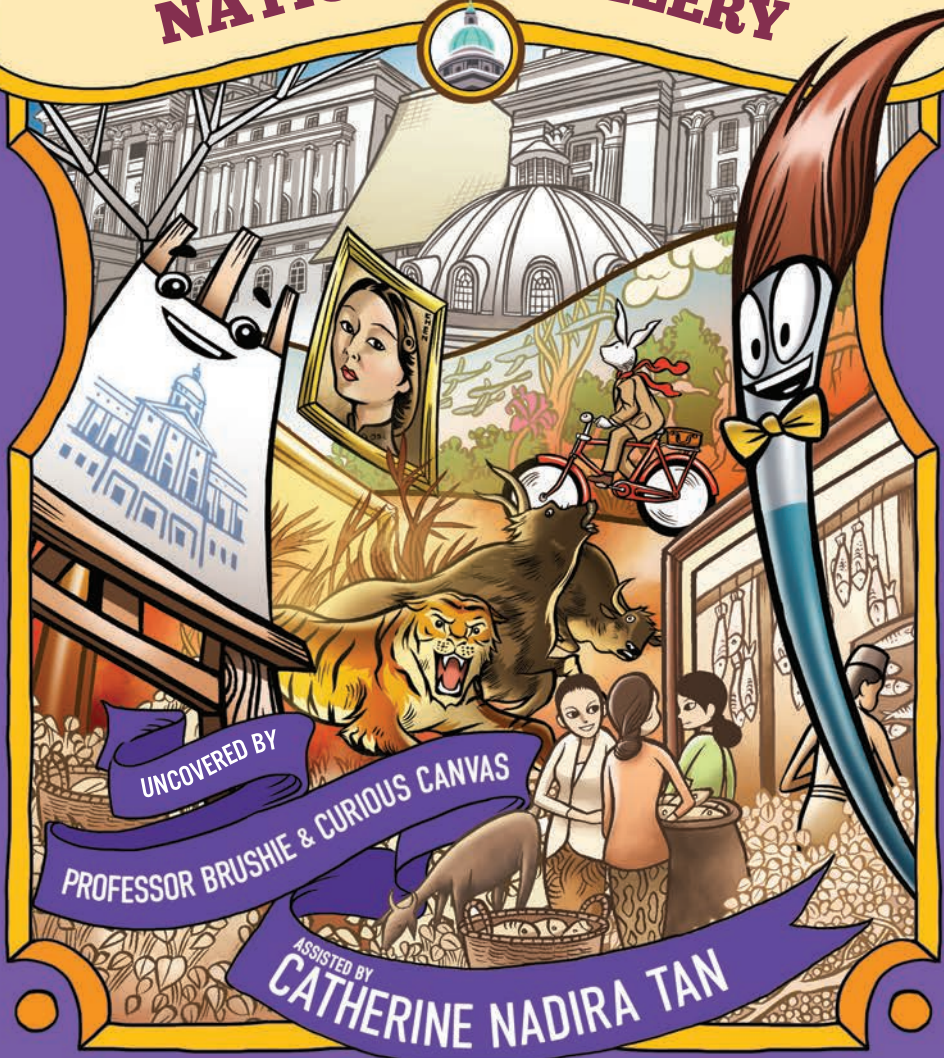


AWARD-WINNING SERIES

# SECRETS OF SINGAPORE

## NATIONAL GALLERY



UNCOVERED BY  
PROFESSOR BRUSHIE & CURIOUS CANVAS

ASSISTED BY  
CATHERINE NADIRA TAN

“A treasure trove of all things art-related—from the nitty-gritty of setting up an exhibition to art making and the who’s who of art in Singapore and Southeast Asia. Filled with quirky illustrations, this is a charming and easy-to-read introduction for both the young and young-at-heart taking the first step towards art appreciation in National Gallery Singapore.”

—Chia Mia Chiang, President, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts

“This book reveals all kinds of fascinating facts about National Gallery Singapore that would enrich any visit here!”

—Elaine Ee, Deputy Director, National Gallery Singapore

“A visit to National Gallery Singapore would not be complete without this book. Besides the 101 facts that will satisfy the most curious kid (is there really a chocolate ceiling?), it offers a friendly and accessible take on how to appreciate art. A real gem!”

—Monica Lim, author of *The Good, the Bad and the PSLE*, and co-author of the Danger Dan series and several award-winning Secrets of Singapore books

“A riveting page-turner for both the serious adult and the curious child... Teeming with fascinating nuggets about National Gallery Singapore and filled with endless adventure. You will never look at a simple piece of artwork the same way again.”

—Caroline Sin, General Paper tutor

**SECRETS OF  
SINGAPORE**  
**NATIONAL GALLERY**





*written by*  
**Catherine Nadira Tan**  
*illustrated by*  
**Elvin Ching**

**E**  
**EPIGRAM**  
SINGAPORE · LONDON

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*Untitled (Malayan Life)*, 1986 by Seah Kim Joo (b. 1939), installation view, courtesy of LASALLE College of the Arts.

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*To my daughter Dablia,  
who taught me how to view the world with childlike wonder*



NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE

A special thanks to the following at National Gallery

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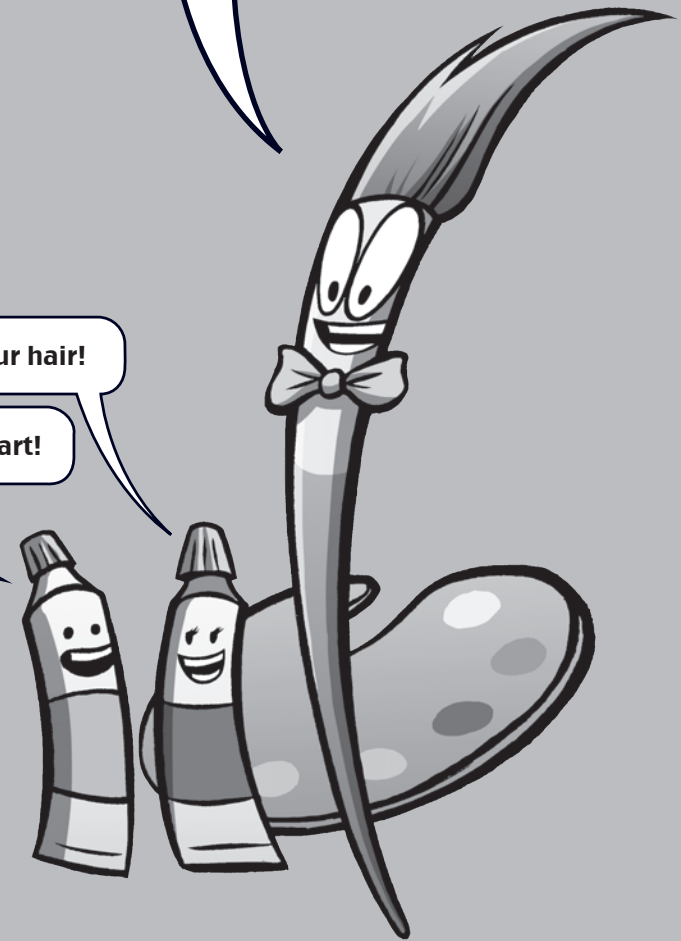
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***Hello there! I'm Professor Brushie,  
and I love working with complimentary...er,  
I mean, complementary colours.***

***Ooh, I love your hair!***

***You are so smart!***

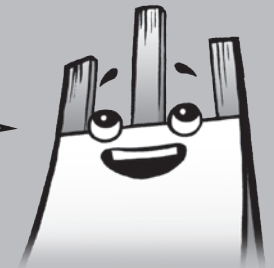


*...and I'm Curious Canvas. Some people like to call me a starving artist! It's because I'm always hungry!*

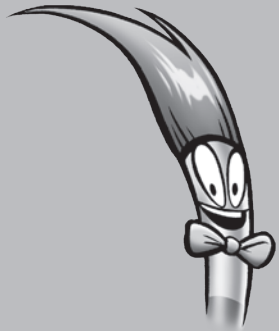


*We have been creating art together for a long, long time.*

*Have you seen our works?*

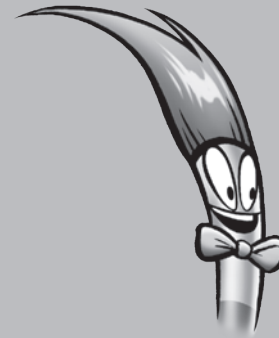






*We are here to let you in on a little secret. You don't need to be artsy or brainy to enjoy art!*

*Looking at art is like playing detective. The next time you visit a gallery, search for clues left by the artist.*



*So relax, get your magnifying glass and let's go!*





National Gallery Singapore contains lots of cool art, which we call **AMAZING ARTWORKS**.

Any other interesting information about the Gallery, its artists or its artworks are marked as **FASCINATING FACTS**. In **LONGER LOOK**, we dive deeper into a subject. Also check out the glossary on page 101 and handy maps on page 123.

#### **FASCINATING FACT**

The artworks at the Gallery may not be on display permanently. That means the displays keep changing! Some of the art can be seen for only a few months, while others for two years or more.

So don't worry if you can't find an artwork mentioned in this book when you visit the Gallery. They are not missing! They might be in storage or under conservation, or they might have been returned to their owners who loaned them to the Gallery (see page 17).

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# SECTION



## Art Is Everywhere

### I Spy With My Eye

#### Where to Find Art in Singapore

Did you know National Gallery Singapore has the world's largest public display of Southeast Asian art? This means you can view artworks by artists not just from Singapore, but also from other countries of Southeast Asia. The list of those countries is long, so take a deep breath, and here goes:

BruneiCambodiaIndonesiaLaosMalaysiaMyanmar  
thePhilippinesThailandandVietnam! **PHEW!**

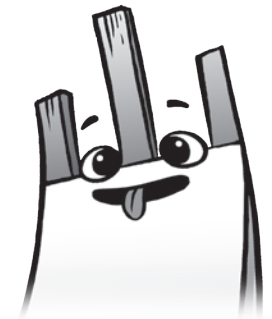


The Gallery's collection includes over 9,000 artworks, with some more than 200 years old!

Opened in November 2015, the Gallery is one of the newest museums in Singapore. And it is the ***BIGGEST***! It occupies a floor area of just over 64,000 square metres. That's about the size of 15 football fields!



*We are going to have a ball of a time at the Gallery!*



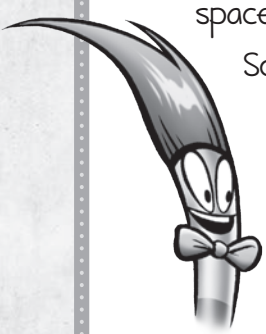
## LONGER LOOK

There are tons of other museums and galleries for art and design in Singapore. Some of them showcase different artworks from the past and present, while others invite you to imagine how the world will be like in the future.

There are even museums with cool collections such as toys, vintage cameras and much more. Here are some that might interest and inspire your own creativity!

### 1) Singapore Art Museum

Did you know that part of this museum used to be a former Catholic school for boys? (St Joseph's Institution, to be exact.) The Singapore Art Museum was opened in 1996 and has gone through more renovations since. It has cosy, unusual and hidden gallery spaces, and shows contemporary art from Southeast Asia.



**Sounds like the perfect place for someone to get schooled in art!**

### 2) ArtScience Museum

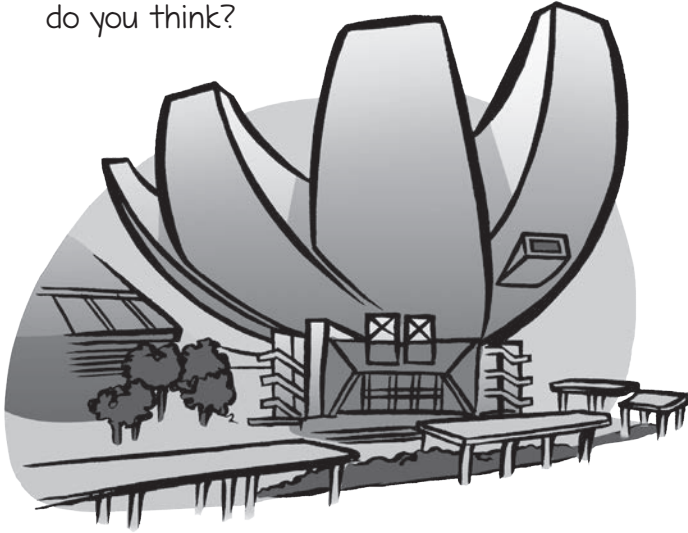
Exhibitions at the ArtScience Museum combine art, science, design, media, architecture and technology. For example, this museum has once showed the sets, costumes and props from blockbuster films such as *Titanic* and the Harry Potter series. It also exhibited original artworks from *Frozen II* **before** the release of the animated film in Singapore!



The museum was designed by a famous Israeli-born architect, Moshe Safdie. He was the same architect who designed Marina Bay Sands and Jewel Changi Airport.



Some say the shape of the ArtScience Museum building reminds them of a lotus, while others say they look like fingers. What do you think?



### 3) Red Dot Design Museum

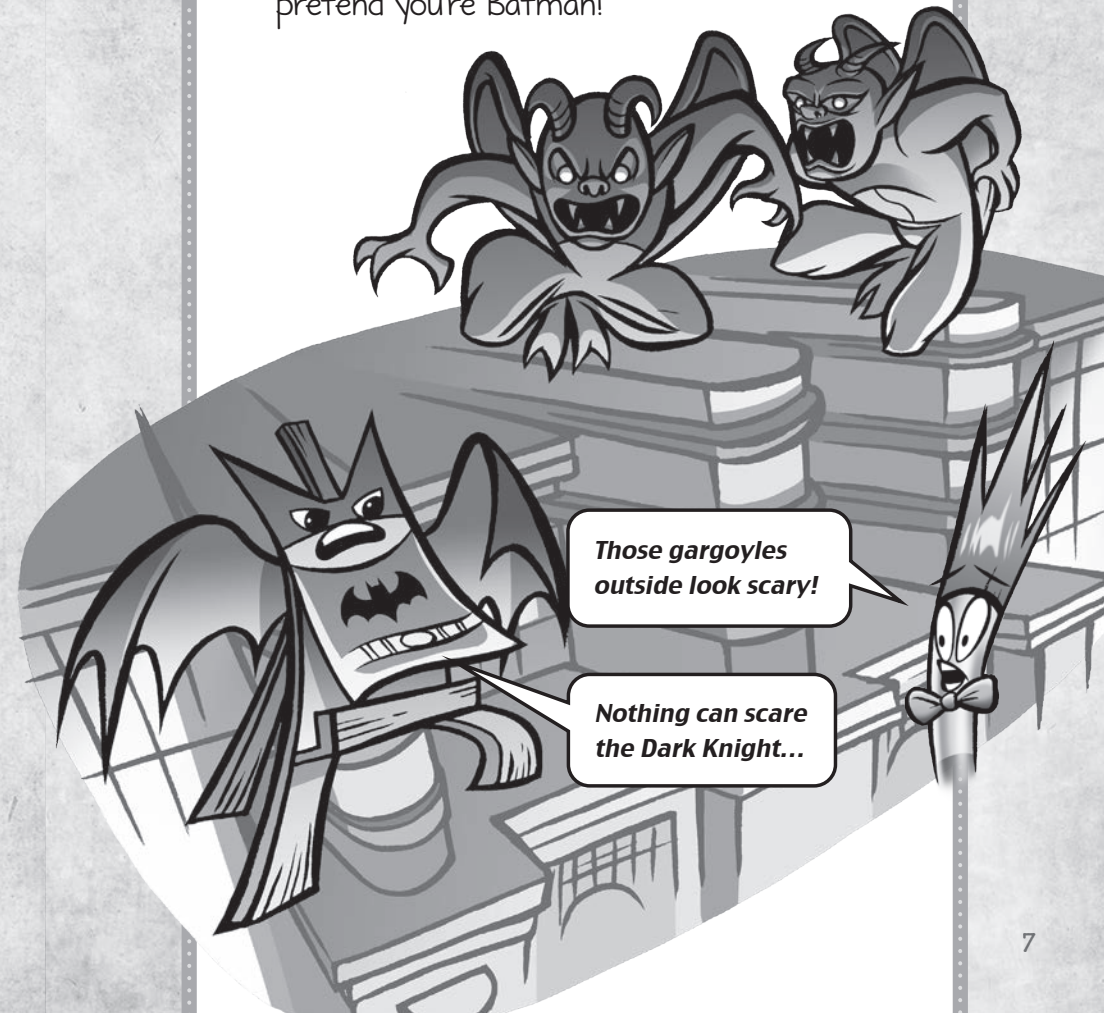
If you are into sci-fi, you will love this museum! There are many cool inventions on display here, from virtual reality goggles to robots.

There is even a fireproof shoe specifically created for Formula 1 race car drivers!



### 4) Parkview Museum

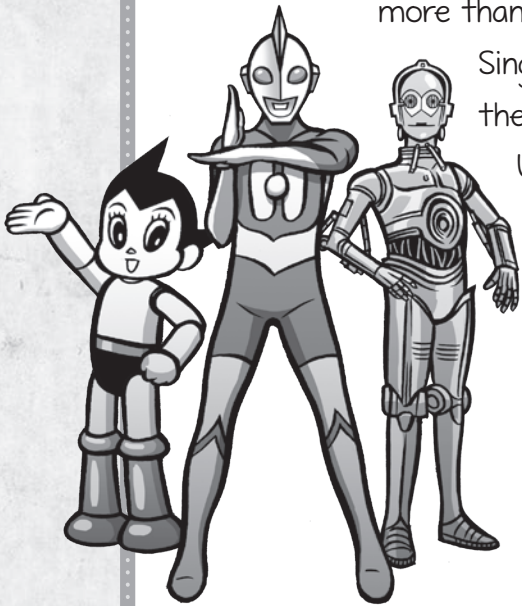
Here, you can find a huge collection of Italian art! There are also many artworks from across Europe and Asia. The museum focuses on contemporary art, which means art produced in present day or after the 1960s. The museum is inside an iconic place with an interesting nickname: Gotham building! So if contemporary art isn't your thing, you can pretend you're Batman!





### 5) Mint Museum of Toys

Okay, this is not exactly an art or design museum, but it deserves a special mention because it is related to creativity and TOYS! Mint—also known as Moment of Imagination and Nostalgia with Toys—is the world's first museum for toys. Get set to be wowed by some 50,000 vintage toys collected from more than 40 countries, including Singapore, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States and even Bulgaria. They include action figures from Star Wars, AstroBoy and Ultraman. There is even a rare Mickey Mouse toy made in the 1930s!



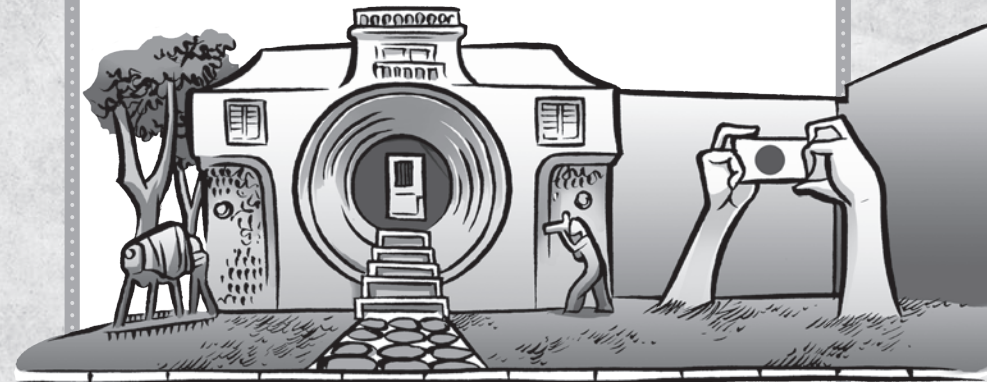
50,000?! That's a lot of toys!

Guess it was mint to be a toy haven!



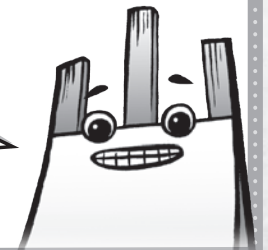
### 6) Vintage Camera Museum

Do you love taking photos? When someone says the word "camera", we usually think of smartphones or digital cameras. At the Vintage Camera Museum, there are over 1,000 antique cameras from the late 1800s to early 2000s on display. This includes spy cameras disguised to look like a walking cane and a pocket watch, and a **HUUUGE** camera that's six metres long! Even the museum building is designed to look like a giant camera!



The best part is, the "no touching" rule found in most museums does not apply here. So you can pick up the vintage cameras and try them out for yourself!

Now that's what I call looking at the big picture!



# About the Author

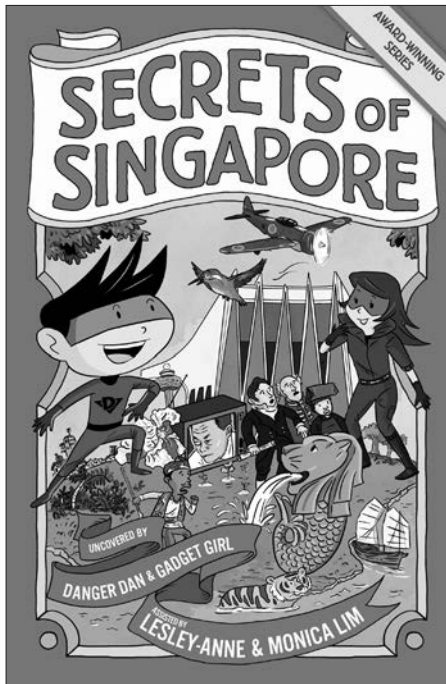


Catherine Nadira Tan does not have a PhD, but she does have a Pint-sized and Humorous Daughter. When she is not writing, she likes to visit libraries and museums because those are quiet places. (She also gets to enter museums for free in Singapore.) Visiting them also makes her feel—and hopefully become—smarter. *Secrets of Singapore: National Gallery* is her first children's book.

# About the Illustrator



Elvin Ching is an illustrator and storyboard artist in Singapore. He is the illustrator of several Danger Dan and Gadget Girl books and the Secrets of Singapore series; his cover for *Secrets of Singapore: National Museum* won best children's book cover at the Popular Reader's Choice Awards 2017. He likes to create his own little comics in his free time and has so many comics at home that he hasn't found time to read them all yet!

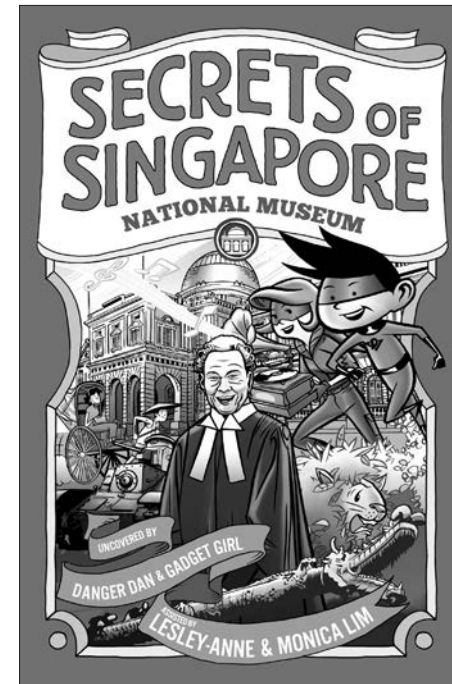


In *Secrets of Singapore*, Danger Dan and Gadget Girl uncover the nation's past, from the time of Sang Nila Utama in 1299 to independence in 1965. But wait, there's more!

They also investigate intriguing areas seldom found in your history books (shhhh!), like cinemas, airports, sports and, of course, food! Join the superhero duo as they unearth fascinating facts like:

- Which animals have escaped from the Singapore Zoo?
- How long was the very first MRT ride?
- Where can you see a tiger car? (And what on earth is a tiger car??)

The answers to these burning questions and much more in Danger Dan and Gadget Girl's guide to Singapore's past.



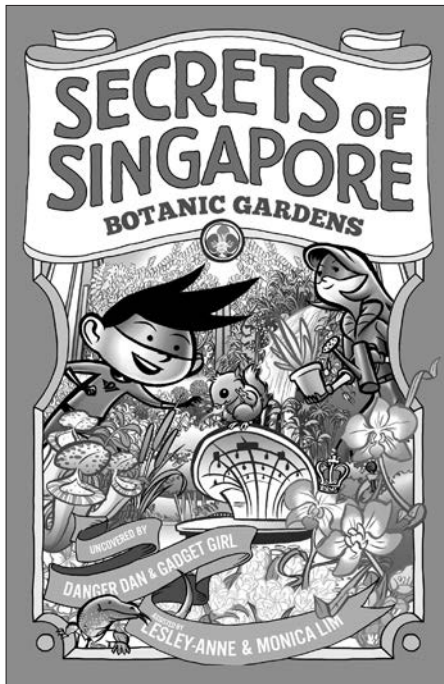
In *Secrets of Singapore: National Museum*, Danger Dan and Gadget Girl take a peek behind the pillars of the National Museum to see what secrets they guard. **AND WHAT A TREASURE TROVE!**

From way back to the time of Sang Nila Utama right up to modern day Singapore, the superhero duo unearths curious artefacts such as a headless horseman figurine from the 1300s, and banana money (not made from actual bananas) from the Japanese Occupation.

In exploring the museum, Danger Dan and Gadget Girl discover that the museum itself hides a curious past. It was once located in a school (Raffles Institution, no less!), and some of the more unusual gifts it received included an elephant and a tiger. Luckily, they were dead. Otherwise, there would have been chaos in the museum.

Join Danger Dan and Gadget Girl on an adventure through the National Museum and watch history come to life right before your eyes! #EpicThrowback





In *Secrets of Singapore: Botanic Gardens*, Danger Dan and Gadget Girl go out on a limb to uproot the Singapore Botanic Gardens' deepest, darkest secrets.

Within the lush grounds, the superhero duo find a tree so famous that its portrait can be found in any Singaporean's wallet, as well as an orchid older and taller than any human alive. Flying back 140 years into the past, they also discover that the Botanic Gardens used to be home to a mixed bag of critters, including a tapir who dreamed of being a rock. Not a rock star. Just a rock. #achievablegoals

There's more! Danger Dan and Gadget Girl realise that the botanical world is more twisted than they think. As it turns out, strawberries are only pretending to be berries, tomatoes can't decide whether they are fruits or vegetables, and sunflowers are really evil at heart.

Trek through the Singapore Botanic Gardens with Danger Dan and Gadget Girl. You will never look at your plant pals the same way again!



In *Secrets of Singapore: Changi Airport*, Danger Dan and Gadget Girl take to the skies!

The two superheroes find out that there's more to Changi Airport than just planes and passengers. They reveal intriguing secrets in places like the taxiways (which have nothing to do with taxis), the runways (which have nothing to do with running) and the apron (which has nothing to do with cooking). Jewel is a real gem, though.

That's not all!

Danger Dan and Gadget Girl also discover that video game devices are used to screen baggage, that someone once lost a pet hamster in the airport and why food tastes like cardboard in a plane (hint: it's not because the chef's a dud).

Join Danger Dan and Gadget Girl as they clear the air by solving all the mysteries shrouding Changi Airport!



# Praise for the Secrets of Singapore series

*"Secrets of Singapore is one for the history buffs... It's written in a breezy and accessible style, with lots of graphics [and] cheesy puns."*

—*Sassy Mama*

*"A gripping read that once you start, you won't be able to leaf it alone!"*

—Dr Shawn Lum, president of Nature Society (Singapore), of *Secrets of Singapore: Botanic Gardens*

*"These fun-filled pages pack a wealth of insights about aviation in Singapore."*

—Lee Seow Hiang, chief executive of Changi Airport Group, of *Secrets of Singapore: Changi Airport*

“A treasure trove of all things art-related...  
filled with quirky illustrations.”

—Chia Mia Chiang, President, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts

“This book reveals all kinds of fascinating facts  
about National Gallery Singapore!”

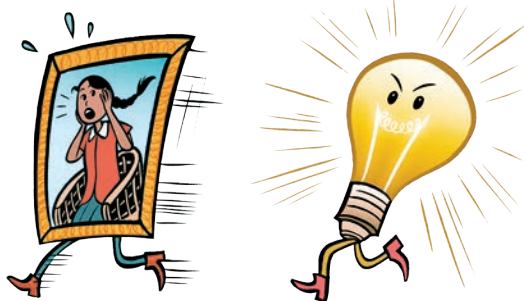
—Elaine Ee, Deputy Director, National Gallery Singapore

FROM SECRET PASSAGES AND A HIDDEN DOME...TO AN UNDERGROUND  
TIME CAPSULE, THERE IS DEFINITELY MORE TO NATIONAL GALLERY  
SINGAPORE THAN MEETS THE EYE!

IN **SECRETS OF SINGAPORE: NATIONAL GALLERY**, JOIN PROFESSOR BRUSHIE  
AND CURIOUS CANVAS TO DISCOVER A TIME WHEN THE BUILDING HAD  
A SPLIT PERSONALITY! LEARN ABOUT THE CHOCOLATE CEILING AND THE  
**BIG** SECRET LIFT THAT CARRIES THE GALLERY'S PRECIOUS MASTERPIECES.  
FIND OUT WHY YOU CAN'T TOUCH THE EXHIBITS AND WHY ARTWORKS  
ARE SCARED OF LIGHT!

AND THERE'S MORE...

WHAT IS A GALLERY  
SITTER? WHY ARE THERE  
BLACK LINES ON THE  
FLOOR? AND DID YOU SAY  
CHOCOLATE CEILING?!



TIME TO **BRUSH** UP ON YOUR ART FACTS AND **DRAW** BACK THE CURTAINS  
ON NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE!



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