that has put Peranakan fashion on the radar of many top fashion designers. The renowned fashion lines of Paul Smith and Dries van Noten, amongst others, have incorporated elements of the sarong kebaya in past collections, while locally, a small group of dedicated couturiers continually experiment in creating unique pieces inspired directly by Peranakan dressing. Peranakan fashion is unique because its quality simply cannot be reproduced on a commercial scale. The kebaya is clothing that

Endnotes

- 1 <http://www.herworldplus.com/fashion/updates/fashion-updates-eugene-lin-creating-timeless-fashion-defies-seasonal-fads>
- 2 <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151233239575279&set=pb.103077225278.-2207520000.1357976346&type=3&theater>
- 3 http://singaporeseen.stomp.com.sg/stomp/sgseen/this_urban_jungle/1415730/spore_manhunt_winners_national_costume_cool_or_cheesy.html
- 4 <http://sgcgo.com/singapore-history/>
- 5 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Ya3Hqu_-cg
- 6 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Uw6ZkbsAH8>
- 7 <http://yellowcranestower.blogspot.sg/2011/05/fan-bingbings-red-crane-gown.html>



THE
PERANAKAN
ASSOCIATION
SINGAPORE

Presents
In Conversation

All Things
PERANAKAN
Chakap Chakap Baba Culture

19 April 2013 (Friday)
20 April 2013 (Saturday)

Programme Time:
Friday: 9.00am – 5.30pm
Saturday: 9.00am – 5.30pm

Venue:
Asian Civilisations Museum
Ngee Ann Auditorium

Tickets available at
\$60.00 (Public) **\$50.00** (Members) **\$40.00** (Students)

For an additional \$30.00, buffet dinner and
entertainment on Saturday 20 April 2013.

Tickets available at Katong Antique House.
For enquiries, Tel: 6345 8544 (Peter Wee) or
Email: geok@peranakan.org.sg

Supported by:



asian
civilisations
museum

peranakan
MUSEUM



IN, OUT OR DOWNRIGHT ODD?

Our trio of merry style meisters weigh in on the future of Peranakan fashion



Aaron de Silva, 33

Editor, Men's Folio magazine

Aaron joined the high-octane world of magazine publishing in 2004. Since then, having worked on specialist titles such as *World of Watches*, *FORM* and now, *Men's Folio*, he's been able to refine his aesthetic sensibilities and cultivate a greater understanding and appreciation of the luxury goods, fashion and design industries.



Goh Laichan, 50

Fashion Designer

Laichan has been designing high fashion for more than 20 years. Renowned for his immaculate cheongsams, his eponymous boutique is located at the Raffles Hotel.

Raymond Wong, 33

Owner of Rumah Kim Choo

Raymond majored in Accounting and Finance. However, his love of art and, in particular, the skills behind making Peranakan handicrafts, compelled him to become a self-taught kebaya designer and embroiderer.



Miuccia Prada once said: "What you wear is how you present yourself to the world, especially today, when human contacts are so quick. Fashion is instant language."

Besides its primary function of clothing the body, fashion is also about one's identity, culture and status. Donning Peranakan fashion, then, could be said to reflect the wearer's desire to either showcase his own identity or align with the culture. What does the phrase "Peranakan fashion" mean to you?

Aaron: As someone who hails from a cross-cultural background (Portuguese-Eurasian on my father's side and Chinese on my mother's side), I've always been somewhat envious of the Peranakan community and their strong, tangible cultural identity

as reflected and enshrined in their architecture, furniture, ceramics, food culture, clothing and accessories. (Much of the Eurasian cultural identity, by comparison, is based on less tangible items – we have no 'Eurasian architecture' to speak of, for instance – and on an oral, rather than written, tradition. But that's another story.)

Peranakan fashion, to me, represents a living legacy of the community: a harmonious fusion of Chinese and Malay elements united by a shared affinity for ornamentation. In terms of traditional womenswear or Nyonya fashion, there's the Chinese – albeit Qing-era – love of riotous colour, pattern and rich embellishment, combined with Malay concepts of sensuality and fluidity in movement and garment construction in pieces like sheer kebaya tops and sarongs (which for some reason, my paternal grandmother appropriated as her dress of choice. Perhaps as a result of

“The ‘Peranakan fashion’ we speak of today is much more than a nostalgic reflection of the past. It is really celebratory attire that marks the zenith of a truly amazing culture. People take pride in and enjoy wearing it.”

– Goh Laichan

Eurasians and Peranakans living side-by-side for so long?)

Raymond: Peranakan fashion is both dramatic and evolving. For drama, the sarong kebaya has to be colourful, glamorous and yet elegant and dainty. It is paired with its own style of *intan* jewellery. Colourful Pekalongan batik is a must. Only fine Czech Charlotte seed beads should be used for their *kasot*. The kebaya should have entredeaux stitches as seamlines. The final composition makes for a remarkable sight, especially when one sees a whole bevy of *nyonyas* dressed in their best.

Laichan: I am not sure if “fashion” is the appropriate word to describe what we now see the Peranakan women and men wearing at special events and dinners. The clothes are really an intrinsic part of the whole distinctive culture born out of the inter-marriage of Chinese, Malay and European influences.

It is interesting to note that few other hybrid cultures have a comparably exuberant material culture. This exuberance is found in everything from jewellery, clothes and shoes to food and rituals, furniture and architecture.

The ‘Peranakan fashion’ we speak of today is much more than a nostalgic reflection of the past. It is really celebratory attire that marks the zenith of a truly amazing culture. People take pride in and enjoy wearing it. Some admire its intrinsic beauty, while others are reminded of a glorious past. For Peranakans, it is a way of keeping tradition alive, and making sure that the younger generations recognise their roots.

National costumes (beauty pageants or otherwise). Racial harmony day (even though Peranakans are not a race but a culture). Culture-related political and high society events. Cultural shows and performances.

We see Peranakan elements in the clothes donned on these occasions. What is the purpose, really, for a “Peranakan fashion”? Does it have relevance – is it decorative, declarative and/or demented? How about in the future?

Aaron: ‘Peranakan fashion’ is, as you mentioned earlier, a declaration of belonging, a symbol of affinity to the Peranakan community. I think it has been elevated

to national costume for various reasons - it’s instantly recognisable, iconic and emblematic, and therefore accessible to non-Peranakans; by its highly decorative and quasi-ceremonial nature, it expresses a nostalgia for the past (very salient in fast-paced Singapore), a time when elegance meant good breeding and when people relished every opportunity to dress in their finery (rare these days).

It definitely has relevance in today’s world. However, I feel that there might be an over-emphasis on tradition. Museum exhibits, TV shows, and other mass media representations of Peranakan fashion continually rehash/reinforce the past. Of course tradition – in terms of colour, proportion, and construction techniques – needs to be upheld, but new blood needs to be injected. The questions I ask are these: could Peranakan fashion be a victim of its own success? Could it very soon become a caricature of itself, much like say, European aristocratic fashion, all powdered wigs, pannier skirts and men in codpieces? There’s a very real risk that Peranakan fashion could veer into tacky, costume-y territory. Think batik-shirted men and kebaya-clad women at Peranakan-themed company D&Ds, a scenario that I believe is already occurring. Gasp.

Raymond: Peranakan fashion has been evolving since the 1890s. Evolution is really part of our culture. Fashion adapts from whatever is beautiful. I feel the sarong kebaya still has its relevance in our current times.

It provides a sense of belonging because it is a dress unique to the locally born Chinese around the Malay Archipelago. As each piece is tailored, the embroidery, motifs and colours used hold clues about the wearer’s personality, taste and background. I believe wearing the sarong kebaya for beauty pageants would be truly representative of Singapore as it has so many cross-cultural influences. Being a two-piece dress, the sarong kebaya is suited for both slim and plump ladies.

I strongly encourage Singaporeans to mix and match the sarong kebaya with their existing wardrobe. The kebaya may be worn like a bolero over sleeveless tops or matched with plain skirts. Beaded shoes can pair very elegantly with evening gowns, while sarongs can even be used as pareos at the beach or swimming pools. The *kerosang* may be applied

“Could Peranakan fashion be a victim of its own success? Could it very soon become a caricature of itself, much like say, European aristocratic fashion, all powdered wigs, pannier skirts and men in codpieces?”

– Aaron de Silva

as brooches on jackets or shawls. Indeed, the possibilities are limitless if you are willing to spend some time to play around with your wardrobe.

Laichan: Fashion designers are known to 'adopt' a culture as a theme for their collections. This is usually discarded after each six-month season, and they turn elsewhere for inspiration for their next collection.

The question of whether Peranakan elements are relevant in beauty pageants, racial harmony days and cultural shows stems from similar ground. For all such occasions, the aim is to showcase the wearer's culture and identity. So long as this purpose is fulfilled, I do not see any reason for it not to be worn. Nonetheless, we must avoid looking like overly-decorated souvenirs. I would like an outfit to be decorative, declarative and 'demented' all at once so long as it is authentic and done in good taste.

I imagine there is a bright and colourful future for Peranakan fashion. It should not be just a flight of fancy lasting a mere season. Peranakan clothes can and must be made accessible and relevant without sacrificing authenticity. My take on the future of Peranakan fashion would be to capture the essence, meaning and beauty of a time when Chinese and Malay cultures fused.

Cut and fit. Form follows function. Silhouette, hemline, waist. Colour block or print.

These are a few of the attributes and obsessions associated with fashion. What are the equivalents when it comes to ethnic/Peranakan dressing? How can these be applied towards a successful template for Peranakan clothing moving forward?

Aaron: Hmm, I don't feel qualified enough to answer this question! I will say though, that a lot of times innovation comes across not in reinventing the whole outfit, but in capturing the spirit of the old and applying it onto a contemporary garment.

Raymond: All of the above items have long been considerations for the sarong kebaya! A good kebaya must be tailored to fit the customer exactly. When that condition is satisfied, we can then proceed to bend the rules. Among the more interesting kebayas I have made is a fitted, sleeveless – yes, sleeveless – piece for an adventurous customer!

Laichan: We can have them all though not necessarily all together in one outfit. The Peranakan kebaya is basically all about these attributes. It is the clash of colour block and prints that make it exciting. I would suggest distilling these attributes so as to make them accessible to contemporary fashion taste buds.

As with my interpretation of the Chinese *qipao*, I would take the kebaya apart and lovingly use a different cutting technique and approach. A re-interpreted kebaya must remain comfortable and practical to stay relevant. I should

“Among the more interesting kebayas I have made is a fitted, sleeveless – yes, sleeveless – piece for an adventurous customer!”

- Raymond Wong

also emphasise that there must be a clear sense of visual kinship when we place a traditional kebaya alongside any contemporary interpretation.

Are tee shirts, blouses and shorts/bermudas the only things that everyone will don nowadays? Could, for example, the sarong make a real comeback? What are your thoughts?

Aaron: I would personally love for the sarong to come back. Why we ever gave it up is anyone's guess. It's easy-to-wear (non-discriminatory and all-inclusive), provides ventilation and ease of movement (thoroughly appropriate for tropical living) and is versatile, apt for daily use as well as for dressier occasions. For inspiration on elegant daily wear, I look to the Balinese. For a more luxe option, I refer to the Javanese royal courts. In the mainstream fashion world, androgyny is all the rage for 2013, and men's skirts are making a strong comeback for example, Givenchy's Spring-Summer collection for this year. Other high-end labels have also been purveying gender-confusing concepts: sheer lace shirts at Dolce & Gabbana, sheer shirt-blouses at Lanvin and organza fabrics at Tomas Meier's show for Bottega Veneta.

Raymond: There are those who believe kebaya wearers are a dying breed. I dare to dream otherwise! As addressed in Question 2, I have made recommendations on how we can take the kebaya into the future. It is a matter of repackaging and reinventing. Fashion designers have recently referenced other traditional wear such as the cheongsam and the kimono (Giorgio Armani Couture Fall/Winter 2011-2012) on the catwalks of Paris.

Many younger men shy away from donning a batik shirt as it makes them look overly mature. Instead of wearing a shirt, why not try batik-print pants? How about a batik tie or even a batik pocket square as interesting accessories to spice up your dinner jacket?

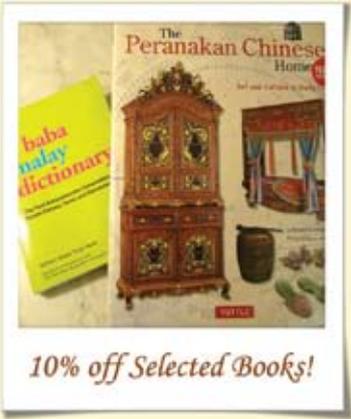
Laichan: No, tee shirts and bermudas are not the only thing people wear these days! The young people are particularly interested in fashion quick to adopt the latest looks. Sarongs can make a comeback but then again why just the sarongs? The kimono is a good example of how one can wear good contemporary fashionable clothes and traditional clothes regularly. Malay ladies still don the *baju kurong* daily. Traditional attire can certainly be a part of one's everyday lifestyle.❖



*Traditional Peranakan Cuisine
as well as regular new creations
by our award-winning
Chef Ben!*



Oxtail Buah Keluak



10% off Selected Books!

*Show us this Ad
and get 10% discount off
selected book titles
as well as food items!*

200 Joo Chiat Road, Singapore 427471. Closed on Tuesday.
Peranakan Food served from 12pm - 3.30pm, 5.30pm - 10pm.
bistro@betelbox.com :: +65 6440 5540 :: www.betelbox.com/bistro/

*Rumah
Kim Choo*
109/111 East Coast Road
Singapore (428800)
2nd Floor



*Authentic Peranakan Wares
and Lifestyle Items. A real Nonya
treasure Trove waiting to be discovered!*

Telephone 6741 2125

IN FITTING FORM

Kebaya maker Baba Raymond Wong shares his rules for making the perfect top

As there are numerous forms of the kebaya, we should start by examining its historical evolution. Here's a summary:

1890s - 1910s: loose-fitting white blouses trimmed with lace or handmade shadow applique. Some machine embroidery to soften the edges.

1920s: Bolder prints, stripes and florals or speckled embroidered fabrics came into fashion and these were paired with lace.

1930s - 1940s: kebayas with machine embroidery overtook lace in popularity due to the prohibitive cost of lace during the great depression and subsequent World War Two. Kebayas were either embroidered with simple scallop trimmings or with floral and animal motifs.

1950s: kebayas with extravagant embroidery became more common. The garment also acquired a body-skimming silhouette that accentuated the waistline.

Late 1950s to 1960s: Auntie Mok Tai Ee, late owner of Kim Seng Kebaya Embroideries, recalled that with the growing popularity of cheongsams, kebayas became even more fitted around both the waist and bustline. The princess seams, or *pesak*, was introduced. When Hong Kong actress Hsia Moon acted in the first Baba Nyonya movie, *Nyonyah*, her kebaya with *pesak* was so tight around the waist and bust, the males in the audience could hardly breathe! ❖

I adhere to the following steps when making a kebaya:

Stage 1: Fabric selection

Robia is no longer available nowadays. Still, there is a wide variety of both plain material and patterned fabrics that drape easily (voiles, georgette, chiffon, silk) or create volume (organza).

Stage 2: Cutting

Every customer has different proportions! Whether the customer purchases the kebaya off the rack or custom made, I would advise them to pay attention to the following:

(A) Shoulder cutting - the kebaya must sit well at the shoulders. If the kebaya fits the bodice but has shoulders that are too broad, the wearer will look like she is slouching. Therefore, kebaya shoulders often have to be tailored or altered to fit just right.

(B) Bodice - the kebaya must fit but not be overly body-hugging. This is essential for comfort. A good fit enables the wearer to lift her hands comfortably until the palms are parallel to the ground. For kebayas with *pesak*, the princess seams must meet the breast points as closely as possible to ensure a shapely figure.

(C) Body length - To ensure the wearer projects a youthful, feminine look, I recommend the kebaya be cut slightly shorter than a normal blouse. Visually, this elongates the sarong to give a more pleasing effect. Most Singaporean ladies are rather petite.

(D) Sleeve length - a formal kebaya sleeve is cuff length. The wearer can eat without staining the sleeves and it is also easier to flaunt her bracelets! There are also $\frac{3}{4}$ -sleeved kebayas which are usually daily-wear pieces with simple embroidery.

Stage 3: Embroidery and embellishments

A basic rule - ladies of smaller build are suited to smaller floral embroidery whereas ladies with larger builds can carry off bigger and more extensive embroidery. The colours and possible designs would be affected by the type and pattern of the fabrics used.

Embellishments include Swarovski crystals and sequins for a glammed-up evening look. I hide thread ends under embroidery. Stitching on the embellishments is much preferred to ironing them onto the fabric as the crystals or rhinestones may fall off after some time, leaving a mark on the delicate material.



Photo courtesy of Rumah Kim Choo.



INFUSING PERANAKAN

Malcolm Chen discovers two young designers who draw inspiration from the colour-saturated motifs of Peranakan culture

Singapore designer Kae Hana weaves printed floral and skull motifs in a collection that reflects her unique personality.

Reading through the crowd along Orchard Road on a busy weekend afternoon, I found a row of pop-up stores outside TripleOne Somerset and promptly spotted Kae Hana's boldly printed garments from her eponymous label.

Contrasting, provocative and funny are adjectives the 25-year-old designer uses to describe her curiously titled launch collection, "Raised by the Middles". I learnt that she's really paying homage to her growing up days of being raised by hardworking, middle-class parents!

Hana graduated from LaSalle College of The Arts in 2010. Armed with a degree in fashion design, she spent a year working in a corporate uniform company sourcing fabrics. Already planning to create her own label, she seized the opportunity to sign up for the Parco Next Next fashion incubation program.

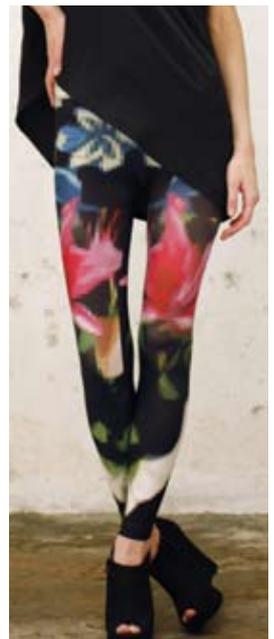
Hana's interpretation of modern Peranakan fashion includes extensive use of floral prints. But being mindful that there are already myriad floral designs, Hana laces hers with humor by arranging the flowers to form unusual skull motifs.



(Far Left)
Kae Hana's Peranakan-inspired shirt with pixel prints and skinny pants.

(Left)
Designer Kae Hana in a kebaya-inspired top.

(Right)
Kae Hana's leggings with pixellated Peranakan-inspired floral motif by Kae Hana.



Check out Kae Hana at <http://facebook.com/kae.hana.the.label>

Growing up literally playing with scissors and fabrics, Hana envisions dresses and blouses with prints placed such that they enhance the female figure. She designs her prints before the actual garments, as she believes that the motif should be the main showstopper.

Hana hopes to expand her label overseas by starting with Asia before expanding further afield.

Make-up artist turned designer Jen Su creates maverick but wearable art. She loves the theatricality of Peranakan attire.

Spunk Punk Funk was set up three years ago when Jen Su decided to venture into the fashion industry. Positioning herself as a fashion stylist and consultant in addition to being a designer, Su started by designing and creating accessories for her clients. This eventually led to the launch of SpunkPunkFunk.

Su's dramatic creations are statement pieces to be worn with brio. "Fashion is about expressing oneself. You shouldn't need to be slim or conventionally beautiful to look cool," she remarks. Su finds inspiration for her designs from anywhere and everywhere. She feels that most people subscribe blindly to trends and hopes that her designs will give people a wider choice. "People have told me that it's near impossible to find unique designs like mine locally," she says.

There is no shortage of sequins, beads and kebaya-inspired prints in her clothing. Su feels that Peranakan fashion should evolve with time. "Peranakan fashion should not be about the kebaya alone; it should be versatile. The modern *baju* could be paired with boots or jeans."

Ultimately, it's about happiness. "Doing the things you love and making others happy" is her philosophy. Jen hopes that Singaporeans will show more support for home-grown labels.❖



(Above) Jen Su's interpretation of a kebaya for the modern Nyonya.

(Left) Make-up artist turned designer, Jen Su.

Jen Su can be followed on facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/JenSu12?fref=ts>



TOOK A HIT?

Lawyer Burok's best advice on reacting to a road accident; *kus semangat!*

**Kalau kita tak langgar orang, Orang nanti langgar kita!
(Even if we're cautious, others may crash into us!)**

It baffles me to see the parties involved in a motoring accident raise their voices at each other, shouting that the other party was to be blamed for the crash. Worse, road rage may result in parties coming to blows causing physical injuries when the damage to the cars in the accident was minimal!

So, *enche enche sama Bibik bibik*, what do you do when your *keretar kena langgar*? Well, two situations would require you to do two different things.

**Bila keretar sajah sombeng orang peng ann
(Damage to cars only; no personal injury)**

If the accident happened in the middle of the road, drive to the side and exchange particulars with the other party, *i.e.* the driver of the other car, even if the other party *maki lu* and don't want to exchange particulars, *tidak apa*, take note of the other car's registration number and within 24 hours make a report with your own insurance company; *itu report panggil*

GIA report. With your mobile phone camera, snap a few shots of the damage to both cars. These images can be used for evidence as to the extent of the damage to the cars if a dispute were to arise later. *Habis itu*, if your car is badly damaged, call the Automobile Association or your *kow kuan* motor repairer to have a tow truck tow your car to the workshop.

Sometimes, the other party may propose to you that he/she does not want to report to his/her own insurance company about the accident, and may request that you have your car towed to his/her motor repairer's workshop for repairs. If the other party is sincere and the repairers repair your damaged car to your satisfaction, you're lucky, if not than you would have to make the GIA report with your insurers and proceed with your claim against the other party's insurance company. Even if the other party admits to being at fault and offers to have your car repaired by his/her motor car workshop, get a detailed written break down of the repairs that would have to be done or agreed upon, otherwise, it would be your words against the other's.

**Bila keretar sombeng sama orang pun lukar
(Damage to car; personal injuries sustained)**

If *orang lukar*, please call the police and have them attend at the site of the accident. An ambulance should be called if the injuries are serious. The process that follows would be the same as above, except that this situation would have the involvement of the police and both parties **must** make a police report on the accident.

As to who is at fault, how much would have to be claimed and what can be claimed, leave these aspects to your respective lawyers. *Jagan wak wak kee* (Do not get emotional) should the other party tell lies on the way the accident happened or twist the facts on the manner the accident occurred: the courts will have to decide. As to the issue of liability (who is more to be blamed) and damages (compensation on the injuries sustained and suffered, medical costs, all other costs and expenses) have your lawyer advise you on them. In cases where personal injuries are sustained and the damages awarded to you are more than S\$5,000, the legal costs of your lawyer acting for you in this situation would be subject to the approval of the Office of the Public Trustee of Singapore (PT), even the award or amount of compensation paid by the insurers to you in such a situation would be paid to the PT. Your lawyer will not be entrusted with such compensation sums.

So, *Babas sama Nyonyas, bila pegang keretar atau motor cycle, jimat jimat. Tapi bila kena langgar, ikot lah apa lawyer burok pesan. Kalau Baba sama Nyonya ikot bergini, perkara langgar tak akan jadi burok!* ❖

This article is not to be relied upon as a complete or comprehensive advice in a motor vehicle and/or personal injuries accident, please refer to a qualified lawyer and not a lawyer *burok* when you are in such circumstances.

BOCS

JAN TAN & CHAN

ADVOCATES & SOLICITORS

COMMISSIONER

FOR OATHS

NOTARY PUBLIC

BOCS

We are a firm of solicitors providing advice & services in the law of the sale & purchase of property, insurance, family, contractual claims, estate matters, criminal representation and civil disputes. Our Commissioner for Oaths and Notary Public is proficient in English, Mandarin, Chinese Dialects, Malay as well as Bahasa Indonesia.

133, New Bridge Road, #15-10
Chinatown Point S(059413)
Tel: 65388280
Fax: 65388281
Email: JanTChan@singnet.com.sg

BABA, BABA ON THE WALL...

Baba Emeric Lau has a blast viewing portraits of Peranakans past

The NUS Baba House's newest exhibition, *Dressing the Baba*, is not to be missed if you delight in studying portraits. The museum's collection comprises 50 images of Peranakans produced from the late 19th to early 20th century in three media: oils, watercolours and photographs. Curator Foo Su Ling's essay, published as a booklet in conjunction with the exhibition, provides an insightful academic analysis on the impact that changing cultural mores had on the Peranakan communities of Southeast Asia and the manner in which they thus chose to present themselves in portraits of the time. It is recommended reading for all visitors to the exhibition.

We live in an age where the recorded image is usually treated with little reverence. Thousands of images are uploaded every minute via digital apps such as Instagram. Yours truly regularly updates his facebook profile picture and his preoccupations do not extend beyond making sure his dark eyebags are none too apparent and that his smile is not lop-sided. Can we imagine living in a time when commissioning a portrait or engaging a photographer was a luxury? How would we present ourselves if we were granted no more than a few opportunities to have our visages captured for all eternity?

The babas and nyonyas of a century (and more) ago donned their best finery – the ladies in *baju panjang* accessorised with their best *kerosangs* and gold hair pins, while the men wore either some form traditional Chinese long gown or Western suit. Foo's essay deals extensively with attire and fashion. Examining the portraits myself, one detail that caught my eye is that the Babas in at least two portraits wore pinky rings. Researching this, I

discovered that they were probably imitating English royalty and aristocracy. It was the fashion then for men from distinguished family lines to wear signet rings on their left finger. Today, wearing such a ring sends a rather different message, often pertaining to one's artistic inclinations or sexual preference!

An aspect of vintage portraiture that I can never get over is that the sitter is invariably captured evincing a stern, inscrutable expression. In the case of photography, I have learnt that the prolonged exposure time needed meant that it was unfeasible to hold a smile. For the babas and nyonyas, their portraits were meant to affirm power and authority rather than approachability or friendliness. Nonetheless, I feel a sense of disconnect with such a collection of stern-looking forebears, especially when everyone in my family has, from a very young age, been instructed (in some cases, ordered) to smile whenever we pose for photographs. How times have changed! It is actually a source of amusement for me, when viewing such portraits of yore, to imagine how differently each person would have come across if only he or she were pictured smiling heartily.

Do attend this exhibition. There's just no better way to literally come face-to-face with our past. ❖

Dressing the Baba: Recent Donations of Portraits

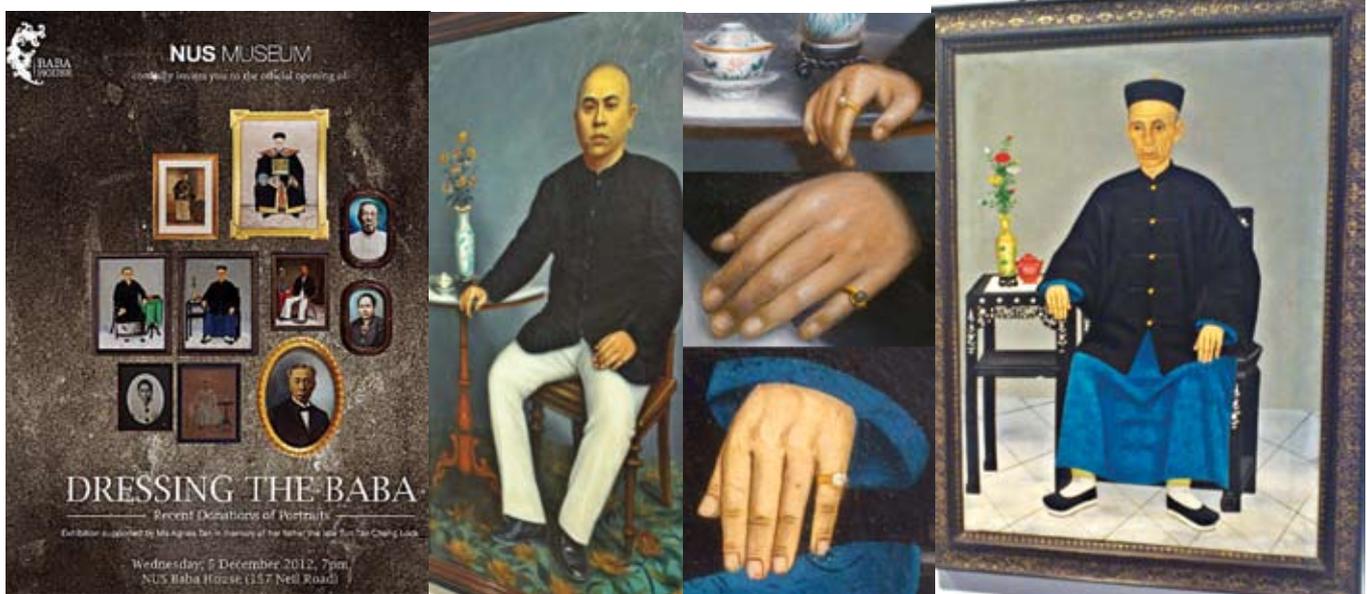
Dates: Now till 31st July 2013

All visits are free and by appointment.

Tel: (65) 6227 5731

Email: babahouse@nus.edu.sg

Web: www.nus.edu.sg/museum/baba





Modern Nyonya Prints
 Tees in assorted colours \$33.
 100% Cotton

MUSE ON THESE

Our museums' new Peranakan-inspired merchandise is a sure-fire hit

Named *Great Singapore Souvenirs* (GSS), the National Heritage Board's (NHB) newest range of museum merchandise celebrates Singapore and what makes us unique through the exploration of local quirks and habits, and re-interprets them into fun and accessible merchandise that appeals to Singaporeans and tourists alike. The GSS range resulted from collaboration between NHB's MUSEUM LABEL, a collective of local designers known as SINGAPORE Souvenirs and FARMSTORE. The GSS provides a light-hearted and atypical alternative to run-of-the mill souvenirs.

Brightly-coloured tiles of European origin, often with floral motifs, were commonly used in Singapore in the past to accentuate the architectural design of shophouses. Use of these elaborate and beautiful tiles have since dwindled, and they are now limited in production.

These tiles are now reinterpreted as fashionable prints to celebrate the intricate beauty and the unique identity of the Peranakan heritage.

The iconic graphic designs of the Peranakan tiles are extracted and emphasized, to create a series of modern monogrammed prints. ❖

**Nyonya Kueh
 Sticky Notes**
 \$15 per pack

**Peranakan Tile
 Badge**
 \$12 each / S\$40
 for a set of 4
 designs
 Soft enamel, gold
 plated, nickel-
 plated





MUSEUM

WEDDING GARMENT

Malacca, Straits Settlements,
late 19th or early 20th century
Silk, gold thread, cotton
Peranakan Museum

This wedding outfit belonged to Nyonya Sharon Chee Guek Kee, a member of one of the oldest Peranakan families in Malacca. It comprises several embroidered pieces, including a robe, a skirt, two forearm attachments, a five-layered cape, and four tie-like hangings. Among the fine and complex embroideries are auspicious Chinese motifs of phoenixes, peonies and butterflies. Peranakans of Singapore and Malaya imported these silk garments from China for their weddings during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The ensemble was on display for the first time at the Peranakan Museum, as part of the special exhibition *Emily of Emerald Hill: Singaporean Identity on Stage*. In the play, the character Emily Gan remembers wearing such an outfit for her wedding. ❖

Nyonyas' love for intan and berlian



Kim Poh Hong Goldsmith (2008) Pte Ltd
金寶芳金鋪(2008)行人有限公司

3, Pickering Street, China Square Central
#01-48, Nankin Row, Singapore 048660
Tel: 6534 1988 Fax: 6534 1922
Email: kimpohhong@yahoo.com
Reg. No.: 200820005W
Mon to Sat 11 am to 6pm
Closed on Sundays & Public Holidays

THE COLLECTION OF KATONG ANTIQUE HOUSE

Nyonyas in the 1930s



Dressed in the timeless sarong-kebaya



208 East Coast Road Singapore 428907
Tel: 63458544 Fax: 63451220

A TREASURE TROVE OF VINTAGE COLLECTIBLES

*Peranakan beaded
items, silver,
early photographs,
out-of-print books,
advertising signs,
clocks, cameras,
tin toys and many
more exciting finds*



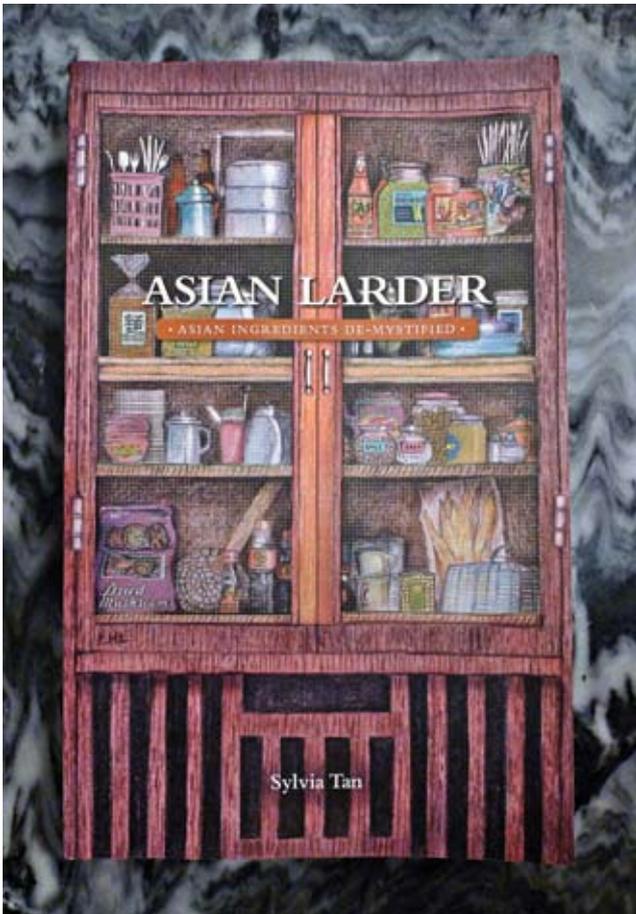
THE HERITAGE SHOP

93 Jalan Sultan #01-01 (opposite Sultan Plaza)
Tel/Fax: 62237982 HP: 96861071
Email: theheritageshop@gmail.com

ASIAN LARDER RAID

Baba Colin Chee rediscovers everyday ingredients

Sylvia Tan is a storyteller. This should not come as a surprise. Once, long ago, she was also an adroit newspaper reporter. Combine this with her love for cooking, her writing of excellent cookbooks, and an amazing hands-on knowledge of the ingredients that go into many of these Asian dishes, and you get a new book featuring 130 Asian food products that you would commonly find in Asian kitchens.



This is not a cookbook, mind you, even though it has a generous sprinkling of recipes – 120 in all. At its core, Sylvia’s *Asian Larder* is all about sauces and pastes, preserved foods, spices and herbs, seasonings, lentils and beans, soybean products, and noodles that you will need to whip up a quick last minute meal, or to painstakingly prepare for that traditional New Year family feast.

Says Sylvia, “The basic question underlying all of this is how to make use of these ingredients optimally...With this in mind, I discuss the role of each of these ingredients in Asian cooking, explain their characteristics, specify storage, describe their uses, including what can be done to refresh the tastes of commercially-made products.”

“More importantly, I think this is the first book that focuses on the ingredients specifically found in a Singapore kitchen, the kind of stuff that you and I would use. So I use chicken rice seasoning for my rice stuffing for the turkey, for example. And I use Glory’s sambal chilli paste, which is like our *rempah titek* as a base from which to build other spice pastes such as that for *lemak* and *geram assam*.”

Don’t expect the usual photographic masterwork printed on glossy art paper that is typical of cookbooks these days. This is a reference book in a way, but one that will prove a good cover-to-cover read for everyone who has a heart for cooking. There are enough stories and tips covering 130 everyday ingredients – plus recipes – to keep you turning page after page.

I found the book to be a treasure trove of interesting information. You will need to be patient. It becomes an adventure when you make little surprising discoveries about ingredients that you think you already know inside out because you’ve grown up with them in mummy’s kitchen!

The write-up on seaweed, for instance, was a revelation. How to prepare chestnuts for cooking was another. Or what spices to look for in bottled vindaloo paste.

And if you don’t know what vindaloo paste is, go buy the book! ❖

Asian Larder – Asian Ingredients De-mystified by Sylvia Tan and published by Straits Times Press is available at all good bookstores.

PETITE PORTIONS

Food enthusiast Baba Jeremy Cheok presents some light bites to whet the appetite

Just steps from the NUS Baba House on Neil Road is a fresh, chic bar-bistro-bakery that Baba Jeremy Cheok has set up with a few like-minded partners. Here, the intrepid chef shares some tasty snacks infused with Peranakan flavours that even the size-zero obsessed fashionistas amongst us will find impossible to resist.

BELACHAN BUTTER MIDWINGS (serves 4)

“I came up with this while digging through my fridge, looking for alternatives to the usual buffalo wing marinade. I found a margarine tub filled with leftover sambal *belachan* from my grandaunt and thought it would make the perfect flavour pairing. I didn’t want the sambal to just be dip so I turned it

into a compound butter that would let all the flavours permeate into the meat while cooking slowly in the oven.”

Ingredients

100g *sambal belachan*
150g salted butter
8 chicken midwings

Method

Leave the butter at room temperature to soften. Fold the *sambal belachan* into the butter till thoroughly combined. Marinate the wings in the compound butter for at least 2 hours in the fridge. Place wings, still cold, in a shallow baking tray and bake in an oven preheated to 150 degrees for 20 minutes or until golden brown, timing varies from between ovens.



Photos courtesy of Jeremy Cheok.

TWICE-COOKED PORK RIBS & LUAK CHYE (serves 4)

“I first tried *luak chye* at my great-grand aunt’s house during *taon baru china* a few years ago. I had a dislike for pickled vegetables but the truth was, I just hadn’t discovered *luak chye*. There’s a lot of knife work involved in this but it is well worth the effort. The initial slow cooking in the oven helps make the meat on the ribs really tender.”

Ingredients for ribs

1 rack of pork loin ribs, uncut (spare ribs work fine too)
1 tbsp oyster sauce
1 tbsp sesame oil
2 tbsp of light soy sauce
salt and pepper

Method

Mix the soy sauce, oyster sauce and sesame oil together and use this to marinate the ribs for at least an hour. Wrap in foil and bake at 120 degrees for

4 hours. Remove foil, season with salt and pepper and caramelise in the oven for 15 minutes at 200 degrees. Serve with *luak chye* on the side.

Ingredients for *luak chye*

200g mustard greens
40g young ginger, peeled
1tbsp salt
2tbsp sugar
4tbsp white vinegar
2 tsp Dijon mustard

Method

Mix the salt, sugar, vinegar and mustard together and stir till everything is dissolved. Finely julienne the mustard greens and the ginger, and mix in the other ingredients. Store in a container and pickle for at least two days before using. This quantity is more than enough for one rack of ribs but it is easier to make more at one go and save the rest for another time.



Pork ribs and *luak chye*.



Buah keluak scallops.

BUAH KELUAK SCALLOPS

(serves 4)

“Every time I make *ayam buah keluak*, I end up having to skim off a good amount of the oil floating on the surface before serving it to my diners. Disposing of this oil, infused with all the goodness of the *rempah*, *ayam* and *buah keluak* away seemed like such a waste so I decided to put it to good use at my restaurant. To get a good crust on the scallops, make sure they are dry. Wrap them in paper towels and leave them in the fridge for at least an hour before using them for best results.”

Ingredients

8 large sea scallops
4tbsp *buah keluak* oil (see recipe for *buah keluak* tapenade)
sea salt

Method

Heat up the frying pan and the oil. Salt the scallops with a generous amount of sea salt and place them in the pan when it just begins to smoke. Reduce the heat to medium to prevent the scallops from burning (the fumes are just like tear gas so make sure your exhaust fan is effective!) Check the sear on the bottom of the scallop after 20 seconds, the time varies depending on how well your stove can maintain the temperature of the pan. If the crust is satisfactory, flip over and repeat the process. Serve immediately. ❖

BUAH KELUAK TAPENADE

Ingredients

100g *buah keluak* flesh (can be purchased from Tekka Market)
50g shallots
30g garlic
20g *lengkuas*
20g *kunyit*
15g toasted *belachan*
15g *buah keras*
100g red chilli
1 *daon lemo perott*
250ml canola oil

Method

Blend all the ingredients into a fine smooth paste. Heat a wok, add the paste and fry until very fragrant and oil splits from emulsion. Refrigerate overnight and peel off hardened oil to use for scallops. Use remaining paste as a spread for toasted bread!

Do check out Jeremy Cheok’s brand new bar-bistro-bakery:
www.onekampongbahru.com

Lions Club of Singapore - Garden City &
The Association of Chetti Melaka (Peranakan Indians) Singapore
proudly present

PERANAKAN *Night*

An evening of Peranakan fun, entertainment and joget!
Enjoy the Chinese dinner with Nyonya kueh-kueh and desserts!

Come dressed in your Peranakan best with your
kakis & kawans and have a jolly-jolly time with us!

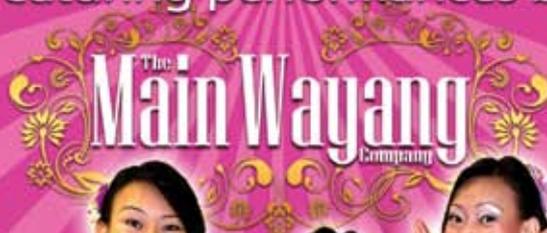
Date : Friday, 17 May 2013 Time : 7:00p.m.

Venue : Furama RiverFront Hotel

Dress Code : Peranakan Tickets at \$98 per person

Please call 62971229 for tickets and more information.

Featuring performances by



The Main Wayang Singers show is available for local and international
corporate & promotional events, toa sehjit dinners, weddings and concerts.

The Main Wayang Company

www.mainwayang.com E-mail : peranakan@mainwayang.com

Find us on YouTube and Facebook

THEATRE

CHAP GOH MEH IN PENANG

Baba Alvin Oon relates a very packed weekend up north

Just like Singapore's renowned annual Chingay Parade, Penang's Chap Goh Meh Festival is a riotous celebration. Across the island, temples are brightly lit and government buildings bedecked with fairy-lights. Two *panggung* stages are assembled for public concerts, and the vicinity buzzes with activities including cultural dances, a best kebaya contest, *getai* style pop concerts, etc.

Back by popular demand, The Main Wayang Company's MW Singers were invited by The Penang State Chinese Association (PSCA) to perform at a series of mini concerts over the Chap Goh Meh weekend. On Friday 22 February, MW performed at a special dinner hosted by the association's patron Dato Seri Khoo Kiat Siew. On Saturday, the show moved to the SCPA Chap Goh Meh Dinner; and on Sunday, MW brought the house down at The Esplanade, with two sets of public concerts.

Our show repertoire ranged from a Bollywood style 'Chan Mali Chan' to a 'Baba Nyonya Gangnam Style', plus many favourite nostalgic tunes. It was easy to get all our happy merry-makers on their feet to *joget* and party the night away. Tourism Minister Danny Low was very impressed with MW's lively acts, and expressed a desire to have the MW Singers back soon! ❖

THE CHAIR: A PERANAKAN TAPESTRY

Main Wayang is proud to present this work by award-winning playwright, Baba Desmond Sim.

The Chair was staged by The Main Wayang Company at The Tampines Primary School Black Box Theatre on 30 and 31 March 2013. Breaking away from the traditional *panggung wayang* style,



this play was presented in-the-round with the audience seated on three sides of the action. Original music and soundscape was specially composed by Ernest Thio to layer the various scenes with dramatic accents, giving the play a docu-drama effect.

It is hoped that Singaporeans will gain a better appreciation of their own culture as well as learn a bit more about the Peranakans from this production.



In front of the *dondang sayang* bus with SCPA members and their President, Dato' Tan Gin Soon.



MW Singers with Dato' Seri Khoo Keat Siew and his wife.

LION-HEARTED

Baba Gerard Lee reports on a unique sing-along

On the auspicious 7th day of the Chinese Lunar New Year (人日), the Peranakan Voices had the honour of entertaining the guests of the Lions Club of Singapore, Chatsworth, to raise funds for the Lions Home for the Elders. The charity lunch was held at the PeraMakan Restaurant at Keppel Club.

Our merry choir mesmerised the guests with a litany of infectious songs and a humorous skit from the legendary G.T. Lye and Nyonya Shirley Tay. Then, for the very first time, five male members of the Peranakan Voices brought on their guitars and ukulele and delivered a retinue of evergreen favourites "unplugged". The guests tapped their feet, sang along and started to *joget* with us!

Baba Chan Eng Thai also enlightened the guests on some of our practices and traditions and recited two specially-composed *pantons*. ❖



Shirley Tay and G.T. Lye ham it up.



Sea Home Boutique
(Home Stay)



Newly Opened Penang's 1st Peranakan style Sea Home Boutique (Homestay)

A showcase of the rich Straits Chinese heritage preserved from the 17th century offering a perfect private getaway with 12 rooms filled with antiques and collectibles. Experience for yourself the unforgettable charm of sleeping on a grand mother of pearl carved wedding bed. Hurry! Special Discounts of up to 25% for limited period only.

Make your reservations at: Tel: +604 8982488 Website: www.seahomeboutique.com | Email: info@seahomeboutiques.com

Address: 523 D&E, Jalan Tanjung Bungah, 11200 Penang (Beside Dalat School Open Air Car Park), T/F: +604 898 2488,
Website: www.seahomeboutique.com or www.seahomeboutiques.com | Email: info@seahomeboutiques.com or info@seahomeboutiques.com
Operation hours for the Home Stay: 8am - 12am



Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose Hope the Lord is. For He shall be as a Tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green: and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.
(Jeremiah 17:7,8 KJV)



Be enthralled with the timeless craftsmanship of beauty in gold, intan and old european cut diamond jewelleryes, ceramics and beautifully embroidered antique kebayas which are the Footprints of the Peranakans here at Timeless Treasure! Come & take a piece of memory with you from our range of ageless collectibles.

Timeless Treasure

19 Tanglin Road #03-47, Tanglin Shopping Centre, Singapore 247909
Tel: 68352235 • HP: 96720713 Email: timetng@singnet.com.sg

NOTICEBOARD

PERANAKAN ASSOCIATIONS IN THE REGION

SINGAPORE

The Peranakan Association Singapore (TPAS)

Raffles City PO Box 1640, Singapore 911755
Contact: Mrs Lim Geok Huay, Hon Secretary
Email: geok@peranakan.org.sg
Tel: 65 6255 0704
Fax: 65 6353 6801
Website: peranakan.org.sg

Gunong Sayang Association (GSA)

50 Lorong 24A, Geylang Road, Singapore 398574
Contact: Mr Christopher Bek, President
Email: gunongsayang@hotmail.com
Mobile: 65 9647 8456
Fax: 65 6441 1569
Website: gunongsayang.org

Association of Chetti Melaka (Peranakan Indians) Singapore

5001 Beach Road #08-09
Golden Mile Complex
Singapore 199588
Contact: Mr Pono Kalastree
Office: 6297 1229
Mobile: 9678 1767

MALAYSIA

MALACCA

Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka (PPCM)

149, Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock (Heeren Street), 75200 Melaka
Contact: Ms Chin Siok Hoon, PJK (Hon Secretary)
Email: admin@ppcm-melaka.org
Website: www.ppcm-melaka.org
Tel: 012 6218 909
Fax: 06 2837 215
To contact the President, Datuk Phua Jin Hock, please email phuajh@gmail.com.

PENANG

State Chinese (Penang) Association / Persatuan Peranakan Cina Pulau Pinang

13, Perak Road
President: Datuk Tan Gin Soon
Contact: 0162050517
Email: ginsoon@hotmail.com

KUALA LUMPUR & SELANGOR

Persatuan Peranakan Baba Nyonya Kuala Lumpur & Selangor (PPBNKLS)

63 Jalan Telawi, Bangsar Baru, 59100, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Contact: Cedric Tan, Hon Secretary
Email: peranakan_kl@yahoo.com.my
Tel: 03 2287 1613
Fax: 03 2287 3613
Website: peranakan-kl.org
To contact the President,
Dr Lee Su Kim, please email sukim25@yahoo.com.

KELANTAN

Association of Peranakan Chinese, Kelantan

Lor 2344 Kampong Wakaf Stan, Kubang Kerian,

16150 Kota Bharu, Kelantan, Malaysia

Contact: Law Awang
Tel: 609-7652261 Mobile: 012-9815688
Email: law_awang@yahoo.com

THAILAND

Thai Peranakan Association

61 Satul Road, Muang District, Phuket 83000, Thailand
Contacts: Dr Kosol Taenguthai at email: k_tanguthai@hotmail.com; Ajan Pranee Sakulpipatana at email: Pranee81@yahoo.com, mobile: +66 81 693 3576; or Piyarat Kulvanich at email: kpiyarat2000@yahoo.com or mobile: +66 81 719 0967.
Fax: +66 76 258179
Tel: +66 76 258124
Website: Thaiperanakan.com

INDONESIA

Association of Peranakan Tionghoa Indonesia

Hero Building II Suite 902,
Jl. Jend. Garot Subroto 177A
Kav. 64 Jakarta 12870, Indonesia
Contact: Chairman Mr Andrew Susanto
Tel +6221 8317751
Fax +6221 8317731
Email: info@aspertina.org
Website: aspertina.org

AUSTRALIA

MELBOURNE

Peranakan Association Australia Inc

P.O. Box 1278, Hawksburn, Victoria, Australia 3142
Contacts: Joseph Then, Secretary, at email j.then@bigpond.com
or Ivy Lee Gek Kim, newsletter editor, at email gekkim@yahoo.co.uk
Website: www.peranakan.org.au

SYDNEY

Peranakan Association Australia (PAA) NSW Inc

P O Box 3810, Marsfield,
NSW 2122 Australia
Contact: Evelyn Tan, President
Website: peranakanaustralia.org
Email: evelyn.peranakan@gmail.com

WELCOME

A big welcome to our new members:

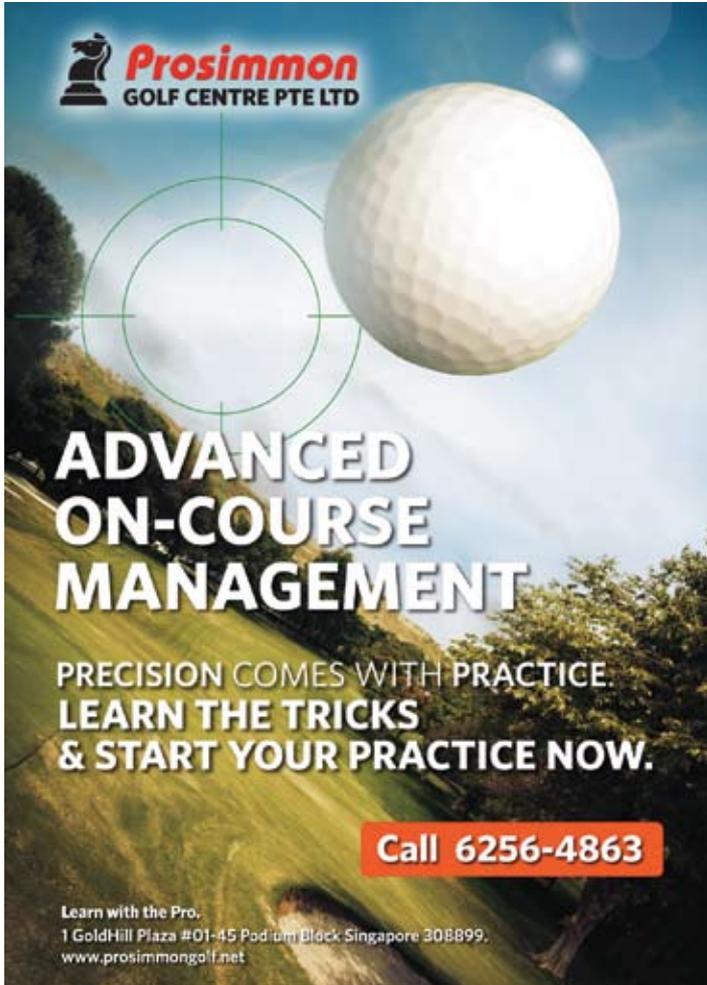
1. Ms. Simone Khoo Wei Yin
2. Ms. Yvonne Tan Kim Kee
3. Mr. Adrian Ching Hong Leong

We appeal to all members who have not submitted two hard copy passport photos of themselves to please do so in order for the committee to produce your membership cards.

All members are to ensure that the Association is kept updated of all their contact details, including email, mailing address and telephone numbers. Please contact Mrs Lim Geok Huay at 62550704 or email geok@peranakan.org.sg.

TPAS 113th Annual General Meeting

We wish to notify all members that at time of printing, this meeting is deferred to 4 May, pending confirmation of time and venue. A further notification will be circulated in due course. Thank you.



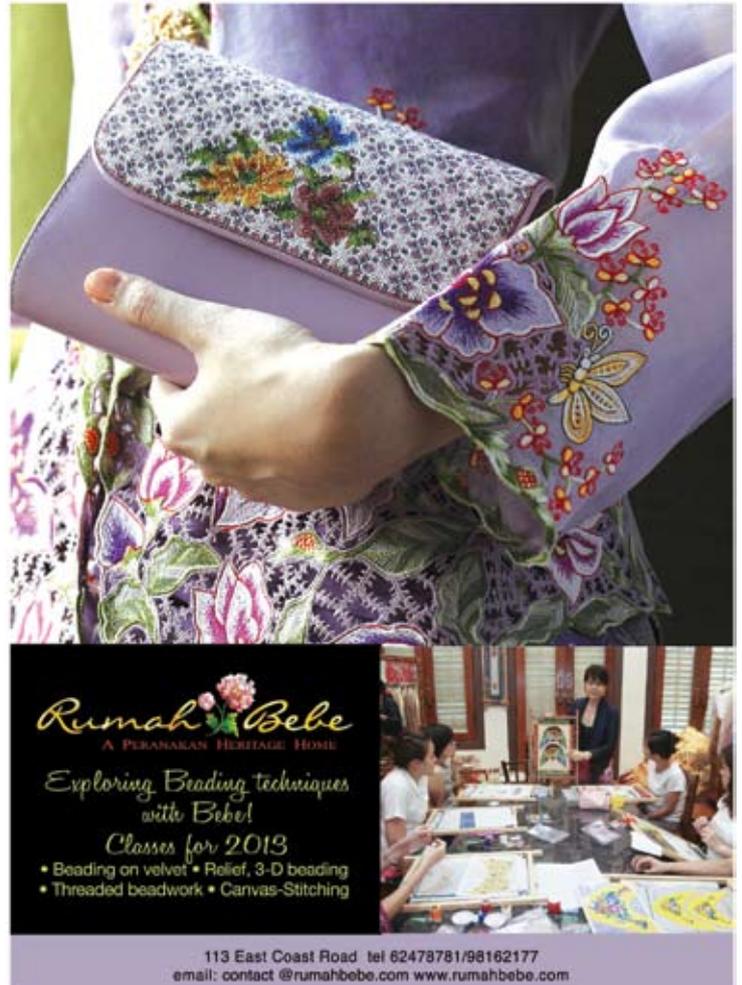
Prosimmon
GOLF CENTRE PTE LTD

ADVANCED ON-COURSE MANAGEMENT

PRECISION COMES WITH PRACTICE.
LEARN THE TRICKS & START YOUR PRACTICE NOW.

Call 6256-4863

Learn with the Pro.
1 GoldHill Plaza #01-45 Podium Block Singapore 308899.
www.prosimmongolf.net



Rumah Bebe
A PERANAKAN HERITAGE HOME

Exploring Beading techniques with Bebe!
Classes for 2013

- Beading on velvet • Relief, 3-D beading
- Threaded beadwork • Canvas-Stitching

113 East Coast Road tel 62478781/98162177
email: contact@rumahbebe.com www.rumahbebe.com

MUSEUMS

Peranakan Museum. See the world's first national Peranakan Museum with the most comprehensive and finest collection of Peranakan artefacts. The boutique museum examines the centres of Peranakan culture in Malacca, Penang and Singapore, and traces its links to as far as Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand. Peranakan Museum, 39 Armenian Street, Singapore 179941. website: www.peranakanmuseum.sg Email: nhb_pm_vs@nhb.gov.sg Tel: 6332 7591.



National Museum of Singapore. The museum's Singapore History Gallery pays tribute to the contributions of the pioneering Peranakans. On view are some outstanding artefacts, including the oil portrait of Lim Boon Keng, old photographs, jewellery and sreh sets, as well as the magnificent carved wood hearse of Tan Jiak Kim, which is considered one of the 11 Treasures of the National Museum. National Museum of Singapore, 93 Stamford Road, Tel: 63323659, Opening Hours: 10am to 6pm Daily (Singapore History Gallery), 10am to 9pm Daily (Singapore Living Galleries), Admission \$10 (adults), \$5 (senior citizens above 60), \$5 (students, Nsmen), Free admission to the Singapore Living Galleries from 6pm to 9pm. <http://nationalmuseum.sg>.



Baba House. This heritage house goes back in time to 1928. Experience what a grand Peranakan terraced house would have been like. Formerly owned by the Wee family (whose ancestor Wee Bin was a mid-19th century shipping magnate) since 1910. 157 Neil Road, Singapore. Tel: 62275731. Visits are by guided tours. Please call the house for details. <http://www.nus.edu.sg/museum/baba/index.html>

Dressing the Baba: Recent Donations of Portraits. This exhibition features a selection of late 19th to early 20th century portraits of ethnic Chinese individuals and couples from Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. As recent donations, the display surveys portraiture, its functions, and ideas it may convey. Significant to such enquiry is the projection of identities informed by gender, ethnicity and economic status,



and the conventions of portrait making that facilitate such projections. Presented at NUS Baba House, formerly a Peranakan residence, the exhibition complements ways of encountering the cultural histories of the regional Peranakan communities, explored through portraits and their proposed contexts. From 5 December 2012 to 31 July 2013. Please call to arrange visits.

Asian Civilisations Museum. The first museum in the region to display a wide range of artefacts from across Asia, the ACM not surprisingly has some important Peranakan treasures. The Mary and Philbert Chin Gallery has some lavish examples of gold jewellery, *sreh* boxes and other paraphernalia, some encrusted with diamonds, and fine batik textiles from the north coast of Java, all made for the Peranakan market. 1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555, Tel: 6332 2982, Opening Hours: 9am to 7pm (Tuesdays to Saturdays), 1pm to 7pm (Mondays), Admission \$8 (adults), \$4 (senior citizens and students). <http://www.acm.org.sg>

Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall
The old Sun Yat Sen Villa reopened in October 2011 after extensive renovations with a new name. Fitting tribute is given to the former owners of the house, especially Teo Eng Hock, a son of Teo Lee, one of the pioneer Teochew merchants in Singapore, together with his nephew Lim Nee Soon, were among the loyal supporters of Sun Yat Sen's bid to overthrow the Qing government. The exhibition shows how Singapore, and the Chinese community here played an important part in this pivotal moment of world history. Intimate photos of family life, and of Teo Eng Hock's nyonya mother, Mrs Teo Lee née Tan Poh Neo (granddaughter of the kapitan of Muntok), add charm and a Peranakan angle to the experience. 12 Tai Gin Road, Singapore 327874, Tel: 6256 7377, Opening Hours: 10am-5pm daily. Website: wanqingyuan.org.sg.



LANDMARKS
Blair Plain. A typical Peranakan residential area around Spottiswoode Park, Blair Road and Neil Road which is worth a stroll. Visit Guan Antiques nearby at Kampong Bahru Road, a treasure trove of Peranakan heirlooms. http://www.arch.nus.edu.sg/SOA/design_studio/ds2b/blair/study/Blair.html.

Emerald Hill Road. Another interesting residential district showcasing the best of eclectic Peranakan residential architecture, just off Orchard Road.

Katong and Joo Chiat. Once the nerve centre of Peranakan life in Singapore. In its heyday it was the site of nearby grand seaside villas and elaborate Peranakan terraced houses. The latter can still be seen in a walk along Koon Seng Road. Also visit Peranakan shops such as Katong Antique House (208 East Coast Road) and Rumah Bebe (113 East Coast Road) as well as the great variety of Peranakan restaurants in the neighbourhood. http://www.visitsingapore.com/publish/stbportal/en/home/what_to_see/suburban_living/katong.html. Also <http://www.myjoochiat.com>.



Amoy Street and Telok Ayer Street. One of the first Peranakan enclaves, now occupied by restaurants and offices. Many Peranakans from Malacca moved to this area as soon as the East India Company began to lease out land for sale.

Thian Hock Keng. The oldest Hokkien temple in Singapore was founded in 1821 although the present structure, built without nails, was completed only in 1841. The temple is dedicated to Mazu, the Daoist goddess of the sea and protector of all seamen. Many of the temple's patrons were Peranakan pioneers, such as Tan Tock Seng, who donated \$30,000 for renovations. He also founded the hospital named after him. The Hokkien Huay Kuan, a community organisation for Hokkien people in Singapore was housed at the temple and also helmed by Peranakan pioneers. Thian Hock Keng, 158 Telok Ayer Street, Tel: 6423 4616.



Tan Si Chong Su. Built in 1878, Tan Si Chong Su is the ancestral temple of the Tan clan, and was founded by prominent Baba philanthropists Tan Kim Ching, son of Tan Tock Seng, and Tan Beng Swee, the son of Tan Kim Seng. The first president of the temple, Tan Kim Tian, was a well-known Baba shipping tycoon. The temple consists of shrines for the ancestral tablets of Tan clansmen, as well as altars to the clan deities. The elaborate stone and wood carvings as well as the swooping ceramic roof finials makes this one of the most elaborate Chinese temples in Singapore, quaintly located amid the gleaming towers of the financial district. Tan Si Chong Su, 15 Magazine Road.





WE SPECIALISE IN PERANAKAN ANTIQUES SUCH AS
BEADWORK, EMBROIDERY, FURNITURE, EPERGNES,
PHOTOGRAPHS, NYONYAWARE, SILVERWARE, JEWELLERY



We also purchase Peranakan and all types of antiques at fair and attractive prices. Call us for a quote.



Very Rare Teakwood Brown and Gold Sam Kai Altar Table

GUAN ANTIQUE

31 KAMPONG BAHRU SINGAPORE 169353 TEL:6226 2281 OPEN DAILY: 11AM - 7PM



THE
PERANAKAN
ASSOCIATION

SINGAPORE