

Group 5-07: Singapore's Unknown Past

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Introduction

Our project is about raising awareness on less well known WWII historic sites in Singapore. Our target audience is the members of the public who appreciate the art of past artifacts. Fort Serapong was built by the British in the 1870s to protect the colony's flourishing port, against Dutch East Indies, pirates and other enemies. In this report, we will go through the origin of our ideas, the obstacles we encountered and how we modified our ideas, and produced our end product.

Source of ideas

We decided to visit such bunkers and WWII sites due to coming across an article by the Straits Times named “Secret British bunker in Woodlands will be open to public for first time in 70 years” However, the bunker was no longer accessible by public. We then found two articles on the Smart Local Singapore: “4 Hidden Bunkers in Singapore Only for the most adventurous explorers” and “The Lost Cause and Forgotten Ruins of Fort Serapong”. We visited the Kay Siang bunkers, which was overgrown with vegetation, making it inaccessible, and the structures were crumbling. Encouraged by articles of these forgotten places, we decided on our agenda - to raise awareness of such sites and promote the general public to appreciate and preserve them.

While working on our artwork, we were inspired by artists such as Asher Brown Durand and Caspar David Friedrich, where we will elaborate on below.

Artist References

Caspar David Friedrich:

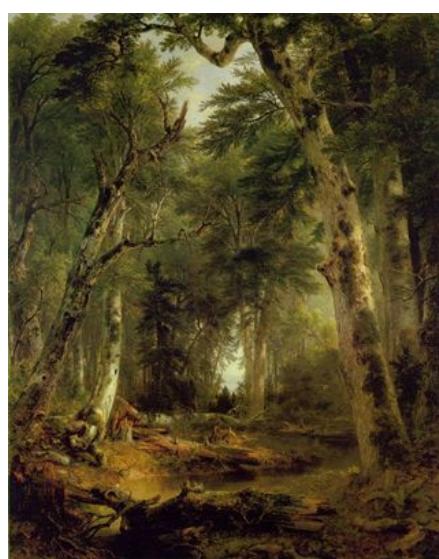
His artworks like the “Eldena Ruins” depict ruins of a building, which is in common with our paintings which illustrates ruins of the structures. His work is steeped in loneliness, isolation and desolation. Therefore, his paintings was fit for our references as the 2 buildings we are painting was not well-known of and unappreciated, and was left to crumble away, hence depicting a sense of loneliness.



Eldena Ruins

Asher Brown Durand:

His famous works like “In The Woods” and “Kindred Spirits” portray mass vegetation, which is something in common with what we are painting. Hence, we referred to his paintings on how to paint nature around the buildings well. His color palette consists of dark and warm colors which we have tried to incorporate into our own painting.



In the Woods

Obstacles encountered

We visited the Kay Siang Bunker realising that it was fenced off and had dense vegetation covering the entrances to the structure, rendering us unable to enter the area and get a clear view of it. Upon visiting the Sembawang Malta Crescent bunker, we realised that the large majority of it was underground and minimal parts of the structure was visible.

Our initial idea was a cinematic video, which would use a drone. However, there was overgrowth blocking the drone from filming the structures clearly. Therefore, we could not film in these areas.

Timeline

March → Visit Malta Crescent Bunker + Kay Siang; Experimenting mediums

April → Proposal

Early June → Visit Fort Serapong, Experiment on Painting

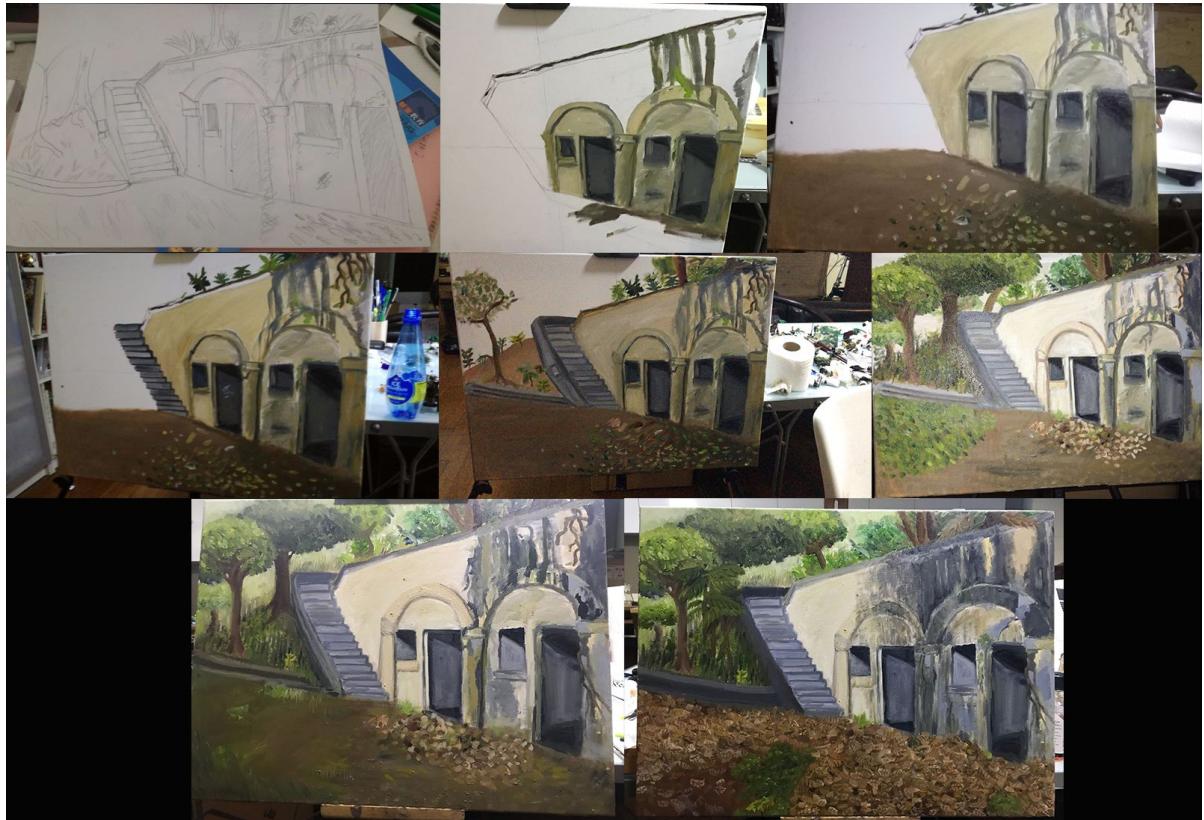
Late June → Painting Process; Start on Written Report

July → Mid-Term Evaluations

August → Final Touches; Completion of Written Report

Process Documentation



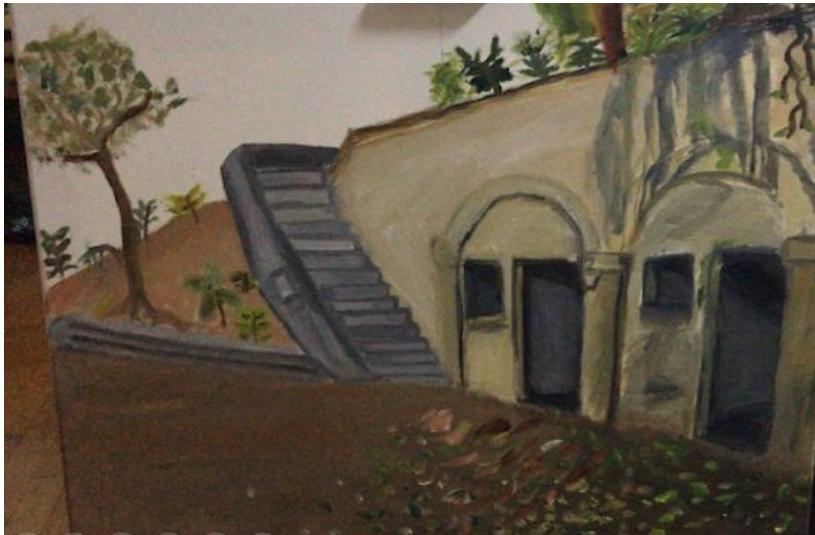


Modifications on our ideas and products

Before Proposal Evaluation, we wanted a 2-3 minute cinematic video and 2 oil paintings as our end product. However, based on advice from the judges and our mentor, we have decided to reduce it to 2 A2 sized oil paintings.

During Mid Term Evaluations, the judges emphasized that our second painting was not consistent in quality compared to the first , which portrays the structure's ruins present at fort serapong.

The real structure had a lot of overgrowth on its roof, with trees and soil spread across it. There were also some cracks on the walls and the building was very fragile. According to the judges, we lacked greenery and emphasis on the damage and overgrowth the area had, so it lacked the depth and realistic touch to it.



Before

The staircase beside the building was in a distorted shape as seen above. Concrete stairs are straight and stiff, whilst the painting portrayed a curved and distorted staircase. So, we returned the staircase to its original form.



After

Testing mediums

We tried 4 different mediums:



Watercolor: Members were unfamiliar with it and we found it difficult to portray small details;



Colour pencil: Too tedious and may leave white gaps;

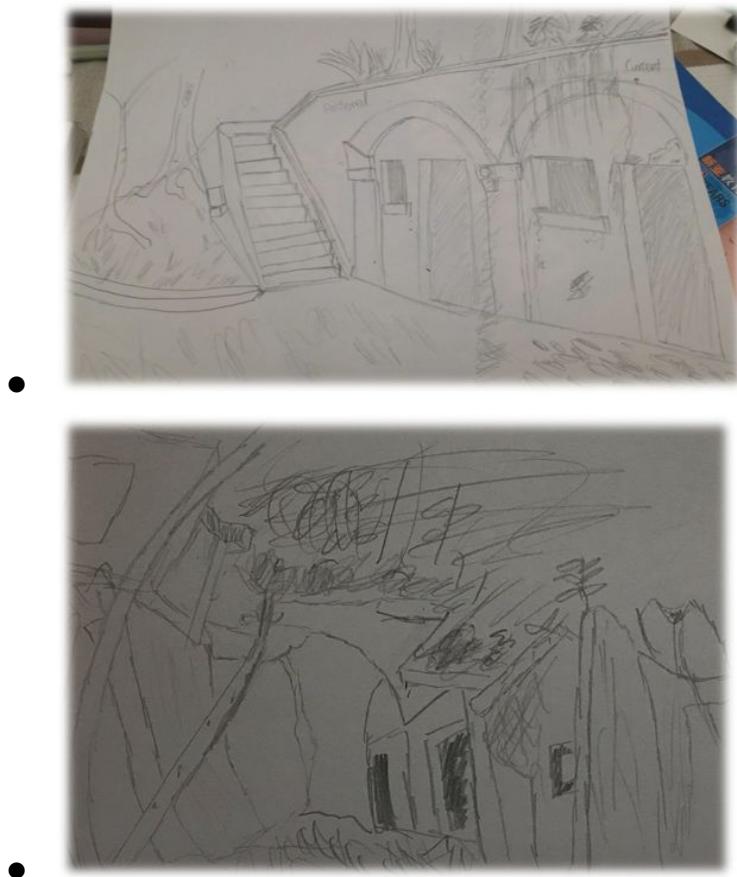


Acrylic: Familiar, but was used in last year's IS project and wanted to try something new;



Oil Paint: Members were also quite familiar and adapt with it;
Therefore, we chose to use oil paint to carry out our project.

Sketches



Final Product

Our final products are 2 A2 Sized Oil painting based on the photos taken at Fort Serapong that show a comparison between two imaginary conditions of the structures - a worse and a better condition of it. The “better” condition of it is the potential of it when maintained. The worsened condition were imaginary - but referenced and based on its current condition with the mass vegetation and already present damages.

The first painting depicted ruined structures present at Fort Serapong, with the left showing further deterioration of the currently already damaged structures.



BEFORE



AFTER



The second showed a building used to house artillery guns at Fort Serapong, with the right showing its current damaged and dirty state, but the left showing its future state, if well maintained and kept whole.



BEFORE



AFTER



Reflection

Tan Hao Xuan:

This project has taught me many things - like problem solving skills and practical exploration. When visiting the bunkers, my group got to experience a humid and hot environment. We had to step out of our comfort zones, experiencing stuff like forest trekking. The project was difficult initially due to our idea of the cinematic video and 2-3

paintings being rejected. We had to brainstorm a feasible idea which would be acceptable and we took many days for our new idea of painting a new location to surface. We learnt on how to manage time well and plan work well. An area of improvement is that we could have met our mentor much earlier before the evaluations and prepare long before any presentations, especially Mid-Terms. If we prepared earlier, we could have rehearsed much more and not rely on the script too much.

I am very grateful to my teammates and mentor for being such patient people to work with.

Chen Weifeng:

This project made me realise that there are lots of other bunkers around Singapore beside the well known ones such as Fort Siloso. Through the process of the project, I experienced a lot of new things, such as trekking through thick vegetation. The first time we went out together as a group to scout the area, we went to Malta Crescent Bunker and Kay Siang bunker, we found that Kay Siang bunker was fenced off and that Malta Crescent Bunker was covered by the terrain and there were only some parts of the bunker that was visible, so we altered the venue to Fort Serapong. This made me realise that when planning for trips, we should research beforehand. We also could have met our mentor more frequently,to have more time to make changes and rehearse. I'm really grateful for this experience and I would like to thank my group-mates and our Mentor for this invaluable experience.

Titus Baet Yi Yang:

I felt that this project is very meaningful, and I have learnt alot about Singapore's history,that I would have been unable to explore and learn about on my own. I enjoyed exploring the ruins of Fort Serapong, and trekking through its forests. This project allowed me to understand the importance of the ability to adjust and adapt to the given situation. We started off on this project adamantly decided on using two sites we found on the internet, without expecting them to be inaccessible and unsuitable for this project. I feel this was quite a major setback to our project, and slowed us down a bit. However, we quickly overcame this problem, and we shifted our eyes from the kay siang and malta crescent bunkers to that of fort serapong. With that, we found a suitable site for our project, and completed it.I feel we should plan our schedule ahead and leave some excess time to work so we can handle such incidents better and not be so rushed. In conclusion, I feel this project has been very meaningful one for me.

Ryan Tan Zhen Xuan:

Through this project, I was able to learn how to select the best medium for the artworks based on experimentation, and I familiarised myself with the oil paint and therefore able to learn new techniques of painting. Although we experienced difficulties in the beginning, we were able to overcome it by working together closely. Moreover, I have also learnt that teamwork and time management is crucial for the success of the project, due to the more hectic schedule we had because of CCA commitments and other activities. The trips to the bunkers certainly allowed us to gain new insight on the less popular areas in Singapore. Lastly, I would like to thank my teammates for their support of this project, and the guidance

of our mentor. However, I would like to improve on our time management as a whole due to the tedious school days we have.

References

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