

Festival explores lesser-known stories of Singapore's past

Month-long line-up of interactive projects developed by youth to bring history to life

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History is far from boring, as organisers of The Future of Our Pasts festival are aiming to prove, with their month-long line-up of 11 multidisciplinary projects exploring lesser-known stories of Singapore's past.

The festival, by Yale-NUS College in support of the Singapore Bicentennial Office, will feature an interactive theatrical installation, films

and graphic novels.

There will also be a music event called Sarong Party, which features a performance reflecting on Singapore's colonial legacy; trivia nights testing knowledge of Singapore's history, such as the various communities of the Straits Settlements; and a board-game night, where participants can fight for the favour of the Temenggong and discover treasures as an 1800s trader.

Other highlights include documentary films on Tampines Junior College before it merged with Meri-

dian Junior College this year, and life as a young mixed-race couple – a Malaysian Ceylonese Tamil male and a Chinese American female.

The festival, which was developed with a pool of young artists and cultural advocates, was launched at Golden Mile Tower's The Projector yesterday.

It was officiated by Education Minister Ong Ye Kung, who said he had approached Yale-NUS president Tan Tai Yong to find ways to encourage youth to engage with Singapore's history on a personal level. He said the Ministry of Education set aside a small budget for this.

"Through the festival, the young creators are making history more relatable and accessible. This is an im-

portant endeavour as we try to connect with our past, gain a better understanding of our history, and better understand the soul of our nation and people," said Mr Ong.

Professor Tan said open calls for proposals for the festival started in 2017. He said they were looking to support projects by young people that explore historical narratives that resonate with them.

The creators then developed their projects over the past 18 months.

"As a historian, I know full well that my subject of study is often seen as overly academic, textbook-based, even 'boring'," Prof Tan said.

"Admittedly, it can sometimes be challenging for people to relate to a



Education Minister Ong Ye Kung writing a message of well wishes for The Future of Our Pasts at the launch of the festival at Golden Mile Tower's The Projector yesterday. Looking on are (from left) Mr Gene Tan, executive director of the Singapore Bicentennial Office, and members of one of the festival's projects, called Intimacies, Mr Calvin Teo and Ms Oh Kailin. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

broad, national historical narrative on any deep personal level. The Future of Our Pasts festival seeks to change that perception of history."

Other projects include a magazine called Meantime, which fea-

tures a collection of love stories from yesteryear and has old photographs such as one of a couple's first date at a cinema in the 1950s.

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