

# National Gallery Singapore Museum Career Resource Pack

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## Introduction

Have you ever wondered what it's like to work in a museum?

Find out what goes on behind the scenes in these exclusive interviews with National Gallery Singapore's very own superheroes. Coming from different departments, these superheroes work together to keep the Gallery running so that visitors can enjoy the art of Singapore and Southeast Asia.

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# Artwork & Exhibition Management

## Ong Zhen Min, Deputy Director



### *Who are you?*

I am Zhen Min, Deputy Director of the Artwork & Exhibition Management department.

### *What do you do in the museum?*

My team is responsible for planning and setting up exhibitions at the Gallery. The department comprises two teams. One team focuses on artwork management, which focuses on conservation, logistics and installation. The other team is in charge of exhibition management, which involves managing budgets, planning timelines, and overseeing the exhibition design and fabrication.

### *Why do you do what you do?*

I started off as a curator at the Gallery many years ago but later became interested in the operational aspect of exhibitions. I work closely with the curators on aspects of exhibition making such as the timeline, budget and how it should look and feel to visitors. We also consider the requirements of each artwork for the show, such as insurance, transportation, conservation, framing and finding the best way to display artworks.

### *What is most exciting about your work?*

My favourite stage is the lead-up to the exhibition opening, when we are installing artworks in the exhibition spaces. This is the time when you can see everything coming together, when artworks are hung and labels are stuck on the wall. That is the most rewarding and fun part of this job. It can be challenging but it is always very interesting.

### *What superpower is needed for the work that you do?*

You need endurance to stay up late during the installation period!

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## Collections Development

### Sangeeta Razu, Senior Manager



#### *Who are you?*

I am Sangeeta from the Collections Development department.

#### *What do you do in the museum?*

I help to implement the museum's acquisition strategy and administer the collections development budget for Singapore, Southeast Asian and Asian ink art from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

#### *Why do you do what you do?*

Acquisition and collection development is very interesting, especially when the Gallery was in the start-up phase. We work closely with the curators, the Artwork & Exhibition Management team and colleagues from the National Heritage Board. I feel fortunate to be able to witness the entire process of developing a collection, from acquiring artworks to seeing them being hung on the wall.

#### *What is most exciting about your work?*

I can't think of any other job in the local culture and heritage sector that allows me to combine right and left-brain approaches. My job requires me to apply both logic and creativity in connecting the dots between science, business, politics, culture and philosophy.

#### *What superpower is needed for the work that you do?*

You have to be a jack of all trades. You've got to have every superpower but the one thing that you really need is stamina—mental, physical and emotional stamina. The work here is always fast-paced. While the job may seem glamorous on the surface, the work can be tough.

## Content Publishing Charmaine Oon, Manager



### *Who are you?*

I am Charmaine from the Content Publishing team.

### *What do you do in the museum?*

I work on the Gallery's publications, which range from scholarly exhibition catalogues to illustrated children's books. I'm involved in the entire publishing process, from conceptualising the book to readying the content for print.

### *Why do you do what you do?*

To delight readers with the fantastical and wondrous world of Southeast Asian art.

### *What is most exciting about your work?*

Seeing the book take form! When the press starts to run, and the ink falls on the reams of paper, it's simultaneously exciting and nerve-wracking.

### *What superpower is needed for the work that you do?*

Bionic vision (for proofreading) and nerves of steel.

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## Content Publishing

### Julianne Chua, Senior Executive



#### *Who are you?*

I am Julianne from the Content Publishing team.

#### *What do you do in the museum?*

I work mostly on educational and audio guide content on our Gallery Explorer app. I write, edit and work closely with other departments such as IT and Education to develop content for different audiences. We help to form the bridge between our curatorial narratives and audiences.

#### *Why do you do what you do?*

I enjoy making content accessible to people through various platforms. For example, the Gallery Explorer app provides a different way of learning about art. Instead of reading labels on the wall, it encourages people to look at the artwork itself by guiding them through audio. With educational materials, it is a fun challenge to distill complex terms or concepts into something that is simple and easy to understand, without losing its essence or meaning.

#### *What is most exciting about your work?*

We work with incredible individuals and organisations, tapping on their knowledge and expertise to make the Gallery's museum experience unique and different. We always have technology such as Artificial Intelligence or Augmented Reality on our radar and seek ways to come up with interesting innovations that can enhance how people experience art.

#### *What superpower is needed for the work that you do?*

I wish I could be a time traveller so that I could meet artists from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to experience the world that they lived in and discover how it shaped the artworks that they created.

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## Curatorial

### Shabbir Hussain Mustafa, Senior Curator



#### *Who are you?*

My name is Shabbir Hussain Mustafa and I am a curator at the Gallery.

#### *What do you do in the museum?*

A museum curator's work usually has two key components: researching artworks and cultural movements from the past and present; and engaging with artists and listening to their stories. Eventually, the curator also has to be a caretaker of the works that enter the museum's collection. Often, through our exhibitions, we attempt to find the best way to present the stories behind artworks and artistic practice in a meaningful manner to our audiences.

#### *Why do you do what you do?*

I trained as a political scientist and later as a historian. As for why I do what I do? I can offer an anecdote. A friend took me to a museum when I was a young student with the suggestion that I could earn a little extra pocket money through writing. I recall that day vividly. We made our way to the museum director's office and after exchanging pleasantries, he proceeded to place two pictures in front of me and asked, "If you were tasked to write 3,000 words on these two images, what would you write?" I was naive and carefree, so without hesitation or concern I presented all sorts of theories and approaches. Most of what I said sounded bombastic and was based on my readings from school. Somehow, the museum director liked what I had to say and commissioned me to write the essay! Since then, I have been working with art and thinking about all the aspects of the museum. As a child, I liked listening to my father, who loved telling stories. Now as a curator, I get the opportunity to tell stories every day.

#### *What is most exciting about your work?*

Having the opportunity to meet artists. Many of the artists I have met are like teachers to me. Each time I sit down with an artist, I try to understand his or her stories and learn from them. In some way, being able to learn from artists excites me.

#### *What superpower is needed for the work that you do?*

Visual perception; vision is something that is often taken for granted. We think that we are seeing all the time but in fact, we are just looking and not seeing. Developing perspective is connected to how one expresses what one has just seen. These perspectives are often articulated in my curatorial work in different forms.

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## Education

### Mohamad Fazrullah, Assistant Manager



#### *Who are you?*

My name is Mohamad Fazrullah, the Assistant Manager of the Education department.

#### *What do you do in the museum?*

I connect the Gallery with school audiences such as primary, secondary and international schools. I introduce these students to the Gallery's artworks through outreach talks, programmes and workshops.

#### *Why do you do what you do?*

The artworks in the Gallery and in our National Collection are visual records of our unique culture. Local artists made works in response to current affairs at the time. These works reflect who we are as a nation and offer glimpses of our history that you may not read about in history books. My role as a museum educator is to encourage students to be curious about these artworks and subsequently to learn about their contexts. In doing so, I hope that the future generation will have a stronger connection with our culture and identity.

#### *What is exciting about your work?*

When crafting a new programme, I get to work with internal and external parties. This takes a lot of coordination and I often need to rework ideas. However, I feel a deep sense of satisfaction when an idea is realised, and I witness people enjoying and benefitting from our programmes.

#### *What superpower is needed for the work you do?*

In order to work with different types of people, you need the ability to read minds. Since I don't have that ability, I rely on reading body language. Sometimes my powers serve me and sometimes they don't.

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## Resource Centre

### Farah Wardani, Assistant Director



#### *Who are you?*

I am Farah Wardani and I run the Resource Centre. The Resource Centre is the library and archives centre of the Gallery.

#### *What do you do in the museum?*

The Resource Centre manages and develops the Gallery's collection of reference and archival materials related to the curatorial research of the Gallery. We work closely with the curators to amass materials that are necessary for exhibition making and the development of the Gallery's curatorial research and strategies. We also try to make these materials accessible to the public.

#### *Why do you do what you do?*

I was trained as an art historian, not a librarian. However, I have a team of librarians and archivists to help me. When I was a writer and independent art researcher in Indonesia, I found it so hard to get access to art historical materials. Therefore, I started a centre for the Indonesian Visual Art Archive with a team, which led me here. Now, it is my mission to build a comprehensive resource for Southeast Asian art history here at the Gallery, which is the best place that supports this work.

#### *What is exciting about your work?*

Working with archival materials is always the most exciting thing for me. We build relationships with artists and artists' families and they have been very supportive because the Gallery is building the scholarship of art history in Singapore and Southeast Asia. Artists and their families see the importance of this and have been very supportive. It gives me great pleasure every time I encounter an artist or an artist's family who wants to work with us in preserving their archive.

#### *What superpower is needed for the work you do?*

Patience. My team and I have to be meticulous in cataloguing everything and creating a database for each item. All these take time and the value of these materials are also defined by time.

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# Audience Development & Engagement

## Suenne Megan Tan, Director



### *Who are you?*

I am Suenne Megan Tan, Director of Audience Development and Engagement at the Gallery.

### *What do you do in the museum?*

I oversee four key areas which include public programmes and audience development. These areas look at making our exhibitions accessible to a wider range of audiences who may have different learning abilities and interests. I also oversee events, which involves organising exhibition openings and receptions, as well as leasing our venues to support both external and internal events.

### *Why do you do what you do?*

I've always been interested in working in a museum context as I think museums reach out to a cross-section of society. It is interesting to see how visitors engage with the art on display. Programmes are a good way to gauge the level of interest and the learning styles of visitors. It is most fulfilling to have a programme that is well-received. Personally, the feedback that we receive from our audience is what drives me to continue the work that I do in the Gallery.

### *What is most exciting about your work?*

The varied nature of the work as well as visitors, who all have different requirements and expectations. I could be planning an exhibition and talking to an artist in the morning, then dealing with policy matters and contributing inputs to a cultural policy that the Ministry requires in the afternoon. It is exciting that no one day is the same.

### *What superpower is needed for the work that you do?*

The mind of a grasshopper. One has to be able to compartmentalise the many different issues encountered on the job. Resilience is another superpower needed as we work on a long-term commitment towards realising a vision which cannot be achieved overnight.

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## Co:Lab X

### Kevin Lim, Deputy Director



#### *Who are you?*

I am Kevin Lim and I am the Deputy Director of Co:Lab X.

#### *What do you do in the museum?*

I work alongside various departments such as Marketing, Visitor Experience, and IT to develop ideas around visitor and staff engagement, largely through digital interactivity, data analytics, and research collaborations. For example, we introduced Evie at the Gallery, a scheduling artificial intelligence bot. Overall, our role is to inspire new approaches to engagement, perform real-world user evaluations, and assess business sustainability on new technology.

#### *Why do you do what you do?*

I am a futurist. I like to explore new realms and and try new things. In this role, new projects come along very often. I am not always an expert in the subject matter but I find that exciting, in that it always keeps me on my toes and forces me to pick up new skills. I never imagined that the Gallery would create such a position. There is very little written on it out there so I have to learn as I go along.

#### *What is most exciting about your work?*

With the constant flow of new tasks, life at the Gallery is never dull. One of the equally exciting and daunting part of my job is the innovation Co:Lab drives. As much as the work can be technologically driven, similar effort comes in change management for visitors and staff. Our team is also extremely lean, which means careful management of our headcount for each new task. The people in the team are diverse and they learn as they go along and that makes this job exciting and enjoyable.

#### *What superpower is needed for the work that you do?*

Open mindedness and resilience. Our work involves working with many different people so conflicts are bound to crop up. You learn about diplomacy and how our visitors and their experience at the Gallery are paramount.

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# Facilities Management

## Eric Oh, Senior Manager



### *Who are you?*

I'm Eric, the Senior Manager of the Facilities Management & Operations department.

### *What do you do in the museum?*

I'm responsible for the Gallery's building operations and maintenance. This includes ensuring that mandatory licenses are valid, services are carried out promptly, indoor air quality is good, mechanical and electrical critical systems are well maintained; carrying out preventive and predictive maintenance; and lastly, implementing innovation building systems.

### *Why do you do what you do?*

I've always been interested in technical work and enjoy discovering the latest technological advancements. It's important to constantly read and attend seminars to ensure we are equipped with the latest technologies. It is fulfilling when we receive words of appreciation for what we do and this always motivates us and sustains our passion for our work.

### *What is most exciting about your work?*

Planning our strategy for maintenance and ensuring the smooth running of our systems. For instance, we were extremely excited when we managed to shorten the disruption to the air-conditioning system serving the galleries.

### *What superpower is needed for the work that you do?*

Passion for your work. I believe that this is the superpower that drives you to excel, although work-life balance is important as well.

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## Finance

### Glenda Teo, Executive



#### *Who are you?*

I am Glenda Teo from the Finance department.

#### *What do you do in the museum?*

I look after the Gallery's revenue. This includes handling the revenue earned from the donation boxes placed around the Gallery, the rental of spaces for events, and the monthly rent from the restaurants located in our building.

#### *Why do you do what you do?*

I worked for businesses for a long time and I thought it would be good to make a change and explore working in a non-profit organisation such as National Gallery Singapore. My work also gives me the chance to contribute to society on a micro-scale with the skills that I have.

#### *What is most exciting about your work?*

The finance department is like the organisation's bank, so I get to work with colleagues from all departments. For instance, if a venue is rented for an event, I have to work with the Audience Relationship & Development (ARD) team to ensure that all charged items are accounted for and all payments are processed.

#### *What superpower is needed for the work that you do?*

I wish I was a money counting machine so that I could count money quickly and accurately.

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## PR & Communications

### Susie Lim-Kannan, Assistant Director

#### *Who are you?*

I am Susie Lim-Kannan, the Assistant Director of the Public Relations (PR) and Communications team.

#### *What do you do in the museum?*

My department handles public relations, communications and social media. We develop communications strategies that drive media coverage for the Gallery's initiatives, exhibitions and programmes. We also cultivate media and influencer relationships to build a strong online presence for the Gallery. Our larger role is to work towards building a global reputation for the Gallery, growing a museum-going culture in Singapore, and attracting more tourists to the Gallery.

#### *Why do you do what you do?*

Entering the PR industry was quite accidental. I started off working in front office operations as I wanted to run a hotel one day. When the opportunity to move to PR came up, I grabbed it as I always love a new challenge. The transition was quite tough but in time I realised that it suited me more. I find it really exciting to open new hotels and cultural venues or launch festivals in Singapore and different parts of the world. To be able to successfully launch something that people come to embrace and support is what keeps me going.

#### *What is most exciting about your work?*

Recently, we held the first Children's Biennale at the Gallery, which received wide publicity on traditional and social media. As a result, visitor attendance was just phenomenal. It is such a joy to see so many parents and children interacting with the installations and having a great time at the Gallery. The Gallery plays a role in encouraging young ones to appreciate art and it gives me a sense of satisfaction knowing that, in a way, we're laying the foundation for a new generation of museum lovers.

#### *What superpower is needed for the work that you do?*

It requires more than just one! The capacity to remember lots of things, even the smallest details, is vital. For example, we need to speak about the building history and at least four exhibitions or programmes when we conduct media tours. The work is very fast-paced, so you also need to be able to think quickly on your feet, recover fast when things don't go as planned, and adapt to change. Patience is a must as some aspects of our work scope require investment of time before you see results. Lastly, having a good sense of humour and a huge dose of self-motivation really helps.



## Visitor Experience

### Katharyn Peh, Head



#### *Who are you?*

I am Katharyn Peh and I head the Visitor Experience team.

#### *What do you do in the museum?*

The mandate of the Visitor Experience team is to ensure that our visitors have the best experience during their time at the Gallery. This also includes looking after pre-visit engagement up to the moment a visitor steps into the Gallery and is served by our front of house staff.

#### *Why do you do what you do?*

I've always loved the creative work in a museum. I have fond memories of visiting museums as a child and it was always my dream to work here and contribute towards something that I enjoy. As a mother, I like having the opportunity to bond with my family and child through the Gallery's interactive events or programmes. These also allow me to better understand the visitor's point of view.

#### *What is most exciting about your work?*

I enjoy hospitality and hosting guests. In Visitor Experience, we are exposed to very high-profile guests as well including celebrities, heads of states and delegates from different countries. We get to interact with many people from different cultures and experience how they see us. These rich exchanges with visitors make my work here enjoyable.

#### *What superpower is needed for the work that you do?*

Resilience, patience and the ability to have a vision. Juggling front of house operations, tours, manpower and diverse visitors with different needs can be challenging. We do our best to respond to all feedback positively, taking it as a chance to improve and close any gaps each time.

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## Human Resource

### Audrey Lim, Assistant Director



#### *Who are you?*

I am Audrey and I'm in the Human Resource department.

#### *What do you do in the museum?*

I work on the development of the organisation and staff. My main role is to make people happy and ensure that the organisation is effective. One could look at it as how we engage with people and streamline our processes.

#### *Why do you do what you do?*

I like working with people—sitting behind a desk all day isn't my cup of tea. When we work on learning and development, we interact with all parts of the organisation and get the chance to know people from different parts of the Gallery.

#### *What is most exciting about your work?*

The idea of being in the Gallery is extremely exciting. Unlike most organisations, the Gallery's structure is very adaptable so we have the flexibility to try new methods of working through our processes and policies. We are small enough to react quickly to changes so I get the chance to try out a lot of different things. If there is something that's trending overseas, we can easily implement it.

#### *What superpower is needed for the work that you do?*

Mind reading. Sometimes we don't have the time to keep in touch with everyone in the organisation so it would allow me to simply glance across the Gallery to know what people are interested in. I could easily gain an insight into the issues they are facing and find a solution for them.

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## Information Technology

### Dave Yeo, Assistant Director



#### *Who are you?*

My name is Dave from the IT department.

#### *What do you do in the museum?*

My primary role in IT is to oversee the Gallery's software and application systems. I am also part of the Co:Lab X team, an innovation lab of the Gallery where we deploy new technology to enhance workplace productivity and transform the way our visitors experience art.

#### *Why do you do what you do?*

I enjoy helping people with their technical challenges by bridging the gap between people and technology. I believe that when people embrace technology in their daily work, they will have more time to focus on their core work and serve our visitors better.

#### *What is most exciting about your work?*

There are many divisions and departments in the Gallery and each comprises many smaller teams working on different portfolios. Assuming each team has one work process, there would be one hundred processes that we can streamline or automate (based on an average size of two per team). Understanding and tackling new requests or problems from different teams makes my work both challenging and exciting.

#### *What superpower is needed for the work that you do?*

The ability to think like our colleagues. With the ability to read minds, I would then know what our colleagues do on a day-to-day basis, identify the challenges that they face and help to resolve them with technology.

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## Partnership Development

### Curina Sim, Manager



#### *Who are you?*

I am Curina from the Partnership Development team.

#### *What do you do in the museum?*

I work closely with our director and team to identify prospective donors who have the capacity to donate to the Gallery, and to cultivate and steward these relationships.

#### *Why do you do what you do?*

Fundraising is a niche sector in Singapore, which makes my work both fun and challenging. It's interesting to find out more about individuals and organisations that focus on philanthropy in the arts sector. Fundraising also gives me the opportunity to develop different skills.

#### *What is most exciting about your work?*

The challenges that I encounter make me want to do more. Before identifying prospective partners, we research who they are and who they are related to, their philanthropic background, how much they donate, which causes they support and why they do so. It's interesting to get to know our prospects better before pitching our ideas to them. The satisfaction comes from clinching a deal after all the hard work.

#### *What superpower is needed for the work that you do?*

Paparazzi skills to find out as much information as possible about clients to understand them better. Networking skills are also essential to reach out to these people.

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# Strategic Development

## Catherine Zhang, Senior Manager

### *Who are you?*

I am Catherine Zhang, Senior Manager of the Strategic Development team.



### *What do you do in the museum?*

My department serves as the brain, arms and legs of the management committee: we help the Gallery map out strategic goals, strategies and recommendations with the help of various departments. Specifically, I'm responsible for performance monitoring, management reporting, enterprise risk and business continuity plans.

### *Why do you do what you do?*

I chose this portfolio for the kind of exposure and interaction I can have with various divisions. It also gives me an overview of the Gallery's operations as well as exposure to the visual arts ecosystem. As my department looks at strategic directions and policies, I also feel I can contribute and create an impact on a wider scale.

### *What is most exciting about your work?*

I think the Gallery is a significant place for Singaporeans and am happy to be part of it. It's exciting to play a part in nation-building.

### *What superpower is needed for the work that you do?*

The power of prophecy so I can anticipate what's coming. We undergo constant changes daily in areas such as technology, politics and the economy, so if I can have the power to predict, perhaps our strategies and policies can be more effective.

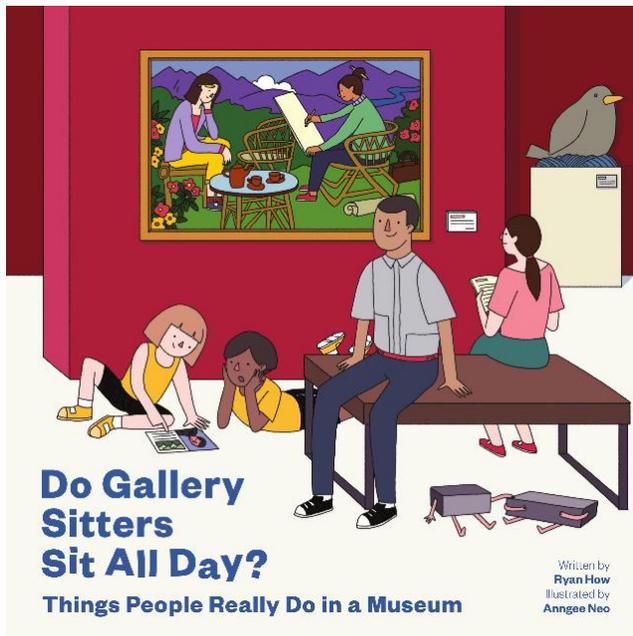
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## Conclusion

We hope you enjoyed learning about the Gallery's superheroes in this resource pack. To find out more about the Gallery, check out our illustrated book that depicts the daily lives of museum professionals as they prepare exhibitions, receive artworks and guide visitors around the museum.

### Do Gallery Sitters Sit All Day?



Written by Ryan How  
Illustrated by Angee Neo  
250 x 250 mm  
36 pp, paperback  
Illustrated throughout  
ISBN: 978-981-11-4514-8  
SGD 29.96 (incl. GST)

What is a docent? What does an artwork conservator do? Take a look behind the scenes to discover what goes on inside an art museum. This book will be available at the Gallery & Co. Museum Store, selected bookstores in Singapore and Amazon.com from March 2018.

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