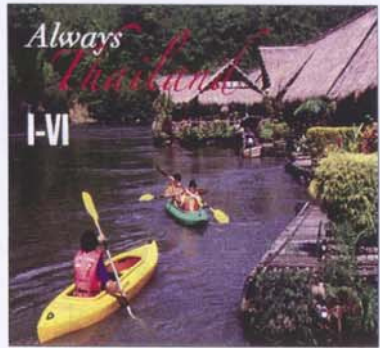


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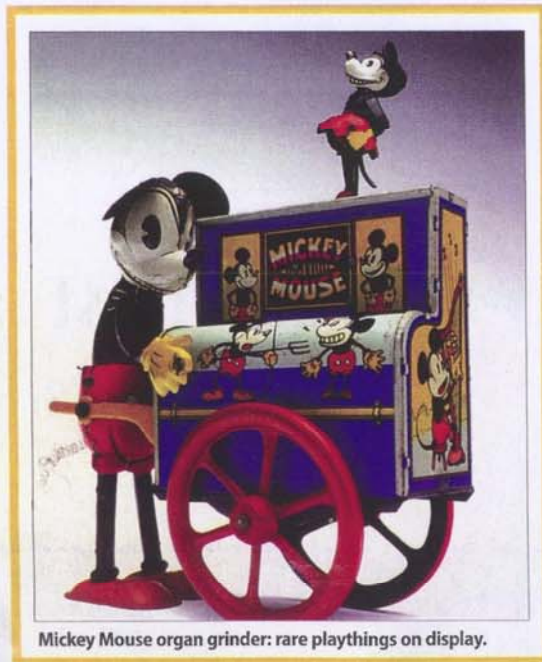


Let's hear it for the toys

SINGAPORE

Let's hear it for the toys

One collector chooses to share his playthings with the world in a new toy museum due to open in December. Sze Toh Yui Munn reports.



Mickey Mouse organ grinder: rare playthings on display.

IT is not child's play to amass more than 50,000 pieces of childhood memorabilia, and harder yet to build a museum around them. But Singapore can lay claim to such an attraction, thanks to toy collector, Mr Chang Yang Fa. His personal collection of vintage toys, accumulated over 25 years, has pieces dating from the mid-1800s to mid-1900s. These will be on display when MINT Museum of Toys opens in December.

The initials MINT stand for "Moment of Imagination and Nostalgia with Toys" and represent the mostly mint condition of the toys.

The toys hail from across the world, including the UK, US, Germany and Japan and are worth an impressive S\$5 million (US\$2.9 million).



Astroboy: character toys are one of the highlights of the collection.

Mr Chang said the unique and rare include: "Door of Hope Dolls, a 1903 Steiff Bear, a 1930s plush Mickey with Walt Disney's signature, which are unlikely to be found at other toy museums".

Other notable playthings include: Disneyana toys and memorabilia; character toys such as Astroboy, Batman, Dan Dare and Popeye; pre-war Japanese toys; a teddy bear collection and a unique collection of Chinese comic covers dating from the 1920s; and Tintin collectables.

Mr Chang said more than half of the collection was found in Singapore and can

be regarded as part of the country's heritage.

The museum will be in a five-storey building at 26 Seah Street next to Raffles Hotel. There will be a merchandise shop and a café.

MINT Museum of Toys is targeting visitors from nine months to 90 years old and aims to offer a "sophisticated" nostalgic experience. More importantly, Mr Chang wants to "reach out to the child in every one of us".

"A visit to the museum is like a nostalgic journey of rediscovery, giving visitors an emotional link to their childhood which has often been long forgotten".

It is also expected to draw tourists as "there is a big vintage toy collector's market worldwide, particularly in Japan, the US and Europe."

The museum received grants from the Singapore Tourism Board and the National Heritage Board has offered curatorial support and advisory services.

The funding for the S\$2 million attraction sits squarely on Mr Chang's shoulders but that did not deter him as he wanted "to share my toy collection of more than 50,000 pieces, one of the finest and most extensive in the world, with the public".

Mr Chang said MINT would explore strategic partnerships with public and private museums overseas to establish an exchange of exhibits to keep visitors coming back.

The proposed opening hours are 09.30 to 18.30 daily. Ticket prices have yet to be decided but are likely to be less than S\$10 for adults, and half that for children.