

A watercolor illustration of a park gazebo. The gazebo has a dark, curved roof and is supported by several thin, light-colored pillars. In the center of the gazebo, there is a mural of a clown's face with red hair and a wide, red mouth. The gazebo is surrounded by lush green trees and foliage. In the foreground, there is a paved area and a small garden bed with red flowers. The overall style is artistic and sketchy.

neighbOURhoods

WE ♥
BEDOK

Urban Sketchers Singapore

WE 
BEDOK

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WE ♥ BEDOK



Our New and Old Home

My wife and I are relatively new residents of Bedok but it has always been familiar to us. The initial impression of Bedok for non-residents probably revolves around the delectable fare at Bedok Town Centre and Simpang Bedok. That, and the convenience of amenities like banks, markets and neighbourhood shops where you can get anything and everything, rank high as a few of the many things we love about Bedok.

It may come as a surprise that Bedok's name actually predates Raffles' arrival in Singapore. On a 1604 map, published in Manuel Godinho de Erédia's 1882 book, are Sune Bodo and nearby Tana Mera, variant names for Sungei Bedok and Tanah Merah, or Red Cliff. These were likely significant navigational points for seafaring Orang Laut and perhaps the earliest known records of the area.

Presumably, settlements would have existed since then but physical and cultural landscapes evolve over time. At Bedok, the majority of changes occurred in the 1960s, when the area was part of the East Coast Reclamation Scheme and Bedok New Town was developed. Even now, Bedok continues to transform but the largely residential area still retains its convivial atmosphere.

This beautifully executed collection of sketches by Urban Sketchers Singapore has captured the spirit and history of Bedok. It is truly a collection of timeless snapshots filled with memories of the place my wife and I now call home.

Dr Yeo Kang Shua

Assistant Professor of Architectural History, Theory and Criticism,
Singapore University of Technology and Design



Situated just opposite Temasek Junior College, Block 17's confectioneries and sundry stores are regularly thronged by students.





"Bedok Community Centre started from one shophouse unit at Block 17 Bedok South Road. I was the chairperson for their Women's Executive Committee after moving here in 1980 — a friend had advised that it was better to raise children away from the city. We served with real passion, helping the needy, conducting courses and even organising the Miss Bedok pageant!"

- Maryam Andy, PBM, retired lecturer

"Bedok Interchange is pretty snazzy,
buses and trains arrive from the city.
The best place to gather in the East,
where all sorts come to feast.
Hollywood Dessert, Bedok chwee kueh,
Uncle's extra black chai tow kway.
Ah Pek lim kopi and Gi Na drink latte,
plus free shuttle to IKEA and Parkway.

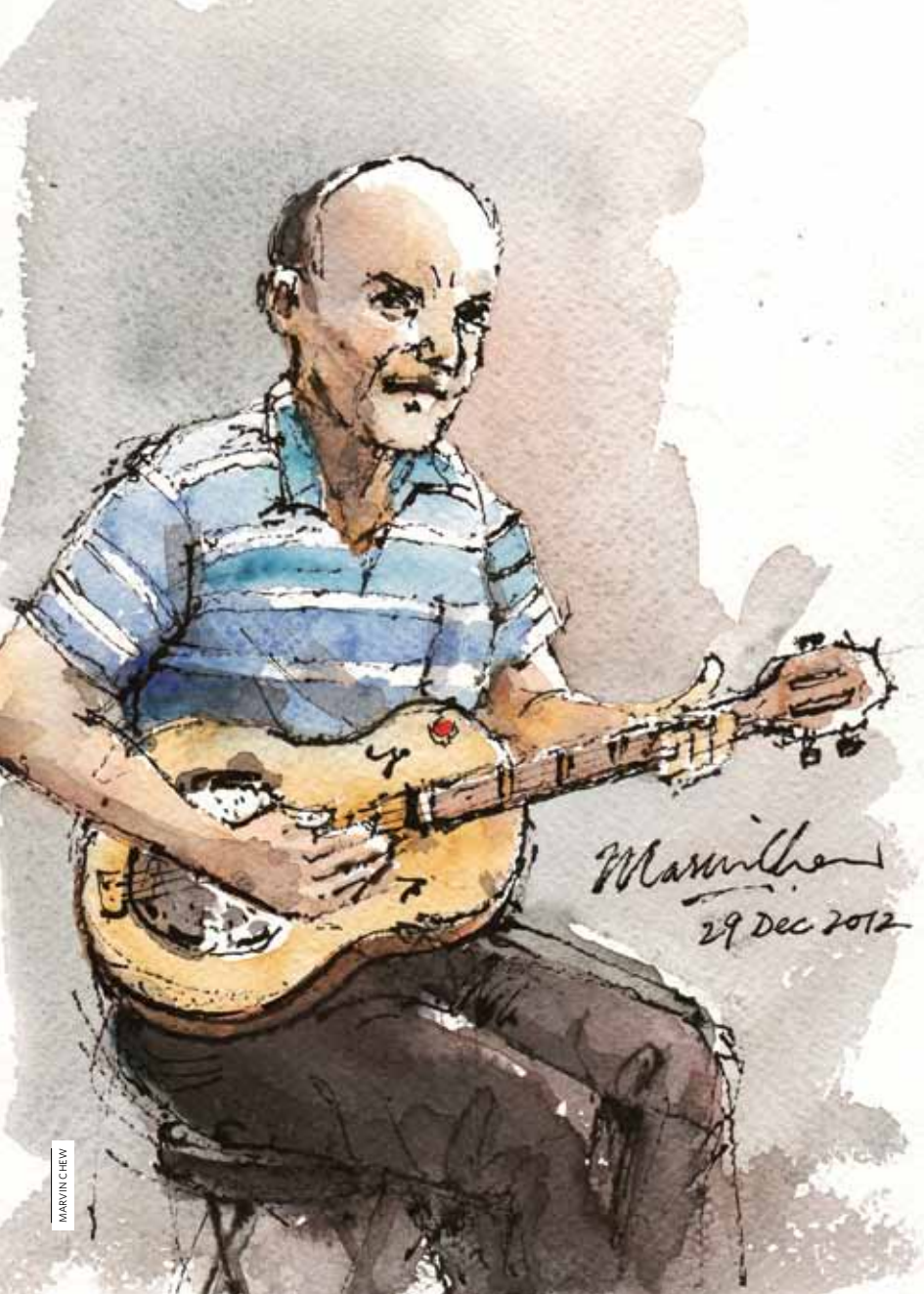
"What's there not to love?"

- Stephanie Wong, designer and illustrator of
The Diary of Amos Lee series





Despite its cramped interiors, Bedok Interchange Food Centre is a great stopover for chwee kueh and chai tow kway. Only 30 per cent of stallholders are guaranteed places at the new hawker centre in 2014.



This qin qin player evokes the days when the bedoh, or Malay slit drum, was used at Masjid Al-Taqua as a call to prayer—Bedok is possibly named after this Malay instrument.

"When I was growing up in Bedok from 1979, there used to be an old grandmother who would walk along the corridors of our HDB block selling freshly baked bread. I can still remember the aroma of her pandan swirl bread. On hindsight it must have been very hard work for an old lady like her, carrying two large baskets on a pole slung on her back. But she was always cheerful. Bedok was a new housing estate then, but she brought an old world, kampung feel to the place."

- Lau Peet Meng, police officer



"I'd very nearly forgotten this, but through the 1990s, I often stopped at this old building after getting off at the adjacent bus interchange (now moved) to have an iced tea and a burger at McDonald's on the ground floor. I would watch cinema patrons buy their tickets and requisite kacang putih at the Princess and Rajah twin cinema. At the other corner of the building, also on the ground floor, was a large video arcade. I was in that dark and noisy place a lot of the time, giving away coins at my favourite airplane games, bubble shooter machines and battle tank simulators. McDonald's is still there today, but not the games centre; the cinemas closed in 2008."

- Lau Mui Lieng, editor and writer

Bedok has an illustrious cinematic heritage. In Bedok Town Centre alone, there were four theatres in operation: Princess-Rajah, Bedok 1 and 2, Changi and Liwagu.

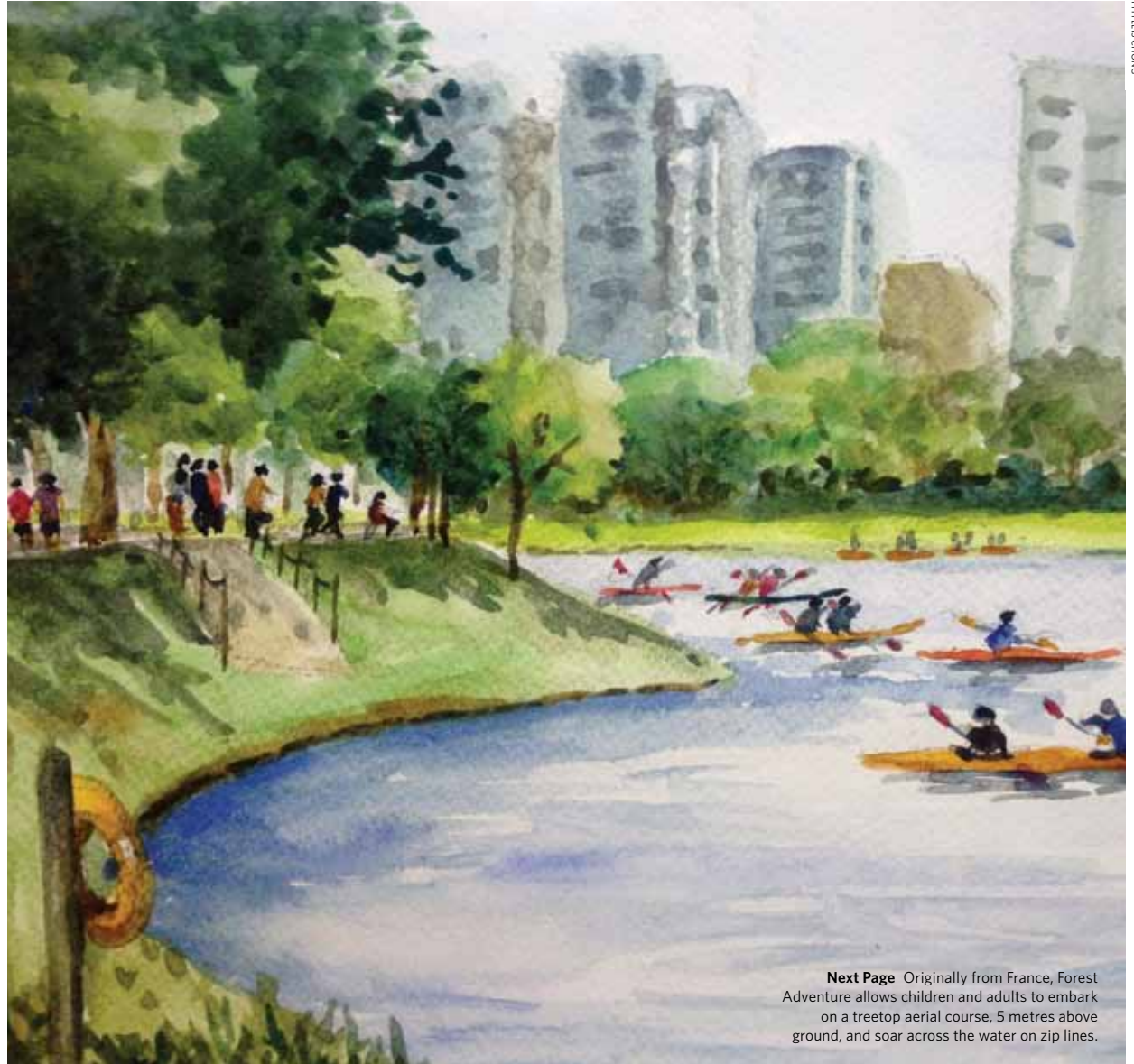
"I'd spent my early childhood in Bedok, and in my teens, when I studied at nearby Temasek Polytechnic, I relaxed at the reservoir park with friends after class, and also went there for annual school runs.

"It felt unreal to read about the eight suicides at Bedok Reservoir from 2011 to 2012. I couldn't comprehend what would drive people to kill themselves at the reservoir. I wanted to try to understand by writing a fictional take on the events. The novel and stage play are about loss, and about searching and accepting one's own demons.

"Little did I know, back then, that my harmless little reservoir would become the muse for my writings."

- Wesley Leon Aroozoo, author of *Bedok Reservoir*

Created out of a sand quarry, Bedok Reservoir today is home to a 4.3 kilometres jogging track, water sports centre and even four Berlin Wall panels, entitled *Kings of Freedom*.



Next Page Originally from France, Forest Adventure allows children and adults to embark on a treetop aerial course, 5 metres above ground, and soar across the water on zip lines.



About the series

Our Neighbourhoods is a series of sketchbooks dedicated to neighbourhoods in Singapore. Each book features drawings from the group of artists called Urban Sketchers Singapore, coupled with the recollections of people who live or work in the community. The books are unique in capturing a time capsule of the place. *We Love Bedok* is the third book in the series. The first, *We Love Toa Payoh*, was published in 2012 and *We Love Tiong Bahru* in 2013. Look for forthcoming titles on www.epigrambooks.sg.

About Urban Sketchers Singapore

Urban Sketchers Singapore is an informal group of artists who draw the places they visit, capturing what they see from direct observation on location. See urbansketchers-singapore.blogspot.sg for more details of their sketching sojourns.

Also in the series



ALVIN MARK TAN

"Memory is the ultimate thing that makes a place come alive. I was a Bedok kid—this book beautifully preserves Bedok's diversity and colour!" – Royston Tan, director of *Old Places*

Tucked away in the East is a sleeping giant: Bedok, a paragon of the heartlands. Previously bordered by the beach, this neighbourhood was known for its scrumptious seafood. Bedok, or Bodo, as it was once called, is now the district with the largest resident population—and the oldest.

Journey with Urban Sketchers Singapore as great change sweeps eastward. Dodge through major construction at the beloved Bedok Town Centre, where Princess Theatre still stands, for the quiet of Bedok North's songbirds. Have a dip at Bedok Swimming Complex, then replenish your energy with the famed rojak and cheng tng at Bedok South. The artists delightfully depict Bedok Reservoir too, where a certain Wall has travelled all the way from Berlin to Bedok.



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