

Mint Museum of Toys



Photo: Mint Museum of Toys

With an extensive collection of well over 50,000 pieces of vintage toys and childhood memorabilia from the mid 19th-20th Century, that is pre-dating the 1970's, Mint Museum of Toys in Singapore is probably the largest Toy Museum of its kind in Southeast Asia, if not in Asia, outside Japan. The Museum features striking design elements, including a sleek glass façade comprising of 26 individually cut profile fins curved edge glass panels, which give rise to a unique and an aesthetic "waved" like façade.

World's first purpose-built toy museum

Mint (Moment of Imagination and Nostalgia with Toys) Museum of Toys, first opened its door to the public in May 2006 and was subsequently officially opened by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr George Yeo on 5 March 2007.

The Museum is located along 26 Seah Street, facing the side entrance to the historic Raffles Hotel. The site, a former shophouse, is just 5.5 metres wide and 27.5 metres in length.

Showcasing an extensive collection of vintage toys, including rare and unique one-of-a-kind toys, the museum is the largest in Southeast Asia and includes more than 50,000 pieces of vintage toys and childhood memorabilia from the mid-19th to mid-20th Century. Many of these are on display at the museum.

One of the objectives of the museum is to "reach out to the child in every one of us". A visit to the museum gives the visitors an emotional link to their childhood, one which has often been long forgotten.

The unique collection, valued at over S\$5 million, originates from more than 40 countries including Germany, Japan, United Kingdom, United States and even Bulgaria. These include Disneyana toys and memorabilia; Character toys such as Astroboy, Batman, Bonzo, Dan Dare, Popeye, etc; Pre-war

Japanese toys; China-made toys, including a 'Door of Hope' doll collection dating from the turn of the 20th Century; Teddy Bear Collection and a unique collection of Chinese comics and comic covers dating from 1920's; Golden Age Comics; and Tintin collectables, amongst others. More than half of the collection was found in Singapore and can be regarded as part of Singapore's heritage.

Award winning design

The collection, one of the finest in the world, is displayed in a contemporary five-storey building designed by Singapore architectural firm SCDA Architects. SCDA won several prestigious international awards, including the Royal Institute of British Architects Worldwide Awards. SCDA Architect's entry, the Mint Museum of Toys, has clinched 3 international architectural awards including Winner for the Tourism, Travel and Transport Category (2008 Cityscape Dubai Architectural Awards), Runners Up for Commercial Building Review Awards 2008) and Best New Global Design (2007 Chicago Athenaeum International Architectural Awards).

With its avant garde design, in particular its facade, the building complements and enhances the unique character of the entire collection.



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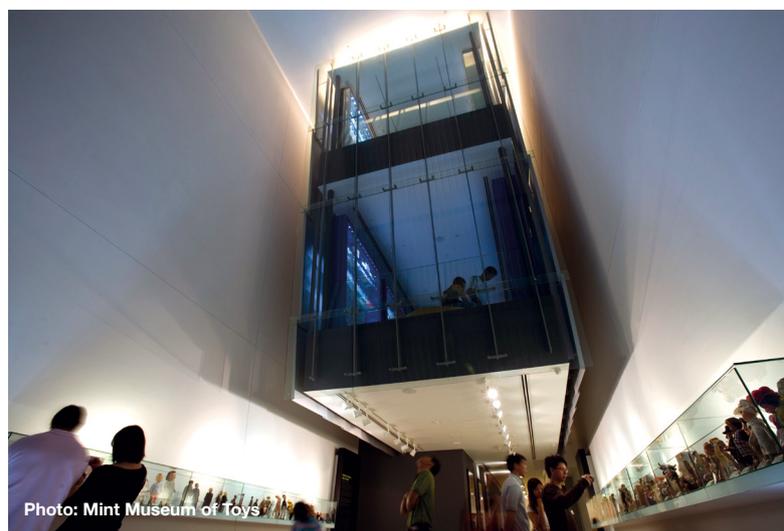


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Entry into the museum is through a ramp overlooking a high ceiling café below. The double volume provides for large exhibits and connects the basement café to the street level.

A column free space is created internally and a series of double and triple volume spaces are interlinked with a lift and stair core. In section alternate floors vary spatially, permitting smaller spaces to be 'toy boxes' with controlled interiors that are juxtaposed within large-scale volumes of light filled space overlooking the street. The rooftop is designed as an open terrace with views over the urban landscape, and is also home to the newly opened Mr Punch Rooftop wine bar.

Flanked by two shophouses the front and the rear elevations of the building are designed to control the amount of natural light entering the exhibition spaces. The toy exhibits in mint condition are sensitive to UV light, as prolonged exposure causes the exhibits to deteriorate and its colours to fade.

SCDA Architects, in collaboration with Arup's façade engineering team on the technical and unusual detail requirements, designed the façade of the museum with glass exposed on the edge.

A series of 26 curved edge glass panels placed on edge and sandwiched between aluminium panels extends from the second storey to the roof of the building, creating a 'windowless' architecture. The curved edge glass provides a crystalline façade that is simple yet dynamic as one passes in front of the building. It is symbolic of a clean modern box that houses the antique mint condition toys within. This feature is believed to be the first of its kind in the world. Another unique feature of the glass panels is that each piece has fibre optic cables embedded into it, allowing the façade of the museum to be lit externally in a beautifully subtle fashion.

The design of the Building is also influenced by geomancy principles, for example, the number of panels not only correspond to



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its address but also to an auspicious number; the position of the cashier points throughout the building; the layout of the kitchen area; as well as the distribution of toys that follows the elements of metal, wood, water, earth. The lighting system for the acrylic shelving of the showcases is



Photo: ©Arup / Kelvin Kan

unique in that light is allowed to pass through the entire shelving and hence does not cause any shadows to be cast by the toys on display.

Another unique and yet novel feature in the building is its lenticular panel, which lines the wall on one side of the walkway leading in from the entrance. This lenticular panel provides a chronological visual record of comics from the Silver Age to the Platinum Age and also provides an idea of what is being displayed in the Museum.

The glass floor on Level Three provides visitors with another exciting experience that allows one to see right through down to the entrance at ground level.

The Café, Restaurant and Wine Bar in the basement offer a relaxed yet sophisticated ambience for both casual and formal dining. The Café is the only themed Café based on vintage toys and childhood memorabilia, in Singapore. Like the façade lighting, the unique wine rack design for the Wine Bar, with its changing LED lighting feature, is believed to be the only one of its kind in the world with this lighting feature.

The Mint Museum of Toys offers an experience like no other, rekindling the joy of the inner child in every one of us, and at the same time sharing a special space of sophistication through the creative architectural design of the museum.

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