

Mereka Utusan

IMPRINTING MALAY MODERNITY

1920s -1960s

16 October 2016 - 25 June 2017
Gallery 1 and 2
MALAY HERITAGE CENTRE





Mereka Utusan:
Imprinting Malay Modernity
1920s – 1960s

Mereka
/mə'rekə/

Verb
1. The act of creation

Utusan
/utusa:n/

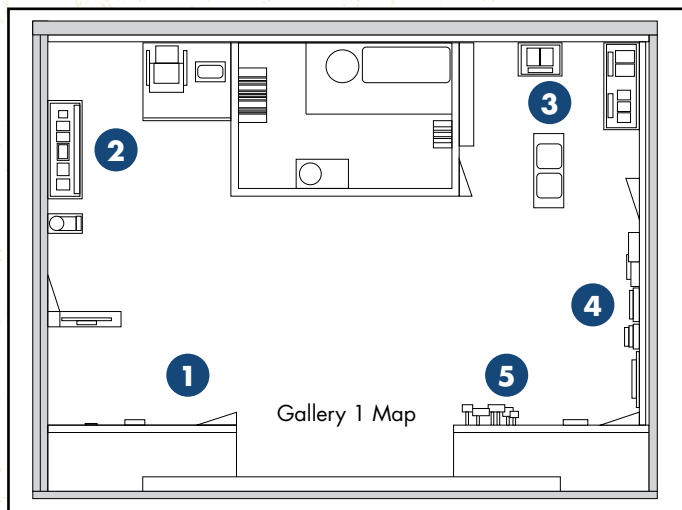
Noun
1. A news item
2. A group of messengers

Mereka Utusan presents insights into the development of Malay modernity and identity through the language of advertisements and editorial cartoons produced during the 1920s – 1960s. Through these features, Malay modernity and identity were simultaneously imagined and discussed in colonial Malaya and Singapore amidst important historical developments in the 20th century.

The 1920s witnessed the growth of Malay publishing houses throughout the Straits Settlements. Whilst the history of Malay printing is intertwined with the production of religious texts, the 20th century saw publishing play a more central role in politics, commerce and entertainment within the Straits Settlements and the Malay peninsula. This is perhaps most evident in the field of politics where newspapers and magazines gained momentum from various nationalist movements in the 1920s and invigorated Malay communities through widespread coverage and commentary on these events.

Newspapers and magazines therefore created (*mereka*) a space for the coverage and development of such news items. In doing so, they sought to cultivate a modern generation of readers, writers and consumers (*utusan*).

GALLERY 1



1. Beginnings of an Industry

Malay newspapers of the late 19th century reflected an early recognition of their value as indicators and influencers of social and political thought. The role of literary and publishing centres for the Malay-Muslim world came to be increasingly assumed by the Straits Settlements, with the added stimulus of a gradual spread of literacy amongst Malays and the growing use of printing technologies in these areas.

2. Hot off the Press

Early Malay publications benefited from the introduction of printing presses in the region by Christian missionary societies. Since these presses were initially used only by a small number of publishing houses, these early Malay publications set the standard for the writing of the Malay language, including how Malay words were spelled.

3. Setting the Standard

Various editorial formats such as quizzes and correspondence columns were introduced during the 1920s - 1930s which allowed

for greater reader participation. The varying formats reflected not only the vibrancy of ideas that were captured in the respective newspapers and magazines, but were also telling of the publishers' desire to attract a wide and diverse range of readers.

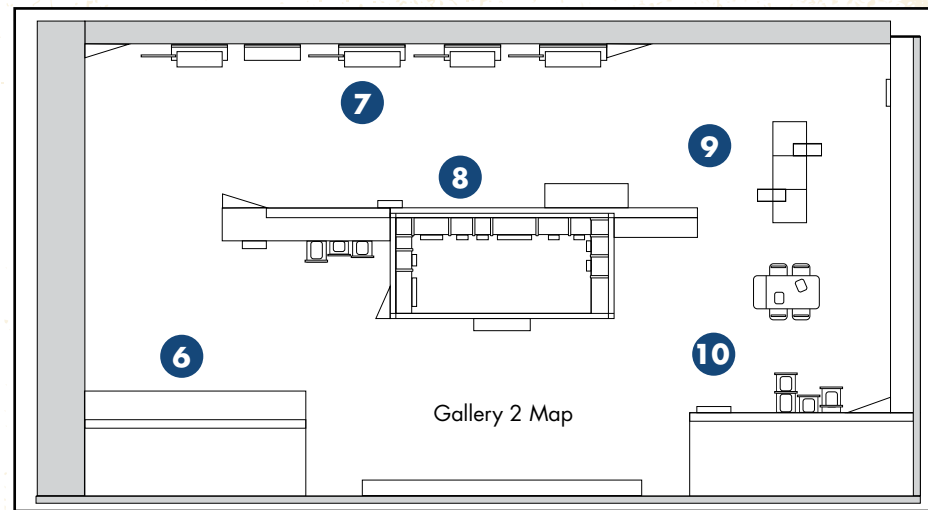
4. Genres and Tastes

Shortly after WWII and by the 1950s, there was a shift in magazine genres. Where early magazines dealt with religion or current affairs, later editions of magazines provided more diverse offerings including film reviews, political satire and erotica.

5. Dollars and Cents

The commercial aspects of publishing in the Straits Settlements were often overlooked by a majority of publishers and editors at the time. In the early years of publishing, editorials and current affairs formed a big part of overall content as compared to advertisements. With the gradual realisation that strong business foundations were essential, publishing houses and editors relooked their business strategies and started courting local and sometimes international advertisers.

GALLERY 2

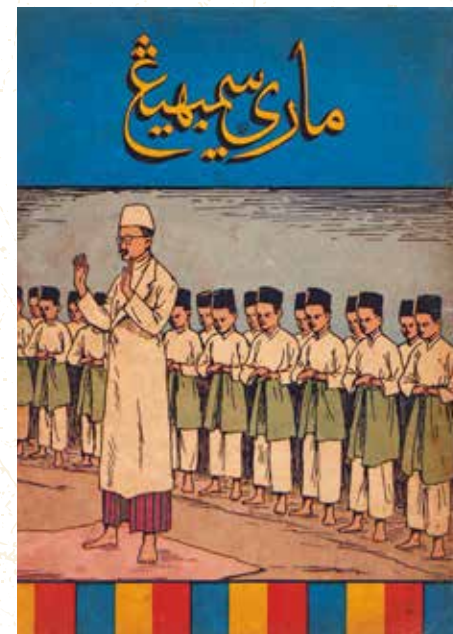


6. Age of Reform

Language issues and religious reformism signalled the beginning of a new outlook in the content of Malay newspapers and magazines such as *Saudara*, *Qalam*, *Sinaran* and many more. Religious tenets, reformist messages and discussions on technological advancements underpinned broader socio-cultural concerns across the four decades between the end of WWI and Malayan independence from colonial rule.

7. Kebun Bahasa

By the 20th century, Malay identity was no longer seen as strictly Islamic and there were arguments for Malay identity to be seen from a more local or 'peninsular' perspective. This discussion on Malay identity went beyond impassioned opinion editorials and took the form of satirical editorial cartoons in the 1930s, as well as advertisements which sought to influence the lifestyles of the local community through the introduction of new or foreign products.



Let's Pray, for Boys

c. 1950s | Singapore | Publisher: Qalam Press | Malay Heritage Centre Collection, National Heritage Board

GALLERY 2

8. Blurred Vision

From the 1940s, religious as well as more secular newspapers and magazines began to produce editorial content for and about women. These included columns about fashion, housekeeping and women's rights. These developments were consistent with a greater visibility of Malay women in the public sphere during that time, in part due to the emerging women's rights movement in the Straits Settlements.

9. The Responsive Consumer

Newspapers and magazines served as dynamic spaces to support Malay-owned enterprises, goods and services. In this regard, advertisements served two vital functions: facilitating the financial survival of newspapers and magazines as well as inculcating a sense of pride and modern identity amongst the Malay community.

10. Out of Print

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, increasing numbers of local publishing houses had to cease operations or relocate due to a number of reasons. These included stiff competition, cheaper production costs in the Malay Peninsula, declining readership as well as stricter censorship laws. Amongst the publishers that remained in Singapore, a new editorial model emerged with a focus on general affairs whilst cartoons relied on observational humour and themes of racial and social harmony.



A Bedak Cahaya Bulan advertisement

c. 1960s | Singapore | Malay Heritage Centre Collection, National Heritage Board

ARTIST COMMISSIONS



Image Credit: vertical submarine

vertical submarine

vertical submarine is an art collective from Singapore whose works include installations, drawings and paintings involving text, storytelling and humour. In 2009, they presented an exhibition at the Singapore Art Museum as part of the President's Young Talents showcase. They have since completed projects in Spain, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, the Philippines, Mexico City, Australia and Germany. They have also won several awards including the Celeste Prize 2011 (Installation), the Credit Suisse Artist Residency Award 2009 and the President's Young Talents Award 2009.



Image credit: Mojoko

MOJOKO

Born in Iran, raised in Hong Kong and educated in Europe, **Mojoko** (aka Steve Lawler) attended the prestigious FABRICA art residency in Treviso, Northern Italy in 2001. Launching his interactive design career at Diesel, he thrived in the creative industry as an artist, designer, art director and creative director. He is also the creator of Kult Magazine, Gallery & Studio, and his works explore the old and historical, alongside new media such as computer programming, digital sculpture, painting and printmaking.

WORKSHOPS



Image Credit: Typesettingsg

Discovering the Jawi Script and Scripting Jawi by HAZWORKS*

Discovering the Jawi Script:

Saturday, 22 October 2016

Scripting Jawi:

Saturday, 29 October 2016

10.00am – 12.30pm
MHC Auditorium

S\$20/session
S\$30 for two sessions

Register via malayheritagecentre.peatix.com or call 6391 0450 for more information

Discover the history of Jawi script in this two-part workshop and learn to read and write in Jawi by creating your very own Jawi calligraphy on canvas.

Basic Malay is required for the workshop

Printing Art: A Letterpress Workshop by TYPESETTINGSG*

Saturday, 5 November 2016

10.00am – 12.30pm
MHC Auditorium

S\$20/pax, register via malayheritagecentre.peatix.com or call 6391 0450 for more information

Experiment with a letterpress proofing press under the guidance of Yao Yu, owner of Typesettingsg, and personalise your very own tote bag with vintage wood types!



Image Credit: SUPERSEGA

Family Pop-up Screenprinting Booth by SUPERSEGA

Saturday, 29 October 2016

2.00pm – 5.00pm
Courtyard 1

Free, registration not required

Get up close with the equipment and tools used in screenprinting and create up to three postcards inspired by magazine covers from the exhibition.

WORKSHOPS



Image Credit: Singapore Tyler Print Institute

Printing Art: A Screenprint Workshop by Singapore Tyler Print Institute

Saturday, February 2017

10.00am – 12.30pm
MHC Auditorium

S\$20/pax, register via malayheritagecentre.peatix.com or call 6391 0450 for more information

Learn more about the art of screenprinting in this workshop organised by the Singapore Tyler Print Institute and create your own limited-edition prints.

Printing Art: A Dry Point Workshop by Singapore Tyler Print Institute

Saturday, May 2017

10.00am – 12.30pm
MHC Auditorium

S\$20/pax, register via malayheritagecentre.peatix.com or call 6391 0450 for more information

Find out more about the what's and how's of dry point in this workshop conducted by the Singapore Tyler Print Institute and bring home prints inspired by the exhibition.

Registration is required for all paid programmes. Visit <http://malayheritage.org.sg/> or email us at NHB_MHC_Programmes@nhb.gov.sg for more details and updates.

*Paid Programmes

TALKS



Image Credit: Malay Heritage Centre

Public Lecture Series: 'Bahasa Bukan Basi': About the Indie Group

In conjunction with Malay CultureFest 2016 & Mereka Utusan Special Exhibition

Saturday, 22 October 2016

2.00pm – 4.30pm
MHC Auditorium

Free, register via
malayheritagecentre.peatix.com or call
6391 0450 for more information

Learn more about the rising popularity of indie literary works which is gaining a following amongst the younger generation in the region. 'Bahasa Bukan Basi': About the Indie Group will discuss the importance of these works to the development of contemporary Malay literature.

Speakers

- Faisal Tehrani, Resident Writer, Department of Malay Studies, National University of Singapore
- Dr Azhar Ibrahim, Department of Malay Studies, National University of Singapore
- Ronasina, Writer, Malaysia

The lecture will be conducted in English and Malay.

Public Lecture Series: Comics of the Nusantara

In conjunction with Mereka Utusan Special Exhibition

Saturday, 14 January 2017

2.00pm – 4.30pm
MHC Auditorium

Register via malayheritagecentre.peatix.com or call 6391 0450 for more information.

Step into the wonderful world of comics and graphic novels at this public lecture and learn more about the development of comics and graphic novels in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia amidst recent social, economic and political developments.

Please check our website at malayheritage.org.sg for more information.

The lecture will be conducted in English and Malay.

TOURS AND TRAILS



Hiboran 10 Tahun

1946 – 1956 | Singapore | Publisher: The Royal Press | Malay Heritage Centre Collection, National Heritage Board

Dichetak Oleh: A Publishers and Printers Heritage Trail

Session 1: Saturday, 11 March 2017
Session 2: Saturday, 25 March 2017

11.00am – 12.30pm
Kampong Gelam precinct

Register via malayheritagecentre.peatix.com or call 6391 0450 for more information.

Relive the days when Kampong Gelam was the printing hub of the Malay world as you embark on a trail to learn more about the history of the Malay printing industry.

Curators' Tour

Saturday, 5 November 2016
& 11 February 2017,
2.00pm – 3.30pm

Friday, 7 April 2017,
7.30pm – 8.30pm

Gallery 1 and 2

Register via malayheritagecentre.peatix.com or call 6391 0450 for more information.

Learn more about the Malay publishing world in this special tour conducted by the curators of Mereka Utusan and discover fun insights about key artefacts and how the exhibition was put together.

EDUCATION

Little Curators' Workshop

Please visit malayheritage.org.sg or email NHB_MHC_Programmes@nhb.gov.sg for more details on workshop dates and pricing.

Gallery 2

Get up close and personal with rare artefacts and experience what it is like to be a curator for a day in this fun-filled workshop by the Malay Heritage Centre.

For ages 6 – 9



Image Credit: Malay Heritage Centre



Image Credit: Malay Heritage Centre

Session 1: Thursday 19 Jan 2017,
3.00pm – 4.30pm**
Session 2: Thursday 9 Mar 2017,
3.00pm – 4.30pm**

Gallery 1 and 2

Free, register via NHB_MHC_Programmes@nhb.gov.sg or call 6391 0450 for more information

Educators' Tour for Teachers

Join us on a special educator's tour by the Malay Heritage Centre and learn how to customise school visits to the centre and the exhibition.

***Session 1 is suitable for upper-primary school educators*

Session 2 is suitable for secondary school educators

For regular updates on upcoming and new programmes, visit malayheritage.org.sg.

PRINTERS AND PUBLISHERS (1920s – 1960s)



LOCATIONS

1. **Royal Press**
(745 North Bridge Road)
2. **HARMY/ Al-Ahmadiyah Press**
(101 Jalan Sultan)
3. **Pustaka H.M. Ali**
(116 Arab Street)
4. **Qalam Press**
(356 – 358 Geylang Road)
5. **Melayu Raya Press**
(380 – 387 Geylang Road)
6. **Waktu Press**
(116 Tembeling Road)
7. **Muslim Publishing House**
(123 Serangoon Road)
8. **Utusan Melayu Press**
(185A-B Cecil Street)
9. **Geliga Publications Bureau**
(16 Nassim Road)

ABOUT MALAY HERITAGE CENTRE



The Malay Heritage Centre (MHC) is housed in the former Istana Kampong Gelam, which was gazetted as a National Monument in 2015. The centre showcases the history, culture and contributions of the Malay community within the context of Singapore's history and multi-cultural society.

MHC's permanent galleries focus on the history of Kampong Gelam and feature an array of artefacts from the National Collection and the Malay community. Through its exhibitions and programmes, the Centre aspires to be a vibrant destination of historical and cultural significance for both Singaporeans and international visitors. The Malay Heritage Centre is a heritage institution managed by the National Heritage Board.

VISITOR INFORMATION



ADDRESS

85 Sultan Gate, Singapore 198501

OPENING HOURS

Tuesday – Sunday: 10.00am – 6.00pm

(Closed on Mondays)

Last admission at 5.30pm



www.malayheritage.org.sg



facebook.com/malayheritage



Instagram: @malayheritage



NHB_MHC@nhb.gov.sg



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