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# First Toy Museum In Southeast Asia

by Audrey Raj



**MINT, the world's first purpose-built museum for toys and the first in Southeast Asia is currently scheduled to be opened in Singapore in late December 2005 or January 2006. The museum showcases an extensive collection of vintage and rare toys.**

The name MINT, meant to embody the "Moment of Imagination and Nostalgia with Toys" was incorporated in 2001.

The museum first began as the personal collection of Singaporean toy collector, Mr. Chang Yang Fa. It started with the 'first' toy he purchased with his Chinese New Year 'ang pow' when he was a child.

"Basically, the MINT Museum of Toys is to provide the public with a journey of re-discovery, sophisticated nostalgia and an emotional link to a childhood, which has probably long been forgotten. The MINT Museum of Toys is thus not just for children, but also for the child in every one of us," says Mr. Chang.

Over a period of more than 25 years, he has collected more than 50,000 pieces of vintage toys and childhood memorabilia from the mid-19th century to mid-20th century.



**This valuable collection worth over S\$5 million, originated from various countries such as Germany, United Kingdom, Japan, United States and Greece.**

Mr. Chang continues, "Collecting in those earlier years was far more affordable, as most toys found

then were considered as either old unwanted stock, or damaged and could not be sold, so they were sold often at a fraction of their original cost".

With the introduction of the Internet and greater awareness, the prices of toys have escalated to an all-time high.

This makes the prices for some of the vintage toys close to the values of antiquities, which makes the MINT Museum of Toys collection, both unique and valuable to Singapore.

The collection includes toys such as Batman, Bonzo, Dan Dare, Popeye and even Japan and China made collectibles.

More than half of the collection was found in Singapore, so can be regarded as part of Singapore's heritage.

The idea for the museum was mooted more than ten years ago, but was delayed due to the lack of a suitable location.

26 Seah Street was finally selected because of its ideal location, being close to historical buildings like Raffles Hotel and other cultural sites.

**"It was serendipity that we chanced upon Seah Street and hence the birth of MINT Museum of Toys. Work on the museum recommenced in the early part of this year and continued until today".**

- Mr. Chang Yang Fa  
Owner of the MINT Museum of Toys

MINT Museum of Toys, being another unique tourist landmark, is supported by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), and other government agencies such as The National Heritage Board (NHB) and Spring Singapore.

This five-storey building is being constructed by SCDA Architects, which won the Royal Institute of British Architects Worldwide Awards in 2004.

The museum will be furnished with a café in the basement and various shops on the first level.

Through this integration, MINT will explore strategic partnerships with both public and private museums overseas to establish an exchange of exhibits. 