

**Sunday
PEOPLE**
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Tuesday, 21 December 2004



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Historical custodians of SouthEast Asia

Reviews byFazli Ibrahim

MUSEUMS ARE CUSTODIANS OF national treasures, where the material culture of the past continues to be preserved and kept alive for future generations.

Hot off the press is this guide, written by a seasoned Singapore-based curator and art journalist — presenting a virtual tour of all of the region's prominent museums and art galleries.

Lenzi's selection would appeal to anyone interested in cultural exhibits, both old and contemporary. She gives an overview of the museums' key areas of interest and history, as well as bring to the reader's attention some of the remarkable artifacts they exhibit. Her book features the serene Angkor period deities showcased at the Cambodia National Museum, the evocative, frieze like drawings of Balinese life by I Gusti Nyoman Lempad housed at Bali's Neka Art Museum, as well as the polychrome beauty of Thai Bencharong tableware arranged in situ at the Jim Thompson House. Closer to home is the impressive Dong Son bell unearthed in Muar, now in the care of KL's National History Museum, as well as the enigmatic and yet to be deciphered fragment of the Singapore Stone at Riverside Point. A whirlwind tour of Southeast Asia's important cultural collections.

Book of the Week DEATH'S ACRE Inside the Legendary 'Body Farm' by Bill Bass & Jon Jefferson Time Warner Books, pp345 THE mention of murder victims and decomposing bodies will send the shudders down a lot of spines. However, this semi-autobiographical book is about someone who has made a lifetime career of understanding corpses.

Dr Bill Bass began his career excavating native American graves in South Dakota. Making a jump from anthropology to forensics, Bass later founded the Body Farm, a research facility at the University of Tennessee dedicated to investigating the mechanics of human decomposition. The cases Bass revisited, such as his new investigation of the murder of aviator Charles Lindbergh's toddler, offers proof that fact is sometimes more exciting than the thriller fiction titles you find in the bookstores.

JAYDEN'S RESCUE by Vladimir Tumanov Utusan Publications & Distributors Sdn Bhd, pp123 QUEEN Jayden is in a lot of trouble and only Alex, Vanessa and Sam can help rescue her from the clutches of Rechner, the evil sorcerer king of Lugubria. In this fantasy adventure book with a twist, you can help the three rescuers free the beautiful queen of Idyllia by solving a series of math riddles that ranges from simple to more complex.

While the story is no doubt inspired by a slew of books from the Dungeons and Dragons series to Lord of the Rings and Harry Potter, Tumanov's ingenuity lies in seamlessly fitting together the mathematical tasks with the simple and yet delightful

prose.

Just the thing to break your young one's long cartoon marathons during the school holidays.

DEAR ALL A Collection of Round Robins by Andrew Duffy, Caroline Duffy and Oliver Pugh Icon Books, pp120 BEFORE the advent of forwarded e-cards and festive SMS clogging our cellular networks, there was another way to remind people about your existence during Christmas — the round robin. These are basically 'Dear All' letters tucked into the seasons greetings card summing up how life was during the past year. Often an exercise in self indulgence and blowing your own trumpet, some round robins can be downright annoying and even humorous. This collection is a distillation of the best round robins that might arrive in your mailbox, written by colourful fictional stereotypes as the retired general, the high maintenance wife and the Kiwi bumming around in the UK, and bragging about having his way with the English roses. Funny, lively and highly irreverent, this book makes the perfect Christmas gift, in lieu of a round robin of course!

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