



Bite-sized lessons  
with big impact  
from SLA's Brown  
Bag sessions

Stories of grit, growth and  
resilience—featuring the dreamers,  
disruptors, believers, risk-takers,  
visionaries, movers, fighters and  
challengers from Singapore.

# CONTENTS

|               |     |                                                                           |
|---------------|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Idea      | 4   |                                                                           |
| About SLA     | 9   |                                                                           |
| Stories       |     |                                                                           |
|               | 10  | Making Singapore Lovable: <b>Wee Teng Wen</b>                             |
|               | 20  | Way of the Ninja: <b>Lai Chang Wen</b>                                    |
|               | 30  | A Lifelong Fascination with Storytelling: <b>Quak Hiang Whai</b>          |
|               | 42  | The Combo Specialist, with a Signature Dish: <b>Eric Sim</b>              |
|               | 52  | The Boy Who Dared to Dream: <b>Fandi Ahmad</b>                            |
|               | 62  | The Modern Agora: <b>Jaelle Ang</b>                                       |
|               | 72  | Conquering a Multi-Million-Dollar Business—and Herself: <b>Rachel Lim</b> |
|               | 84  | Saving Ourselves, and the Planet: <b>Professor Koh Lian Pin</b>           |
|               | 94  | Spreading the Gift of Education: <b>Ng Yi-Xian</b>                        |
|               | 106 | Man on a Green Mission: <b>Zac Toh</b>                                    |
|               | 118 | Matters of the Mind: <b>Dr Lim Boon Leng</b>                              |
|               | 128 | Lights, Camera, Action: <b>Dasmond Koh</b>                                |
|               | 138 | Eye on Singapore: <b>Darren Soh</b>                                       |
|               | 150 | The Toast That Binds: <b>Jesher Loi</b>                                   |
|               | 160 | First Instincts, Best Instincts: <b>Sharon Sim</b>                        |
|               | 170 | Liberating the Voice: <b>Petrina Kow</b>                                  |
|               | 180 | The Singaporean Who Beat Michael Phelps: <b>Joseph Schooling</b>          |
|               | 190 | Happiness, with a Side of Spice: <b>Benjamin Boh</b>                      |
|               | 200 | Never Too Young to Build an Empire: <b>Vanessa Ho</b>                     |
|               | 210 | Force for Good: <b>Sybil Lau</b>                                          |
|               | 220 | On Stage, Off Stage: <b>Taufik Batisah</b>                                |
| Index         | 230 |                                                                           |
| Photo Credits | 238 |                                                                           |

THE  
IDEA

As Singapore marks its 60th year of independence, we honour the generations who have built this nation through unity, ingenuity, and resilience. SG60 is not just a celebration of how far we've come—it's also a call to action: to continue building a more inclusive, innovative, and sustainable Singapore together.

It is in this spirit that we at the Singapore Land Authority (SLA) embrace the challenge of turning constraints into possibilities. While Singapore may be bounded by limited land, our capacity for innovation and transformation knows no bounds.

As our world becomes increasingly unpredictable and challenges grow ever more complex, it is crucial—now more than ever—that we pause to reconsider how we think, work, act, and engage with our stakeholders.

The Brown Bag sessions were a series of lunchtime conversations initiated to exemplify how curiosity and collaboration can spark meaningful dialogue and inspire new ideas.

In 2021, as the effects of the pandemic continued to reverberate through the lives of individuals and across organisations and governments, we found ourselves asking, "How can we gain a real sense of what is happening on the ground? How do we stay attuned to emerging trends? How can we be inspired to generate new ideas in optimising spaces, beyond purely economic uses?"

One way, we believed, was by bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds, industries, and areas of expertise to share their stories, thought processes, experiences, and lessons. And this was how SLA's Brown Bag sessions began.

In July 2021, we held our inaugural session with Mr Wee Teng Wen from the Lo & Behold Group. Since then, we have had the privilege of hosting over 20 speakers, primarily from the private sector, who shared their stories of resilience, entrepreneurship, and sustainability.

From sports to finance to logistics to fashion to hospitality and entertainment, these conversations have been a wellspring of learning for all of us at SLA. And this book, *Think Unlimited*, extends that spirit outward—to our fellow Singaporeans today, and for generations to come.

At SLA, we are committed to shaping and stewarding Singapore's land and geospatial resources not just with technical excellence, but with imagination and purpose. We aim to engage, co-create, and evolve alongside the people we serve by tapping into the collective talents of our community and embracing a mindset of possibility—realising a vision of space that is not just physical, but filled with potential.

As we reflect on our shared journey and look toward the future, we hope this compilation of stories will serve as a beacon of hope and inspiration for us all to always *Think Unlimited*.

This publication is a collaborative effort between SLA and our distinguished speakers, all of whom generously contributed their time and effort on a pro bono basis.

All speakers featured in this publication were from the private sector when their respective sessions took place between 2021 and 2024.

The content reflects their Brown Bag session, and each

story features them photographed against a State property that best resonates with their professional domain or personal narrative. The ■ **State properties** managed by SLA in this publication are highlighted in colour and with a square.

We extend our warmest gratitude to all the speakers who have participated in these conversations, embraced this project, and shared their wisdom.







# ABOUT SLA

The Singapore Land Authority (SLA) is a statutory board under the Ministry of Law. Formed on 1 June 2001, our mission is to ensure effective use of land resources and data for the economic and social development of Singapore.

Our vision Limited Land • Unlimited Space is a creative paradox that aptly highlights our nation's constraints and SLA's commitment in addressing them. The word 'Space' is multi-dimensional, encompassing realms from the physical to the digital. 'Unlimited' represents the extent of our commitment in our quest for solutions and innovations that will contribute to the economic and social development of Singapore.

## **State Land and Properties**

SLA manages about 11,000 hectares of State land and about 2,600 State properties, which are used for residential, commercial, social and community purposes. Through the careful planning and execution of interim uses for State properties under our management, SLA is able to maximise the use of vacant State land and properties in creative and innovative ways to support our nation's evolving economic and social needs.

## **Geospatial**

SLA drives the use and development of geospatial information and technology by fostering a national collaborative environment that encourages innovation, knowledge sharing and value creation among public agencies, private enterprises and the community.

## **Regulatory**

SLA is the national land registration and land survey authority and is responsible for maintaining accurate and reliable land ownership and land boundary systems.



Professor Koh is shot at the ■ **Former Bukit Timah Fire Station**, built in 1956. The station, set against the lush trees of the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, is an apt reference to Professor Koh's work in nature-based solutions. Decommissioned in April 2005 following the relocation of firefighting operations to Bukit Batok, the site has since been revitalised into a mixed-used community node.

# Saving Ourselves, and the Planet:

Koh Lian Pin

on his passion  
for conservation,  
the twin pillars of  
economy and ecology,  
and pioneering  
conservation  
technology

"We're not saving the planet—we're saving ourselves."

Echoing the urgency of unprecedented climate changes and ecological challenges, this quote from Professor Koh Lian Pin's favourite sci-fi saga rings truer today than ever. Declared by Vice-Admiral Amilyn Holdo in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, these words lay bare a truth—self-preservation is at the heart of the larger fight, and protecting ourselves is the first step towards it.

For Professor Koh Lian Pin, this truth has come to define his entire career—and life's mission.

From revolutionising forest and biodiversity mapping in inaccessible terrains to helping Singapore and ASEAN nations develop science-backed climate policies, his work has earned him the status of being Singapore's most globally recognised environmental scientist, and one of the world's most cited conservation researchers.

His journey—from Princeton to ETH Zurich—has rewritten the rules of ecological problem-solving.

## EARLY YEARS

Growing up in 1980s Singapore, Professor Koh belonged to one of the last generations to experience the island's kampong life. He spent his childhood moving between two worlds—the pockets of nature where he chased butterflies and staged jumping spider battles

**RIGHT**

"This is a photograph of my late grandfather and his many grandchildren at his attap house, taken probably around 1982. I am the pudgy one in green shorts. I benefitted greatly from Singapore's economic success, in having a quality of life and the many opportunities that my parents and grandparents never had, although that came at a cost to our natural environment. This juxtaposition of my life experiences has had a profound influence on my goal as a conservation scientist and my wanting to contribute in Parliament as an NMP, which is to find ways to help reconcile economic development with environmental protection."



A younger Professor Koh (with guitar) performing on stage during one of the songwriting competitions he took part in.



during visits to his grandparents' and the rapidly modernising city where high-rise buildings gradually replaced green spaces.

"Those moments in nature were wonderful. They gave me my first sense of life's intricate systems. As I grew older, I grappled with the duality of having an affinity towards nature while also understanding the need for economic development."

Yet, Professor Koh wasn't always bent on pursuing the sciences. His earliest passion? Music. His teenage years were spent composing songs and competing in music competitions as part of a Mandarin-speaking boy band.

"When I was 12, 13, I wanted to be a musician; I was very interested in music. And like most Singaporean kids, my parents sent me to piano and guitar lessons, but I was more interested in songwriting. I was part of a boy band, and we wrote our own songs and won a few competitions. At one point, I even told my parents I was going to quit school to study audio engineering. That freaked them out. Thankfully, they were very nice and talked me through the reasons why I should at least complete my college education. And I did."

His academic journey began at Hwa Chong Institution, then the National University of Singapore (NUS), which led to a First-Class Honours degree and Masters of Sciences in Biological Sciences. But beyond formal education, his worldview was also shaped by the books he devoured. Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene* left an indelible mark on him, while Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* expanded his imagination.

"I remember being fascinated by the the idea of being on a bike and riding through vast expanses of land and being able to think about those bigger philosophical questions."

#### **PATH TO EMINENCE**

In the early 2000s, young Professor Koh went for a scholarship interview, where he found his passion was met with scepticism.

"I told the interviewer I was studying butterflies and birds, and he told me butterflies and birds can't make money."

This rejection proved to be a blessing in disguise. The young man—who once hunted spiders and was determined to bridge humanity's needs with

nature's limits—decided to venture abroad.

"I wanted to prove that that ecology could make a difference. And there weren't jobs here for what I wanted to study."

His destination? Princeton University. There, he pursued a PhD under conservation biologist David Wilcove, investigating the environmental toll of oil palm agriculture in Southeast Asia. During that time, he spent months living on the plantations in Sabah, Malaysia, confronting the uncomfortable truths of the industry: that while it devastated biodiversity, it also lifted communities out of poverty.

"I went in focused on habitat loss. But the reality was more complex—these crops fed families."

This duality between ecology and economy then came to define his career.

After three and a half years at Princeton, Professor Koh joined ETH Zurich as a postdoctoral researcher, diving into the world of palm oil-based biofuels. Being in close proximity to other top institutions in Europe, he thrived on the region's collaborative intensity while honing the skills needed to collaborate across cultures.

"You learn to defend your ideas to your colleagues while remaining open to theirs."

At ETH, he was working with Jaboury Ghazoul, the ecosystem management professor, who became his mentor. Under Ghazoul's guidance, Professor Koh's research expanded beyond theory—informing real-world environmental policies.

Then, at just 40, Professor Koh secured a full professorship at the University of Adelaide. This achievement proved both a blessing and a curse—he was top of his game, but it also made him question academia's limits.

"I started experiencing a midlife crisis. I was 40. I thought to myself, 'You're done. You're finished. What are you going to do for the rest of your life?' So I started engaging with the NGO world and started to be involved in some of Conservation International's efforts in the region. I got to know them and eventually, was offered a position with them in the US."

#### AT THE VANGUARD OF CONSERVATION SCIENCE

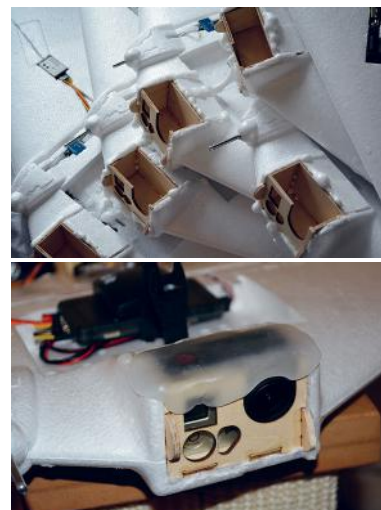
Recognising early that traditional field methods alone cannot address the escalating biodiversity crisis, Professor Koh became a trailblazer in what we now call conservation technology—a revolutionary approach in harnessing cutting-edge tools to safeguard nature.

Among his most transformative innovations was co-founding ConservationDrones.org in 2011, a simple idea that sparked a paradigm shift in ecological monitoring—earning him accolades from *Nature* and *The New York Times*.

"One of my colleagues, Professor Serge Wich, who had been working for many years in Indonesia on orangutans and how their habitats are destroyed by palm oil production, came over to ETH and we chatted. Somewhere along the way, I mentioned Switzerland is great for flying remote-controlled gliders, which are like toy planes. And then we joked about how maybe we can just stick a compact camera underneath one of these glider planes and fly it over the forest in Sumatra and maybe we can use that to detect orangutan nests and count them and study their populations."

That offhand idea birthed an essential conservation tool.

"We built the earliest prototype in 2011. Although it was just a prototype,



A low-cost drone, made from styrofoam and craft wood, has taken Professor Koh to places like Chitwan National Park in Nepal, where he trained forest rangers to use drones for park patrols.

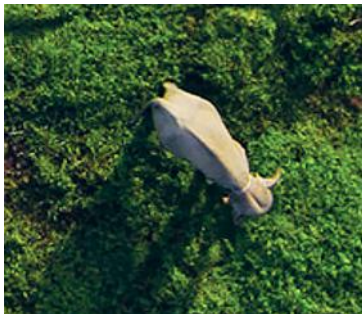


#### TOP AND RIGHT

A conversation with Professor Serge Wich in 2011 led to Professor Koh using drones in conservation research in tropical rainforests.



Professor Koh on a recce field trip to the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park in South Australia in 2017.



Footage from a conservation drone captured an endangered Sumatran elephant in Indonesia.



it was already quite sophisticated. It had an autopilot system, a GPS, a compass, and a couple of other sensors. We were surprised at how well it performed, considering it was put together with some glue and tape. For the first time, we were able to get a bird's eye view of the landscape without the high cost of hiring a manned aircraft, and that opened up new possibilities. We were the first ecologists to build and use this technology for conservation."

Their work brought them all over the world: from Sumatra, where they mapped orangutan nests hidden beneath dense canopies, to New Caledonia, where they created 3D forest models to track reforestation.

"We will first program our drone to fly in a zigzag pattern over the forest, capturing images of the forest canopy. The images can then be processed to produce maps of the area and 3D models of the forest. The 3D model enables us to estimate the height, shape, and volume of the trees."

In a landmark 2016 project with a Medan-based NGO, Professor Koh's drones exposed illegal logging camouflaged by untouched riverfront trees— scenes which would otherwise be invisible from the ground.

On Macquarie Island in 2013, his PhD student, Jarrod Hodgson, was involved in the research of royal penguins (*Eudyptes schlegeli*), which are endemic to the sub-Antarctic island and two other smaller islands nearby. There, colonies of the animal, which were traditionally counted manually, were documented by drone imagery so precise that each of the hundreds of thousands of them could be tallied—a scientific first.

"The penguins of Macquarie Island were a eureka moment. The conventional way to survey these colonies is to go up in the air in a helicopter with a pair of binoculars and just eyeball the size of each colony."

Despite these advances, Professor Koh is cognisant of the pitfalls and challenges of technology and is cautious about how to employ it.

"We need to ensure that we are using technology for the appropriate purpose. We must understand and adapt to the environmental conditions where it would be used. If we are transferring the technology to local communities, we need to be aware of the potential barriers and find ways to overcome them. If we are using our drones near wildlife, we need to be aware of any disturbance or distress we might be causing to these animals and take steps to minimise these negative impacts."

"Technology is just a means to an end and not the end itself. Our end goal has always been to produce robust data and information to help guide policies and decisions in society."

“CLIMATE CHANGE  
ISN'T JUST A  
TECHNICAL OR  
MORAL PROBLEM—  
IT'S EXISTENTIAL. IT  
**FORCES** US TO  
CONFRONT OUR  
*FRAGILITY* AS  
A SPECIES.”



Oil palm plantation in Sabah where Professor Koh conducted most of his PhD research as a student.



Map from Professor Koh's research highlighting priority areas for implementing nature-based carbon projects.

1: The Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple Professorship of Conservation was set up in 2012 through the generous gift from the Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple. Established in 1884, the temple is one of Singapore's most respected institutions and has a long history of philanthropy. The Professorship is the first that supports conservation and biodiversity research conducted in Singapore and Southeast Asia.

Beyond drones, Professor Koh also led the global palm oil debate. His research exposed the crop's devastating biodiversity impacts—particularly in Southeast Asia—where orangutan habitats shrank by 80% in some regions due to plantations. Yet he also revealed its economic necessity, with palm oil supporting millions of smallholder farmers.

His groundbreaking 2009 study in *Conservation Letters* quantified the carbon cost of deforestation for palm oil, directly informing the EU's 2018 biofuel regulations. Later work with the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) also helped design certification schemes that protect High Conservation Value forests while ensuring farmer livelihoods.

#### **HOMECOMING WITH A PURPOSE**

After nearly two decades abroad, Professor Koh's return to Singapore in 2020 marked the start of his new chapter, one that was at the convergence of personal reasons—to spend more time with his ageing parents—and a bigger purpose.

"It was a good time to come back to Singapore, given the growing attention Singapore was placing on climate change and environmental sustainability. So having been away for so long and having had experience in this area, I decided to come back to see how I could contribute."

As the Vice President (Sustainability and Resilience) and Chief Sustainability Scientist at NUS, Professor Koh channels his global experience into actionable local strategies. The centre bridges academia, government, and industry, developing scalable solutions grounded in cutting-edge science. His work spans both mitigation—advising on policies like Singapore's carbon tax, one of Southeast Asia's first—and adaptation, such as integrating mangrove restoration with engineered seawalls.

"Adaptation is as important as mitigation. Nature-based solutions aren't an alternative to infrastructure; they're complementary. Our mangroves buffer storms and sequester carbon—that's double value."

Professor Koh also shapes Singapore's green transition, ensuring the nation's sustainability ambitions are rooted in science, scaled by technology, and realised through policy.

#### **ILLUMINATING OUR CARBON LANDSCAPE WITH GEOSPATIAL DATA**

"Imagine if every tree in Singapore could show its ID card with its carbon storage value."

In 2023, SLA and NUS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to use geospatial data to find a more efficient way of gauging the amount of carbon stored in Singapore's forests, mangroves, parks, and even gardens—capturing the real value of the city's greenery.

In addition, as the Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple<sup>1</sup> Professor of Conservation at NUS, Professor Koh was at the forefront of this pioneering partnership, revolutionising how the nation quantifies and values its natural carbon stores. By harnessing cutting-edge geospatial technology—combining SLA's advanced airborne LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) capabilities with NUS' sophisticated carbon modelling—it illuminates the invisible, but complex carbon landscape of our city.

This innovative approach addresses a critical challenge in environmental monitoring: while satellite images from 500 kilometres above deliver only blurry green blobs, LiDAR scans capture individual branches with millimetre precision.

"Suddenly, we can see that a 100-year-old rain tree in MacRitchie stores three times more carbon than a young angšana by the roadside."

This data collected has overturned previous assumptions and revealed surprising discoveries about Singapore's ecosystems. For instance, Singapore's mature forests, which make up just 0.25% of the land area, store an impressive 60% of the country's terrestrial carbon. Additionally, roadside trees collectively remove 50,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually, which is equivalent to the emissions from 11,000 cars.

Perhaps most surprisingly, despite their small area, mangroves have emerged as carbon powerhouses, exhibiting unique sequestration patterns that were previously unrecognised.

## "We used to think, 'Green is green.'"

The team's carbon maps have now begun to inform critical aspects of urban management, including Singapore's carbon credit framework, urban planning decisions that protect high-sequestration zones, and mangrove restoration projects at Pulau Ubin.

Looking ahead, Professor Koh is excited about embracing hyperspectral imaging technology, referring to it as a method of "chemical fingerprinting", capable of detecting methane leaks or stressed vegetation.

And as Singapore grapples with the challenges posed by rising sea levels, this pioneering work demonstrates that urban nature is vital infrastructure.

### ADVOCACY AND SHAPING PUBLIC POLICY

Professor Koh's efforts don't just reside in the ivory towers of academia. He is also passionate about bridging scientific research with real-world governance—turning data into public policy, and innovation into action. His tenure as a Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) in Singapore from 2021 to 2023 is testament to this.

"As a scientist, this tension underpins my desire to always use science to inform our discussions in society, and our decisions that we make to reconcile our society's priorities."

During parliamentary debates, he emerged as a compelling voice for evidence-based sustainability, framing climate action not as a partisan issue but as an existential imperative.

"Climate change isn't about ideology—it's about decisions. In Singapore, it's about balancing our priorities and understanding the trade-offs. We don't have enough land to protect all the forests we want and also build enough housing for our people."

In the Budget 2023 debate, Professor Koh challenged Singapore to maintain climate ambition despite economic headwinds, arguing that "environmental resilience underpins societal resilience". He championed nature-based solutions—like mangrove restoration and urban greening—as dual tools for carbon sequestration and flood mitigation, while calling for stricter oversight of carbon credit markets to ensure integrity.

"I try to take into account what people's concerns are and raise these issues in Parliament in a sensible way. Climate change and sustainability are not fringe issues, or just green issues. They must be understood as bread-and-butter issues, top-of-mind planning issues, quality-of-life issues, existential issues."

Beyond environmental bills, Professor Koh also addresses systemic challenges, from mental health in academia (advocating for campus support networks) to household recycling reforms (pushing for transparent bins and HDB chutes to reduce contamination). These underscore his belief that sustainability must be interdisciplinary and inclusive.



Professor Koh and his teaching team at NUS delivering a sustainability training course to policy officers.



Professor Koh receives an autographed book from former President Halimah Yacob during a lunch with NMPs at the Istana.

“Singapore must invest in mental health in its academic community to develop more effective and ‘bespoke’ solutions. Academia is not just a moral imperative, but also an economic one. Addressing mental health in academia is critical for Singapore to succeed as a knowledge and innovation hub, and attract and retain top talents, as well as build a resilient workforce and society.”

Beyond Singapore, as an advisor to the U.N., World Bank, and ASEAN, he has shaped frameworks for deforestation monitoring and nature-based climate solutions, ensuring tropical nations’ perspectives inform global accords. His work with Conservation International further cemented his role as a mediator between scientists, policymakers, and industries—a rarity in often-siloed environmental governance.

**RISE TO  
PROMINENCE:  
ACHIEVEMENTS  
AND ACCOLADES**

With over 30,000 academic citations from publications in the world’s most prestigious journals—including *Nature*, *Scientific American*, *Science*, and *PNAS* (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*)—Professor Koh ranks among the top most-cited scientists globally, and one of Singapore’s most influential.

After his PhD at Princeton and his Swiss National Science Foundation Professorship (2011) at ETH Zurich, his subsequent roles include Chair of Applied Ecology at the University of Adelaide and Vice President at Conservation International. He was also named a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader (2013) for his climate advocacy and a panellist at the Nobel Prize Dialogue (2022), as well as awarded the Frontiers Planet Prize (2023) for nature-based solutions. His tenure as an NMP also proved pivotal, where he distilled complex science into legislative action.

“Climate change isn’t about ideology. It’s about decisions. And we must decide wisely—with both humility and urgency.”

Yet for all the accolades—what truly defines him is his insistence that science serve society. Whether leading NUS’ CNCS or advising Singapore’s Emerging Stronger Taskforce, his north star remains unchanged.

**“Technology is just a means to an end. Our goal is data that drives wiser choices for people and the planet.”**

**A CALLING BIGGER  
THAN OURSELVES**

When he isn’t working, it comes as little surprise that Professor Koh seeks solace in nature, conquering the most stunning peaks, from Alpine trails in Switzerland to Washington’s Cascade Range. But his biggest motivation right now?

“How do we make humanity care enough to act decisively and at scale?”

As his work focuses on equipping Singapore with AI-powered carbon maps and policy tools, his vision stretches further—across the galaxy of possibilities.

“Climate change goes beyond Singapore. And solving it isn’t just survival—it’s our chance to be part of something greater. And be proud of it.”



"As SLA embraces its vision of 'Limited Land • Unlimited Space', I look forward to seeing the adaptability, creativity, and resilience of Singapore to thrive in spite of our limitations."

**When I think unlimited, I think of...**  
realising our potential.

**I am unlimited when...**  
I can visualise the future.

# I N D E X



↑ Once a British military barracks in the 1800s, **■ Dempsey** has evolved into a vibrant lifestyle and dining destination near the Singapore Botanic Gardens. Nestled in lush greenery, it blends colonial heritage with modern charm, featuring a mix of restaurants, cafés, boutiques and sports and wellness establishments. Remnants like tiled-roof structures and old playing fields hint at its military past. Today, Dempsey is celebrated both locally and internationally as one of Singapore's premier spots for dining and leisure.

LEFT: Dempsey was originally the site of a nutmeg plantation that later became Tanglin Barracks for British troops in the 1800s. The site was also once the headquarters of the Far East Land Forces, and later the headquarters of the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) and the Central Manpower Base (CMPB).

➤ Built in the mid-1960s as married quarters for British military personnel, **■ Chip Bee Gardens** has transformed into a trendy lifestyle enclave. Once home to expatriate teachers after the British withdrawal, it now features a mix of residential and commercial spaces, blending heritage with contemporary charm. Known for its distinctive 1960s-style design, the estate is now popular for its eclectic blend of local lifestyle and F&B brands, including quaint cafés and homegrown brand names.



➔ ■ **Dignity Kitchen at 69 Boon Keng Road** is a social enterprise-run food court staffed by individuals with disabilities and from disadvantaged backgrounds. Operated by Project Dignity and founded by Koh Seng Choon, engineer turned entrepreneur and recipient of the Straits Times Singaporean of the Year 2024 award for his efforts, the outlet offers meaningful employment through skills training and food service roles. Housed in a striking red State property since 2021, it serves affordable local hawker fare and baked goods in an inclusive environment. Beyond being a vibrant dining spot, Dignity Kitchen stands as a powerful symbol of empowerment, mental health advocacy, and social change, aligning with broader efforts to promote dignity and opportunity for all.



↩ The charming row of restored 1930s heritage buildings at ■ **52-56 Kampong Java Road** will soon become a vibrant multi-disciplinary arts sandbox for experimentation, creation, and collaboration. Originally residences for municipal officers, the buildings sit along a road named after Javanese gardeners who once sold produce along Arab Street. Awarded to 19SixtyFive Pte Ltd via a joint tender by SLA and the National Arts Council, the space will feature acoustically treated studios, galleries, and performance venues. It will also host live performances, arts markets, and arts festivals - enriching Singapore's artistic landscape and fostering creative growth.



➔ Built in 1956, the ■ **Former Bukit Timah Fire Station** served as part of the post-war Fire Service expansion and features distinctive elements like a hose drying tower and the Colony of Singapore's coat of arms. Decommissioned in 2005, the 0.86ha site—comprising the main station, firefighters' quarters, and Station Master's residence—has been gazetted for conservation. Strategically located near the Rail Corridor and nature reserves, it is now set to be revitalised by LHN Facilities Management into a mixed-use community node, offering co-living, heritage, and nature experiences with sustainable, zero-energy features while preserving its historic character.





↑ Originally known as Flagstaff House, the **Former Command House** was built between 1937 and 1938 as the residence of Malaya's senior military commander. Designed in a distinctive Arts and Crafts-inspired style with pitched roofs and brick archways, the house later provided lodging for royalty, a president in office, and senior military figures. In 2007, UBS, the Swiss investment bank, made it its business university's Asia-Pacific campus. Now a national monument, the State property continues its legacy as an elegant event venue, blending heritage, architecture, and history with quiet distinction.



↑ The former St Andrew's Mission Hospital at **5 Kadayannallur Street** provided respite and care to impoverished women and children in its early years, with a unique triangular air well in the middle of the building to let in natural light and ventilation. Originally built in the 1920s, it has served various purposes over the years, including as a government medical store, an outpatient dispensary and an office space. It has most recently been transformed into **KADA**, a creative lifestyle and wellness hub with co-working and co-living spaces popular with the youth. The building, one of Singapore's earliest Modernist structures, houses one of the nation's oldest electric lifts, still in operation today.

1. Crowd of onlookers during the opening of the outpatient clinic at Kadayannallur Street (1964).
2. Maxwell Road outpatient dispensary (1989).



↓ Launched in November 2024, **The Foundry** is a collaborative hub for social purpose organisations housed in the former Elections Department building at **11 Prinsep Link**. The Foundry is a result of a partnership with The Majority Trust, SLA, Tote Board, and the Singapore Government Partnerships Office, with its 17,000 sq ft space housing over 20 non-profits and social enterprises. With an aim to foster a vibrant ecosystem, The Foundry supports idea incubation, community-building, and collaborative innovation to address Singapore's evolving social challenges.



➔ ■ **1925 Quarters at 79-95 Hindoo Road** is situated in a beautifully restored row of red-brick, two-storey building in the heritage Little India precinct. Originally built in 1927 to house junior Asian staff of the Municipality of Singapore, this State property has been transformed into a modern co-living space by Eco-Energy Pte Ltd and Cove Living Pte Ltd. The building retains its distinctive colonial architecture, featuring pitched roofs and fair-faced brick columns, and reflects the shared history of other municipal quarters in the area.



↑ ■ **New Bahru at 46 & 58 Kim Yam Road** occupies the former site of Nan Chiau High School, a historically significant educational institution that was first the Nan Chiau Teachers' Training School established in 1941. Today, the site has been reimagined into a dynamic lifestyle destination that blends residential, retail, and commercial uses. Developed by the Lo and Behold Group, it houses an exciting collection of homegrown brands and offers community-centric spaces and activities, and is well visited by locals and international tourists.



↓ Opened in 1937, ■ **Old Kallang Airport** was Singapore's first purpose-built civilian aerodrome and was hailed as the world's most modern at the time. Described as the "finest airport in the British Empire", it gained international recognition, with aviator Amelia Earhart praising it as "an aviation miracle of the East". The Art Deco terminal later housed the People's Association from 1960 to 2009 and is now part of a conserved site with a hangar, service blocks, and an entrance gateway. Since 2011, it has hosted a variety of events, from arts and culture to corporate launches.

4. Immigration check point (1948).  
5. Aerial view in 1957. The foreground shows Nicoll Highway, while the circular control tower can be seen beside the highway on the right.



3. Nan Chiau High School in 1993.



➔ Built between 1952 and 1953, **■ Pasir Panjang Power Station** began with Station A, which was named when Station B was added in 1965. Its iconic red-brick design reflects Singapore's early urban transformation. Together, the two stations powered Singapore's industrial boom in the 1960s. In recent years, its arresting architecture was the stunning backdrop for the staging of shows and events, including the Louis Vuitton Spring Summer 2023 trunk show and the immersive exhibition on Singapore's founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's life and legacy.

BOTTOM: Aerial view of Pasir Panjang Power Station (1957).



↑ The **■ Ridout Tea Gardens** in Queenstown was once home to Singapore's first Japanese-themed community garden, later redeveloped in 1980 into a traditional Japanese Garden (RIGHT) with ponds, pavilions and bridges. In the late 1990s, the site was transformed into the McDonald's Ridout Garden outlet, blending modern dining with the location's tranquil past. Today, it stands as one of the few recognisable flagship McDonald's outlets worldwide, drawing families for its food as much as its unique and scenic setting.





↑ The **State Land @ Margaret Drive**, once the site of Hua Yi Secondary School or previously known as Hua Yi Government Chinese Middle School, is now home to a restored public running track. Established in 1956 as Singapore's first government-aided Chinese secondary school, Hua Yi was renowned for its academic excellence and sports achievements. After relocating in the 1980s, the school left behind its legacy at Margaret Drive. The newly restored running track honours its historical connection to education and sports, providing a community space for residents to enjoy.



↑ The Team Singapore Wall of Fame at **8C Jalan Kledek** features a vibrant mural celebrating Singapore's Olympians and Paralympians. Created by graffiti artist Ceno2, it showcases Team Singapore athletes Nur Syahidah Alim, Shanti Pereira, Maximilian Maeder, Loh Kean Yew, and Yip Pin Xiu for their sporting achievements on the world stage. The location also houses the Vintage Camera Museum, home to over 1,000 cameras that offer a fascinating glimpse into photographic history. It's a unique landmark in Kampong Glam where sport, art, and photography come together.

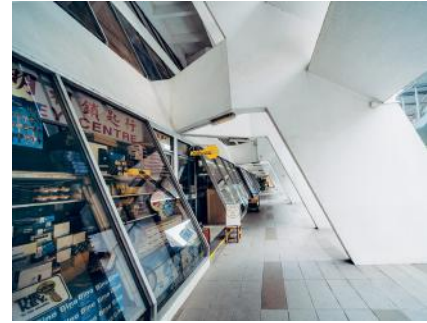
↓ **Smith Street**—named after Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, Governor of the Straits Settlements—is a heritage-rich enclave in Chinatown where conserved shophouses and pedestrian-friendly spaces bring the area's storied past to life. Once known as Hei Yuen Kai or "Theatre Street" and home to the iconic Lai Chun Yuen Theatre, Smith Street has been rejuvenated with exciting lifestyle concepts including local favourites and international brands while preserving local Chinese culture. With its unique blend of history, culture and architecture, Smith Street is a living showcase of Chinatown's enduring identity and evolving vibrancy.



↓ EtonHouse International Education Group's headquarters at **6A and 8 Stevens Road** occupies a pair of conserved colonial-era heritage bungalows managed by SLA. Once a residential property—including the former home of philanthropist and businessman Lee Kong Chian—the heritage site has been thoughtfully repurposed into a serene, greenery-filled office space. Retaining elements like timber floors and arched doorways, the design features biophilic elements and clever adaptive reuse.



➔ The **Tanjong Katong Complex**, a familiar and iconic landmark in the heart of the Geylang Serai area, is set for rejuvenation. These include plans to dedicate a portion of the redeveloped space to tenants representing traditional Malay trades, preserving and celebrating the heritage and culture of the Malay community. With its deep historical roots and strong cultural ties, the revitalised Tanjong Katong Complex will continue to serve as a vibrant hub, honouring its past while evolving to meet the future needs of the community.



⤵ **Temasek Shophouse at 28 Orchard Road** was known for its distinctive architecture. Built in 1928, it was one of the first buildings in Singapore to feature spiral staircases. The social impact hub will expand to include restored units at **14, 22, and 38 Orchard Road** with reinstated historic features such as its Shanghai plaster façade, further highlighting Orchard Road's transformation from nutmeg plantations and motor showrooms to a place of renewed purpose for people, planet, and community.



↑ ■ **Vidacity** is a sustainability innovation hub located at the former Loyang Primary School (RIGHT), now creatively repurposed as a space for green entrepreneurship by City Sprouts. The site features co-working areas, workshops, and living labs focused on urban farming and sustainable technologies. Home to startups in fields such as agriculture, water treatment, reusable materials, and waste innovation, Vidacity brings together a community dedicated to building solutions for a more sustainable future.



↵ The former community centre at **10 Kampong Eunus** is now home to ■ **Vivistop Kampong Eunus**, Singapore's only non-profit makerspace dedicated to children and youth. Operated by Vivita, the space offers hands-on workshops, camps, and competitions that introduce young learners to robotics, AI, and emerging technologies. Supported by public sector and community partners, this SLA-led initiative has transformed the State property into a vibrant hub for creative learning and empowering the next generation of tech-savvy changemakers.



# PHOTO CREDITS

All images in this publication, unless otherwise specified, are provided courtesy of the speakers.

The numbers refer to pages.

**Hosanna Swee**

12 (Top left)

**Finbarr Fallon**

14, 18 (Bottom right), 110 (Bottom left)

**Colossal Photos**

14 (Top right), 66 (Top), 68 (Top)

**Lisa Cohen**

15 (Top), 16 (Bottom left)

**Darren Soh**

16 (Top & right), 236 (Bottom left)

**Ministry of Information and the Arts  
Collection, courtesy of National  
Archives of Singapore**

31, 191 (Top), 232 (Photo no. 1)

**The Straits Times © SPH Media Limited.  
Reprinted with permission**

54, 55, 56 (Top left), 58, 59 (Top),  
191 (Bottom)

**WriteHaus Asia**

60 (Top)

**BP Chua, Junpiter Futbol**

60 (Bottom)

**E.K. Yap**

68 (Bottom left)

**People's Association, Chingay Parade  
Singapore**

130 (Top right)

**National Archives of Singapore**

152 (Left), 232 (Photo no. 2), 233  
(Photo no. 3)

**Alvin Toh**

182, 185, 187, 188 (Top)

**International Olympic Committee**

184

**Simone Castrovillari**

188 (Bottom)

**Fremantle / 19**

222 (Top right)

**Jerome Lim**

230 (Top right), 232 (Top right),  
233 (Top)

**Collection of the National Museum of  
Singapore, National Heritage Board**  
230 (Clockwise from top left, 4th photo),  
234 (Bottom left & right)

**Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore  
Collection, courtesy of National  
Archives of Singapore**

233 (Photo no. 4)

**Aerial photographs by the British  
Royal Air Force between 1940 to 1970s,  
from a collection held by the National  
Archives of Singapore.**

**Crown copyright.**

233 (Photo no. 5), 234 (B&W photo)

**Singapore Tourism Board**

235 (Top right)

When I think **unlimited**, I think of...



*Inspired to think  
unlimited? Let  
this space be  
where your own  
story begins.*

I am **unlimited** when...

Copyright © 2025  
Singapore Land Authority.  
This publication may include material for  
which copyright is held by other parties.

**DESIGN**

Do Not Design

**WRITER**

Charlene Kuah

**PHOTOGRAPHER**

Sayher Heffernan

**PRINTER**

AC Dominie

**PUBLISHER**

Singapore Land Authority  
55 Newton Road, Revenue House  
#09-01, Singapore 307987

**EXTRACT FROM ISBN**

978-981-94-3583-8 (e-Book)

**DISCLOSURE**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted or used in any form or by any means - electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise - without the prior written permission of the copyright owner(s), including the publisher.

The information in this publication is based on the featured individuals' Brown Bag sessions held at the Singapore Land Authority between 2021 and 2024 and has been updated where necessary and appropriate as of July 2025. The views expressed by the featured individuals do not necessarily represent the views of the Singapore Land Authority.

Whilst every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information in this publication, the Singapore Land Authority makes no representations or warranties as to its completeness, reliability, accuracy, or current relevance, and accepts no liability for any loss or damage arising from reliance on such information.





Wee Teng Wen  
Lai Chang Wen  
Quak Hiang Whai  
Eric Sim  
Fandi Ahmad  
Jaelle Ang  
Rachel Lim  
Professor Koh Lian Pin  
Ng Yi-Xian  
Zac Toh  
Dr Lim Boon Leng  
Dasmond Koh  
Darren Soh  
Jesher Loi  
Sharon Sim  
Petrina Kow  
Joseph Schooling  
Benjamin Boh  
Vanessa Ho  
Sybil Lau  
Taufik Batisah



Limited Land • Unlimited Space

