



THURSDAY, 23 JULY 2015



# TRAVEL MEMENTOS

SINGAPORE'S DESIGNERS ARE OFFERING  
A WHOLE NEW SLEW OF SOUVENIRS

56

**HELPING HAND**  
IT'S TIME TO VISIT NEPAL,  
SAYS PUSHPA BASNET

58

**DON'T MIND  
THE WOOD**  
TRY ECO-CONSCIOUS  
DRINKING IN THE  
FORM OF WOODEN  
BEER BOTTLES

60

**GOING ON  
HYPERDRIVE**  
SINGER GIN WIGMORE ON  
WHAT IT TAKES  
TO MAKE IT IN ASIA

62



56 **travel**

# THE PERFECT SOUVENIR

## TACKY MERLION KEYCHAINS GET AN UPGRADE FROM LOCAL DESIGNERS

SERENE LIM  
serenelim@mediacorp.com.sg



One of the best things about travelling overseas is bringing a piece of the place back with us — literally. We can't get enough of souvenirs so we happily lug back 14 different flavours of KitKat from Japan and shop for knick-knacks at Goods Of Desire (GOD) in Hong Kong.

In London, we can't escape its signature phone booth, double-decker bus and Big Ben and the Royal Couple in shops. Countries such as Sweden, Russia and Australia boast quintessentially local mascots such as Pippi Longstocking, Matryoshka nesting dolls and koalas.

As for Singapore, we have ... the Merlion. All right, we do have a few awesome souvenirs like Bengawan Solo kuehs and Ya Kun kaya, but most tourists still associate us with the Merlion.

We don't have to feel embarrassed about that anymore. Thanks to designer Edwin Low of lifestyle store Supermama, the Merlion is finally kind of cool: It has been reimaged as a cuddly chou chou pillow. For those who don't know better, a chou chou pillow or bantal busuk — which means



“smelly pillow” — was a common attachment for many Singaporeans growing up.

The Merlion chou chou pillow is one of 50 objects from Supermama's Souvenirs From Singapore collection. Low worked with fellow Singaporean design outfit Stuck and manufacturer



1 ATAS' Peranakan Plate

2 Merlion chou chou pillow

PHOTO: ATAS: SUPERMAMA



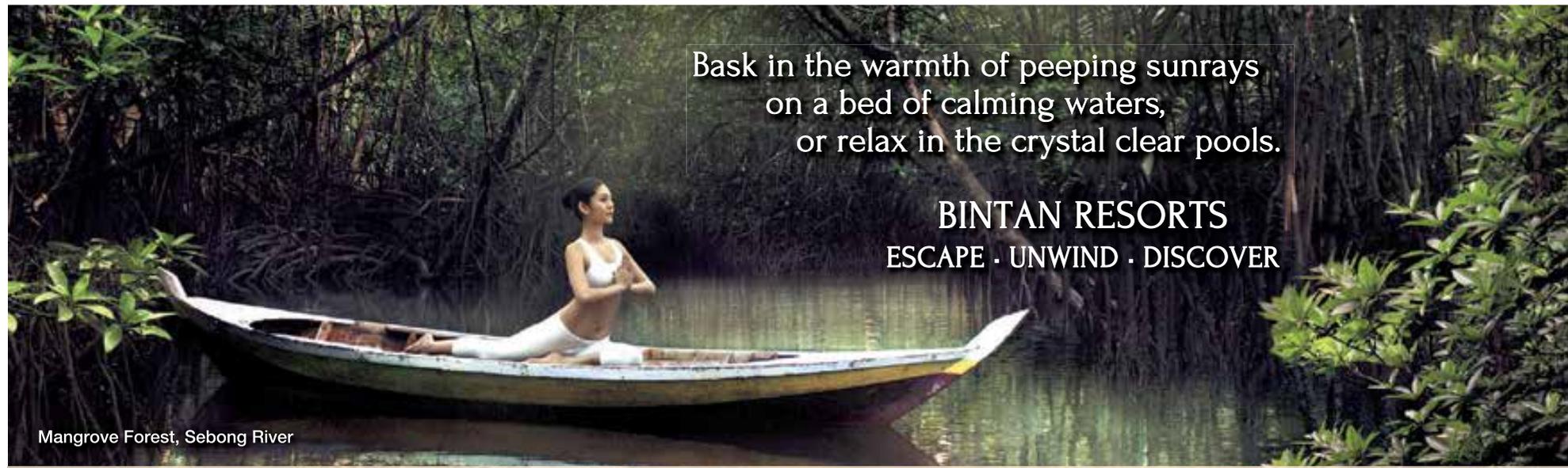
Meykrs to create objects inspired by Singapore icons. Besides the Merlion, the collection pays homage to familiar Singaporean institutions, so you get HDB-flat-shaped eraser blocks, hair-clips with prints of potong and wafer ice cream, a kopi packet mug and a doorstopper shaped like the now-rar-

ified dragon playground. Best of all, these souvenirs are affordable, retailing at S\$10 or S\$20.

“Most of the time, souvenirs were either seen as being well-designed and expensive or cheap and not very nice,” said Low. “We wanted to show souvenirs could be both well-designed and affordable. It was a conscious decision to ensure that it won't exceed S\$20 and this could only be done by working really closely with the designer and the manufacturer to keep costs low.”

Twenty products from the Souvenirs From Singapore collection were soft-launched at Supermama's store at Singapore Art Museum last Saturday, with the rest to be launched at the design pop-up market Singapasar, which will be held at the National Design Centre on Middle Road from July 31 to Aug 2. Also launching during Singapasar are five new products by ATAS (which stands for All Things About Singapore). This collaboration label by design studios FARM and Triggerhappy specialises in local gifts — it previously produced the Singlish notebook and kueh tutu erasers.

It's not the first time Triggerhappy and FARM have collaborated. The two companies had worked together in 2012 to create the Great Singapore Souvenir Collection for the National Heritage Board's Museum Label, which included the hit “kancheong watch” and Nyonya kueh sticky notepad.



Bask in the warmth of peeping sunrays on a bed of calming waters, or relax in the crystal clear pools.

**BINTAN RESORTS**  
ESCAPE · UNWIND · DISCOVER

Mangrove Forest, Sebong River

Bintan Resorts - only 50 mins away by modern catamaran ferry from Singapore.  
For more information, visit [www.bintan-resorts.com](http://www.bintan-resorts.com) or email us at [bintan@bintan-resorts.com](mailto:bintan@bintan-resorts.com)  
Like us on bintanresorts and follow us on bintanresortsofficial



Among the five new items are wooden blocks emblazoned with Singapore attractions such as The Esplanade and Marina Bay Sands, a decorative tape with Peranakan-tiled motifs you can use to jazz up your homes, and a plate for lohei. Triggerhappy's Winston Chai said that the products are retailing on FARM's website and they are looking to have it stocked in other places after the launch.

"We realised that tourists tend to prefer obvious visual representations of Singapore such as shophouses, while Singaporeans like a bit of an insider joke to the souvenirs," said Chai. "This is why for ATAS' new products, we made them stronger in terms of visual cues, such as our Peranakan tape."

Chai is also the co-organiser of the Singapore Souvenir Exhibition opening this Saturday at the National Design Centre, where 90 objects by 16 designers from the last six years will be displayed in what is a sure sign of our growing confidence in locally designed souvenirs. Among the new creations exhibited is The Singapore Deck playing cards inspired by our "history, people and culture". Designer Joe Tan feels the cards would appeal to both locals and tourists alike with its sense of nostalgia.

The biggest coup for Singaporean souvenirs has got to be the opening of pop-up store KEEPERS:



- 3 HDB eraser blocks
- 4 The Singapore Deck
- 5 HDB proposal ring

PHOTO: SUPERMAMA, TRIGGERHAPPY

Singapore Designer Collective along Orchard Road. The store championing and housing Singaporean designers and their products under one roof has proven so popular that it launched a second pop-up store in Terminal 1 of Changi Airport last week.

Carolyn Kan, co-organiser of KEEPERS, revealed that 50 per cent



of their buyers are tourists, and they tend to purchase a variety of gifts ranging from jewellery and accessories to perfume and lifestyle items.

"Tourists who visit KEEPERS tell us they want to bring home something that is unique and created by Singapore designers. A more compelling reason for them to make a purchase

is when the designs have a story to tell so that they can share our stories when they return home," said Kan. "We often hear tourists saying how pleasantly surprised they are to find such a good and diverse range of local designer products. It is starting to create an awareness of the growing pool of Singapore designers, artists and artisans."

Hence, the selection for KEEPERS at Changi Airport is specially curated to ensure the products also have a unique story to tell. Kan added that Supermama's Souvenirs From Singapore collection will also be selling at KEEPERS, which is good news for tourists.

Singaporeans are already lapping them up. Some of Supermama's Souvenirs Of Singapore Collection — such as the Merlion chou chou pillow, the plastic chair ornaments, the Good Morning cup and the Water Wally Bottle — are already sold out. Low promised they will be replenished before Aug 7.

"Most of these were bought by Singaporeans. Many Singaporeans don't buy or promote our products because we're not proud of them. But we make the best ambassadors — when we're proud of our souvenirs, we'll tell all our friends from overseas about them and what they represent."

Who knows, perhaps one day we'll find that Merlion chou chou nestled in a bed somewhere in Russia.

## Inviting destinations. Irresistible fares. Now that's a joy to fly.

Exclusive MasterCard® all-in return fares from

# \$239

Penang, Phuket, Semarang

\$299

Cebu, Kota Kinabalu, Palembang, Phnom Penh

\$359

Chiang Mai, Siem Reap

\$409

Davao, Hanoi, Mandalay, Yangon

\$569

Chongqing, Hyderabad, Wuhan, Xiamen



SilkAir Studio



30kg Bag Allowance



Inflight Meal



Earn Miles



Exclusive MasterCard® Privilege  
Book now and enjoy these promotional fares\*, only applicable to payments made with MasterCard from 1 July 2015 to 31 July 2015. Visit [www.silkair.com/MasterCardGSS](http://www.silkair.com/MasterCardGSS) for more information.

[silkair.com/MasterCardGSS](http://silkair.com/MasterCardGSS)

SilkAir Studio (on-board wireless entertainment) is available on selected aircraft only. All-in fares include complimentary 30kg check-in baggage allowance, seat selection, inflight meals where applicable, and associated taxes and surcharges. Fares quoted are for a return trip on Economy Class per person, for flights originating out of Singapore with payment by MasterCard® only. Fares quoted are subject to change due to currency fluctuations and exclude agents' service fees. Bookings are to be made online via [silkair.com/MasterCardGSS](http://silkair.com/MasterCardGSS) or through any SilkAir authorised agents from 1 July 2015 to 31 July 2015. Subject to seat availability. \*Fares quoted are for travel from 1 September 2015 to 30 September 2015 (Denpasar); and from 1 July 2015 to 30 September 2015 (all other destinations). Black-out travel dates apply.



Asia's most  
awarded  
regional  
airline

