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NTU CENTRE FOR
CONTEMPORARY
ART SINGAPORE



A

EDUCATION RESOURCE GUIDE

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Ulrike Ottinger CHINA. THE ARTS - THE PEOPLE
 Photographs and Films from the 1980s and 1990s

Exhibition
 27 May -
 13 August
 2017

NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

ABOUT US

Located in Gillman Barracks, the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore (NTU CCA Singapore) is a national research centre of Nanyang Technological University and is supported by a grant from the Economic Development Board, Singapore. The Centre is unique in its threefold constellation of organizing exhibitions, international residencies, research and academic education, all of which engage in knowledge production and dissemination. The NTU CCA Singapore positions itself as a space for critical discourse and encourages new ways of thinking about Spaces of the Curatorial in Southeast Asia and beyond. The Centre's dynamic public programmes serve to engage with various audiences through lectures, workshops, open studios, film screenings, Exhibition (de)Tours, and Stagings. As a research centre, it aims to provide visiting researchers and curators a comprehensive entry point to study the contemporary art ecosystem in Singapore and the region.

Since the Centre's inauguration in October 2013, the NTU CCA Singapore has featured leading artists presenting their work for the first time in Southeast Asia, making it one of the few spaces in Singapore to present contemporary art from around the globe. The Centre's residencies programme is dedicated to facilitate the production of knowledge and research, engaging and connecting artists, curators, and researchers from Singapore, Southeast Asia, and around the globe, across various disciplines.

NOTES TO TEACHERS & EDUCATORS

This Resource Guide is developed to supplement the Workshop for Teachers and Educators and focuses on the artist(s) and works included in the exhibitions at the NTU CCA Singapore. It provides the opportunity for educators to learn how contemporary artists address the issues and concerns of our times, as well as to explore new teaching strategies.

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Here you will find resources specifically designed to be used by teachers or students. The activities proposed in this guide are conceived to be used in a flexible manner, so educators are better able to choose which ones to use or how to combine them for the benefit of their students' needs.

Before bringing your class to the NTU CCA Singapore, it is recommended that you visit the exhibition, read the guide, and decide which aspects of the exhibition are most relevant to your students.

Specially-crafted tours for student groups led by NTU CCA Singapore curators are also available by advance booking.

For more information on scheduling please email:
NTUCCAeducation@ntu.edu.sg

ABOUT THE EDUCATION & OUTREACH PROGRAMMES

Our educational programmes promote creative learning through contemporary art, including gallery explorations, talks, and workshops developed by our education team. Our accessible and inclusive learning experiences connect students and teachers with contemporary art and artists to encourage looking, thinking, and creating in new ways.

This page gives an example of how to render text more accessible to people with visual impairments. White and bright yellow print against a black background provides a stronger colour contrast than the standard black print against a white background.

This paragraph has been rendered accessible by **Matthias Sohr**. He is an artist based in Lausanne, Switzerland. From April to June 2017, he is artist-in-residence at the NTU CCA Singapore Residencies Programme.

Central to us is the intention to “bring your own story” to encounters with contemporary art, while generating new meaning through playful learning strategies, collaborations and exchanges.

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Who would benefit from working with these materials?

Although these resources are conceived for teachers and educators working in primary, secondary, and tertiary educational settings, it is possible for other interested gallery goers to make use of them as an aid to understanding and enjoying contemporary art. By following the guided questions and activities, viewers of the exhibition are encouraged to reflect on and participate in the world of the artist, helping to illuminate shared ideas and experiences.

How can the materials be used by both educators and the general visitor?

These educational activities can be used as pre-gallery, in-gallery or as post-gallery lessons. Teachers can choose which activities are valuable for their educational objectives, and are free to add on other related materials of their own choosing. Visitors from the public can also decide on which ideas and content inspire them to further learn from and enhance their exhibition visit.

What are the goals of these resources?

We want to assist people to discover and trust their own responses to contemporary art. We think contemporary art has power and relevance for everyone, but also acknowledge that it can be an intimidating and confusing subject to approach. The resources we produce are designed to build confidence in thinking and talking about art and in doing so, open up new creative possibilities to engage with contemporary art.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

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The exhibition *China. The Arts – The People. Photographs and Films from the 1980s and 1990s* by the award-winning filmmaker and artist Ulrike Ottinger (b. 1942 in Constance, Germany) is the first large-scale exhibition by her in Asia. The selection of works focuses on Ottinger's research and travels in China and Mongolia during the 1980s and 1990s, comprising four films and more than one hundred photographs. The photographs, created largely in parallel with the production of her films, will be unfolded along the artist's leitmotifs.

Starting with *China. The Arts – The People* (1985), the exhibition leads a journey through the cultures and geographies of China, while also exploring the relationship between moving image and still life. The three acts of the documentary are presented on a three-screen installation, documenting everyday life in Beijing (February 1985), Sichuan Province (March 1985), and Yunnan Province (March 1985). While meeting the film director Ling Zifeng in one chapter, a bamboo factory is visited in another, and in parallel the Sani people, a minority group, show their habitat, the Stone Forest.

Taiga. A Journey to Northern Mongolia (1992), a documentary over eight hours long that will be presented on multiple monitors throughout the exhibition space, looks into the everyday life of nomadic peoples in Mongolia. On view in the cinematic space of the Centre, The Single Screen, will be *Exile Shanghai* (1997), a film telling the six life stories of German, Austrian, and Russian Jews intersecting in Shanghai after their escape from Nazi Germany, as well as *Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia* (1989), Ottinger's only feature fiction film presented, starring Badema, Lydia Billiet, Inés Sastre, and Delphine Seyrig.



The extraordinary filmic and photographic oeuvre from China and Mongolia of the 1980s and 1990s prove her outstanding practice and beyond. Fighting for permission to travel and film in communist China, Ottinger's interest in Asia also broke with the Cold War stereotype of that time. Her inimitable universe of provinces and regions of China is filled with rich imagery of various provinces in China and nomadic societies in Northern Mongolia and their history, paying attention to the presence of local details and reaching far beyond its described territory.

The exhibition is accompanied by an intensive public programme, starting with a *Behind the Scenes* discussion with the artist on her practice as photographer and filmmaker. Programmed talks and screenings will reflect on the notion of the documentary, its intersection with fiction, and the potential that artistic production can have for anthropology, cultural studies, and history.

BIOGRAPHY ULRIKE OTTINGER

- 6 **Ulrike Ottinger** (b. 1942) grew up in Constance, Germany, where she opened her own studio at an early age. From 1962 until 1968, she lived and worked as an artist in Paris, where she exhibited at the Salon de la Jeune Peinture and elsewhere. She studied etching techniques at the studio of Johnny Friedlaender and attended lectures at the Sorbonne on art history, religious studies, and ethnology with Claude Lévi-Strauss, Louis Althusser, and Pierre Bourdieu. In 1966, she wrote her first screenplay, entitled *The Mongolian Double Drawer*.

After returning to West Germany, she founded the filmclub visuell in Constance in 1969, as well as the galeriepress gallery and press, presenting Wolf Vostell and David Hockney, among others. With Tabea Blumenschein, she realised her first film in 1972–73, *Laocoon & Sons*, which had its premiere at Arsenal Berlin. She moved to Berlin in 1973 where she filmed the happening documentation *Berlinfever – Wolf Vostell*. After *The Enchantment of the Blue Sailors* (1975) with Valeska Gert, came the female pirate film *Madame X* (1977), a coproduction with the ZDF television network. The film was a sensation and prompted substantial controversy.

Ottinger's "Berlin trilogy" began with *Ticket of No Return* (1979), followed by *Freak Orlando* (1981) and *Dorian Gray in the Mirror of the Yellow Press* (1984). Collaborating on the films were Delphine Seyrig, Magdalena Montezuma, Veruschka von Lehndorff, Eddie Constantine, and Kurt Raab, as well as the composer Peer Raben. In the short film *Usinimage* (1987), she revisited imagery derived from industrial wastelands and alienated urban landscapes.

The films of Ulrike Ottinger have received numerous awards, including the Audience Jury Prize in Montréal and the Bundesfilmpreis (Visual Design) for *Johanna D'Arc of Mongolia*,



and the German Film Critics Award for the documentary films *China The Arts – The People and Prater* (2008). Her works have been shown at the world's most important film festivals and appreciated in multiple retrospectives, including at the Cinémathèque française (1982) in Paris and at the Museum of Modern Art (2000) in New York. Ottinger has also worked as a director of theater and opera. Her productions have included the 2000 premiere of Elfriede Jelinek's *The Farewell* at the Berliner Ensemble. 7

Ottinger has worked in photography throughout her career as an artist. With her photographs, created largely in parallel with the film works, she has identified her own visual points of emphasis. She furthermore produced operas, several theatre plays, and radio dramas. Her work has received numerous awards and has been included in major art exhibitions, such as the Documenta (2002 and 2017), Berlin Biennale (2004 and 2010), Shanghai Biennale (2008), and the Gwangju Biennale (2014), among others. Her solo exhibitions have been, among other places, at the Kunst-Werke Berlin (2001), Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art (2004) in Rotterdam, and the Museo Reina Sofia (2004) in Madrid. Her artist's book *Bildarchive* (2005) collects a selection of photographs from 1975 through 2005. In her artist's book *Floating Food*, published in 2011, Ottinger created a comprehensive collage from four decades of her artistic production. Other major monographies include *Ulrike Ottinger: N.B.K. Ausstellungen Band 11* (2011), *Ulrike Ottinger* (2012), and *Ulrike Ottinger: World Images* (2013).

In 2010, Ottinger was honoured with the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany and in 2011, she was awarded the Hannah-Hösch-Prize for her creative work.

Using a Gallery as a Site of Research: a fieldtrip to NTU CCA Singapore

Theme:

IMAGE ARCHIVE.DRAMATURGY.DAILY LIFE

Cross-disciplinary subjects:

filmmaking, ethnology, travel photography, social studies

Gallery Activities:

Looking Longer and Telling the Tale

Ulrike Ottinger CHINA. THE ARTS - THE PEOPLE
Photographs and Films from the 1980s and 1990s

Introduction:

Read the background information and discuss your answers to the questions in this section with your classmates.

Acclaimed artist Ulrike Ottinger's lifework comprises many different media including, painting, performance art, photography and film. She has also created operas, theatre plays and radio dramas. From early on she used her photographs not only as independent images, but also integrated them into her other artworks. When she began to make films, she incorporated her older staged photographs into this new medium as well. Photography has played a major role in her art practice since the 1970s. She uses these to create the sketchbooks for her films. Her travel photography serves as preparatory material for her screenplays, allowing her to work out the overall composition or the small details of her films. Ottinger has assembled an archive consisting of her own images as well as her collection of postcards, cutouts, magazine illustrations and other unique documents related to the experiences and voyages that have inspired her work. Driven by her curiosity for people and places, the artist's images alternate between documentary insight and theatrical extravagance, presenting encounters with everyday realities at the intersection of the contemporary, the traditional, and the ritual.

*Do you keep an archive?
What do you do with the photographs
you have taken from your travels?*

*What is dramaturgy?
What do you have
a penchant for?*

Telling stories through visual means is a hallmark of Ottinger's art practice. She has cultivated a keen eye for selecting visual imagery found in daily life and depicting it in new and surprising ways. Her storylines are based on the concept of dramaturgical stations, which serve as a model for the constructing of illustrations and narratives, akin to the way the old epics unfold. Ottinger's art is also characterized by her penchant for playfully rearranging reality, creating new worlds with a fresh perspective. There is often a mix of opposites to be discovered, reflecting on the relationship between reality and fiction, nature and art. Through her unique method of collaging imagery and scenarios, whereby various times, locations and genres overlap, she encourages new meeting points between people, places and objects, as well as the imagination.

Ottinger succeeded to enter China to make her films starting in the 1980s when it was more difficult for a foreigner to visit the country. She has always been interested in the concept of being "en face", a French word meaning "face-to-face". It designates someone or something being across from us, as when coming into contact with the camera, the photographer or the individual. In her work, which traverses multiple cultures, Ottinger displays a strong curiosity towards aesthetic diversity in the daily life of societies that are foreign to her. In order to really see something, including an artwork, one must look longer and then look again. It takes time to see and understand what is unfamiliar to us. Through her films and photographs, Ottinger brings other cultures in their differences, but also in their similarities, closer to us.

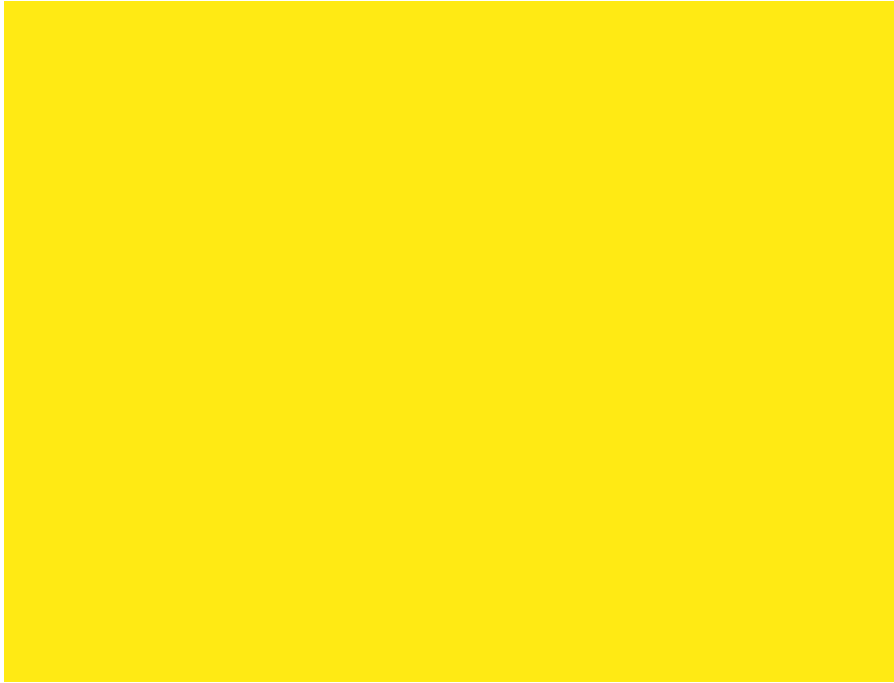
*When you take photos, what subjects
do you prefer to be 'face to face' with?*



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Consider the Following:

1. Can you guess what is happening in this scene?
2. What do you think the artist was thinking when she took this photograph?
3. Would you equate this photograph with the concept of documentary photography or an ethnographic document? Is there a difference?



**Activity #1 (Individual):
Looking longer, through the eyes of the viewer, artist
and the photographed subject.**

[Required materials: notebook, pencil, camera or a smart phone.]

An important note: The activity sheets will not be graded, nor is there only one correct answer. They are to provide a platform for creative dialogue, debate and continued research into the suggested topics.

This exhibition, *Ulrike Ottinger: China. The Arts – The People. Photographs and Films from the 1980s and 1990s*, consists of the projection of four films, *China. The Arts – The People* (1985), *Taiga* (1992), *Exile Shanghai* (1997), *Johanna d’Arc of Mongolia* (1989) and over one hundred related photographs. In Activity #1 please explore the exhibition on your own, allowing your intuition to lead you to images that strongly attract your attention, whether in the films presented or the accompanying photographs. Use your booklet to sketch a person, place or thing from five works. Answer the additional questions.

1. Write a short description of the image you chose, noting any interesting details.

2. What drew you to this image? Name at least three reasons.

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For what purpose do you use your camera?

3. What do you think the artist was focusing on?

Have you ever used your photography to tell a story?

4. What do you think the artist was feeling?

How do you archive your photographs?

5. What could the “subject” of the film or photograph have thought of the artist?

*Have you ever made a documentary?
How is it different from telling a story?*

Would any of your photographs serve as an ethnographic document, if so how?

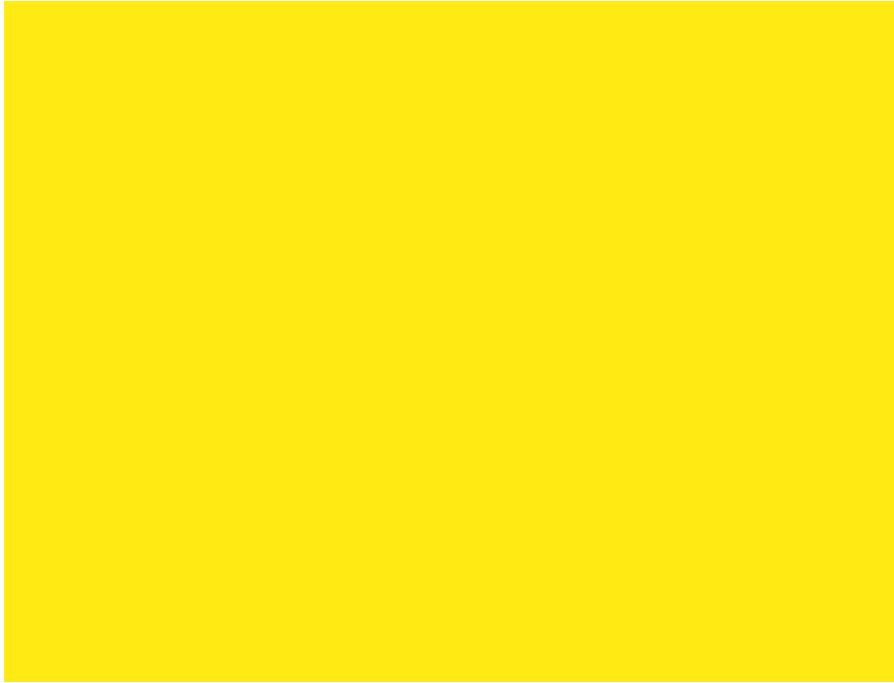
**Activity #2 (Group):
Telling the tale.**

Gallery Work:

While still in the gallery, students can get together in groups of three to five people. They should discuss the five images they each were drawn to in Activity #1. The next task would be to come up with a story, either by brainstorming one of their own or choosing a well-known example of which everyone is familiar. Each person should pick at least one of his or her chosen images to take part in the story. By using the dramaturgical stations to structure the narrative, each group must decide upon the following elements as a base for their story.

1. What is the *past history* of the characters?
2. What are the characters *future* hopes, desires and fears?
3. What is happening in the *present*?

By using these concepts as the skeleton to organize their narrative, the students can write their own tale feeling free to mix and match time, places, people and objects. While in the gallery a summary of the group's story can be written in the booklet in the box provided. It can be further developed back at school.

**Activity #3 (Group):**

Imagine an experience with a culture foreign to you.

Art Studio Work:

[Required materials: drawing and painting materials, paper clay, fabric, string, stickers, glue and other assorted mixed media materials]

Either in the NTU CCA Singapore studio workshop or back in the classroom, students can now make their gallery-visit inspired story and characters come alive. Based on the work of Ottinger, students can create mixed-media figurines, puppets or stand-up images to be used in reenacting their narrative on a mini-stage. This performance can be documented through photography or by filming the play.

Post-visit Ideas!

Each teacher must decide how to best continue to use the enriching and thought provoking gallery visits to enhance their students' cross-disciplinary learning experience. The following are a few ideas that could be developed by the students in post-visit lessons or projects.

- Students could bring into class a collection of their own photographs with the aim to examine them from an ethnographic perspective.
- Groups of students could create an “image archive” by combining their photographs together in related sets, choosing unique themes or story lines.
- Students could reenact a famous epic story from another culture by staging it using their own photos as props and characters. Filming the final cross-cultural narrative could be done by using handphones.
- Students could choose to go to a neighborhood in Singapore where they have never been before, exploring it through the lens of their camera, as if they were a foreigner in another land.
- Students could create a performance piece of art using video to document their visit to an “unfamiliar” neighborhood in Singapore.

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Vocabulary

Suggested definitions from www.freedictionary.com

Archive – a repository for stored memories or information.

Documentary – presenting facts objectively without editorializing or inserting fictional matter, as in a book or film.

Dramaturgy – 1.) the art, craft, or techniques of dramatic composition 2.) the art of writing or producing plays.

Ethnology – the branch of anthropology that analyzes and compares human cultures, as in social structure, language, religion and technology; cultural anthropology.

En face – opposite; facing.

Fiction – The act of feigning, inventing, or imagining; as, by a mere fiction of the mind.

Lifework – the chief or entire work of a person's lifetime.

Media – plural of medium.

Medium – a specific kind of artistic technique or means of expression as determined by the materials used or the creative methods involved.

Penchant – a strong inclination, taste or liking for something.

Story-telling – The act or practice of telling stories.

Biography

Kelly Reedy (United States/Singapore) has worked in Singapore for over 18 years as an artist and educator. She holds a BFA in Fine Art (University of Wisconsin, 1985), MA in Education (Hunter College, 1991), MA in Art Therapy (LASALLE College of the Arts, 2017). She has exhibited her artworks internationally in Paris, Chicago, and Berlin, as well as locally at the Jendela Visual Arts Space, Esplanade, the Singapore Tyler Print Institute, and Alliance Française. Reedy has developed educational resources for the National Gallery Singapore and trained teachers at the National Institute of Education, specialising in visual arts education in museums and galleries. For this education resource guide, she has created the Using a Gallery as a Site of Research activities' plan, as well as facilitating the teacher training workshop.

Resource

<http://www.ulrikeottinger.com>

<http://freedictionary.com>

<https://www.sgenable.sg/Pages/Home.aspx>

PROGRAMME

Saturday, 24 June 2017

10.00am – 5.00pm

The Wunder Tribe
Workshop for Kids
by artist **anGie seah (Singapore)**
(on the occasion of ***Art Day Out x School***
Holidays at Gillman Barracks)

This workshop is organised for children aged 7 to 12, with the idea of “Wunder” as starting point. By exploring some of the diverse cultures within and around Singapore, we will think about how tales are told and invent new personas and characters associated *flying, fight good causes, feed the hungry, and... to be somebody wonderful*. Focusing on stories the region has to tell and the images that those stories summon, we analyse ways of sharing experiences, visions, and emotions, as well as reinventing “ritualistic” actions by creating personalised objects.

Fridays, 14 and 28 July 2017

5.00 – 6.30pm

Stagings:
Shaman/Peasants – Dance of the
Barefoot Guardians by Arts Fission

This performance responds to Ulrike Ottinger’s penchant to making films and documentaries based on everyday life and in diverse settings, from urban to rural

environments. The title *Shaman/Peasants* alludes to the two factors related to the rise of communism in early 20th century China. The Chinese Communists built their revolutionary momentum with the support of the “Peasants” and later sealed their fate with the Land Reform Movement that changed the destiny of old China forever. “Shaman” is the intermediate between the deep-seated connection of human and land which bred myths and beliefs among the people. The dance will encompass incongruous motifs that aim to build conflict by pitching bizarre characters against a repressive, conformative ensemble, with abstract figures referenced through contemporary interpretation.

Commissioned by NTU CCA Singapore and co-produced with Arts Fission. For ticketing information visit ntu.ccasingapore.org.

As the longest incorporated contemporary dance company in Singapore since 1994, **Arts Fission** has gathered a diverse and ground-breaking dance-making track record. Under the artistic direction of Cultural Medallion Recipient Angela Liong, Arts Fission has evolved into a dynamic hybrid that creates works relevant to people and everyday life. Many of the works are influenced by Asian cultures, aesthetics, and heritage. The company often finds its creative impetus on topical themes like rapid urban changes that affect irretrievable cultural and environmental losses. Arts Fission’s dance works are collaborative in nature, having included working with composers and musicians, visual and new media artists, designers and film makers. The company has presented works regionally and internationally.

NOTES

JOIN NTU CCA SINGAPORE'S GUIDED SCHOOL TOURS

Offering engaging discussions on art, these specially designed tours provide opportunities for honing observation skills and interpretive thinking for both students and teachers. These are led by NTU CCA Singapore's curators who will give insights to the exhibiting artists, their works, and personal anecdotes, as well as elaborate on the key themes of the exhibition.

Tours in Mandarin and Malay available upon request.

All tours are free of charge.

To arrange a day and time for our school tours suited to your schedule, please email NTUCCAEducation@ntu.edu.sg

VISITOR INFO

Exhibition Hours

Tuesday – Sunday, 12.00 – 7.00pm
Friday, 12.00 – 9.00pm
Closed on Mondays
Open on Public Holidays

Public Programmes

Wednesday and Friday evenings

Curator-led Exhibition Tours

First Friday of the month, 7.00pm

Gillman Barracks Tours

For a tour please register at www.gillmanbarracks.com/tours

Free admission to all programmes, unless otherwise stated.

Exhibitions

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