

NEWSLETTER

Special Edition



When the COVID-19 outbreak was declared to be a global pandemic, in the second quarter of this year, the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia was closed for the first time since its founding in 1998.



The wooden manuscript of Kitab Tibb Melayu (Malay Book of Medicine), Patani, 1786 CE, collection of Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.

'ISLAMIC ARTS MUSEUM MALAYSIA FACING THE PANDEMIC'

al Pandemic COVID-19: The Malaysian Response



The Global Pandemic COVID-19: The Malaysian Response

When the COVID-19 outbreak was declared to be a global pandemic, in the second quarter of this year, the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia was closed for the first time since its founding in 1998. The Prime Minister of Malaysia, Muhyiddin Yasin, made an official statement on 16 March, that the Malaysian Government would take preventive measures to combat the spread of the virus in this country. On 18 March, the Movement Control Order (MCO), under the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988 and the Police Act 1967, was officially launched. Under the MCO, the government and its departments are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of the nation's citizens as well as foreigners who currently reside in Malaysia. The government's swift action forced many public premises to immediately halt their operations.

Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia responds to the global pandemic

The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia closed its doors to visitors. From 18 March 2020, the permanent galleries, special exhibitions, restaurant, museum shop and other facilities were restricted to the public throughout the MCO period. A museum without visitors was a new challenge, not only for us but for cultural and heritage institutions across the globe. This unprecedented phenomenon pushed us to a new and unexpected reality: that we could no longer allow the physical presence of visitors at our museum. Nevertheless, we as museum professionals were determined to enable our visitors and the public to have access to the museum and to benefit from our collection. Although we are fully compliant with social distancing during this time, we did not allow our institution to be distant from the public as our purpose is to stay connected.

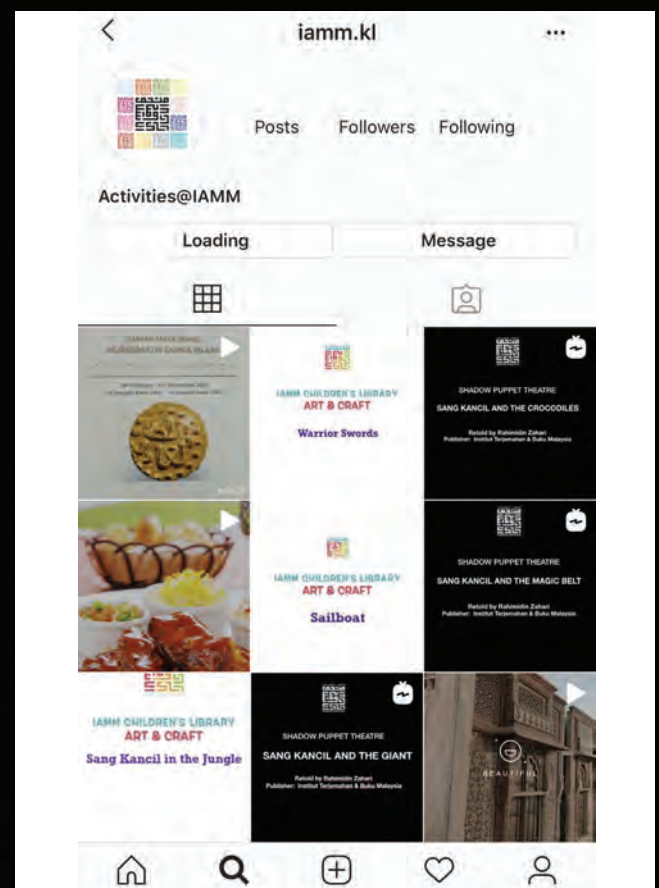
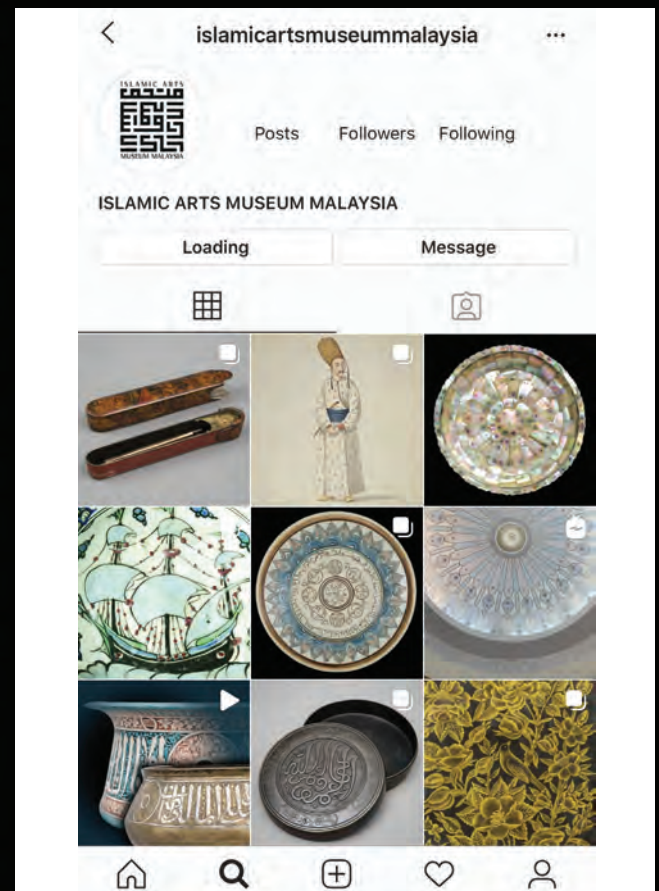
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Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia goes online

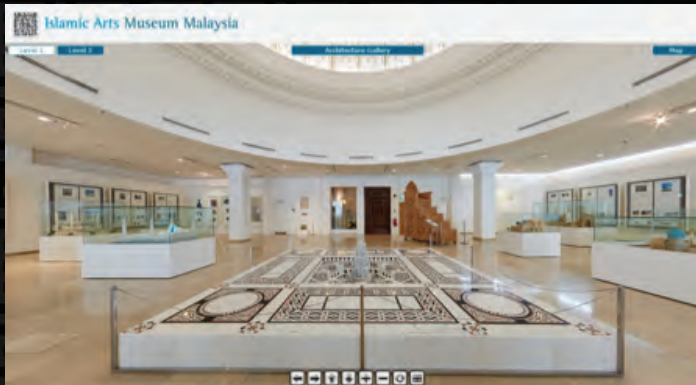
Several measures have been taken to ensure that the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia stays connected throughout the MCO period. One of the most important of these steps is to strengthen our social media sites and their content. Our official website was also constantly updated to provide the latest announcements and information. Finally, we also had to diversify our online presence in order for the public to have continuous fresh experiences and to enjoy our collection by visiting the museum virtually.

The MCO period is a blessing in disguise for most of us; especially the Curatorial, Media and Education teams. We have had to work hand in hand to experiment, and to come out with online contents for our website and social-media platforms. We have dedicated our official Instagram page @islamicartsmuseummalaysia as a main platform to share our collection online. In addition to our normal postings that feature high-resolution images of artefacts, we have been producing a documentary-style videos about many of the fascinating objects in our collection. We have also produced several videos to feature our special exhibitions that opened before the MCO was imposed, such as the Coin Chronicles: Numismatics of the Islamic world and the Introduction to Islamic Calligraphy. These two exhibitions have also had their closing dates extended to the end of the year. In addition to these videos, in conjunction with the holy month of Ramadan 2020, we managed to publish 30 videos, the 'Ramadan Series', featuring our selected artefacts.

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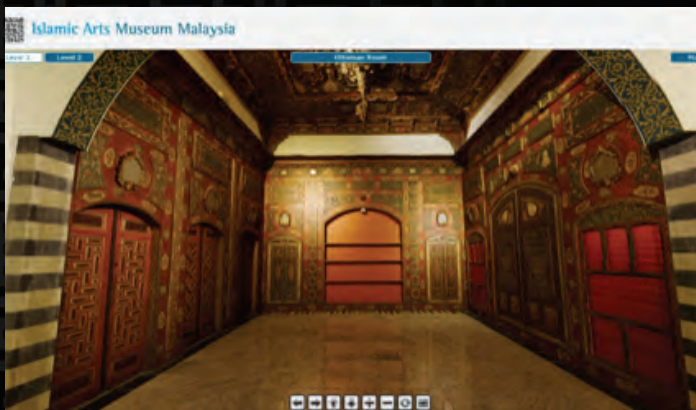


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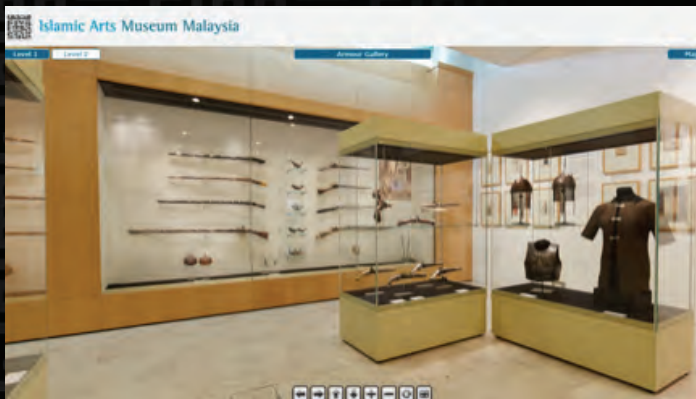


Our official website, in the meantime, has been running its Virtual Tour function, which allows the public to have a glimpse into the museum's 12 permanent galleries. We are also feeding our website with the latest updates, such as the museum's quarterly e-newsletter.

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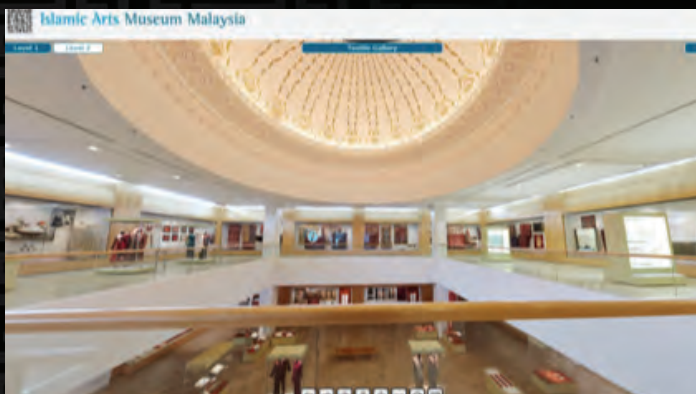
Online educational programmes and activities throughout the MCO



The Weekend Workshop programme has been part of our Education offering for so long it has now become part of our identity. Every Saturday and Sunday, at 3pm, we have welcomed families with their children to gather at the Children's Library to take part in our storytelling and arts and crafts sessions. However, the pandemic has caused the programme to be halted momentarily.

It is unfortunate because the programme has always been especially well received by the public. Parents/guardians and children huddle together to create beautiful memories as they listen to stories and work together to create a work of art using simple (and often recyclable) materials. The activity promotes creativity, tolerance and communication skills between family members.

After reflecting on the essence of the Weekend Workshops, we feel that the spirit of the programme can be replicated online. Henceforth, we have adapted it to be conducted online for families to complete at home. We are pre-recording our activities and post them on the @iamm.kl Instagram page every Saturday and Sunday at 3pm.

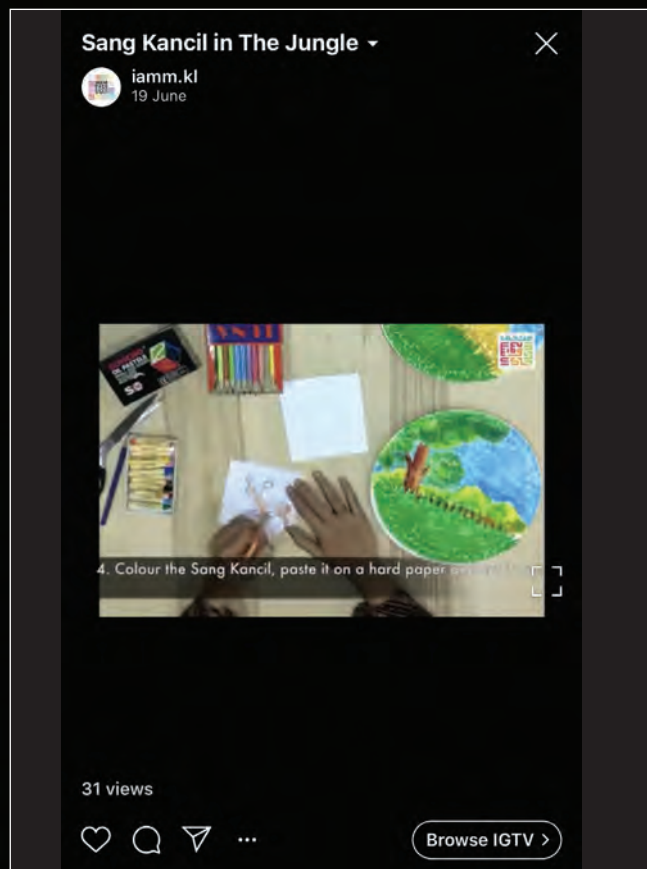
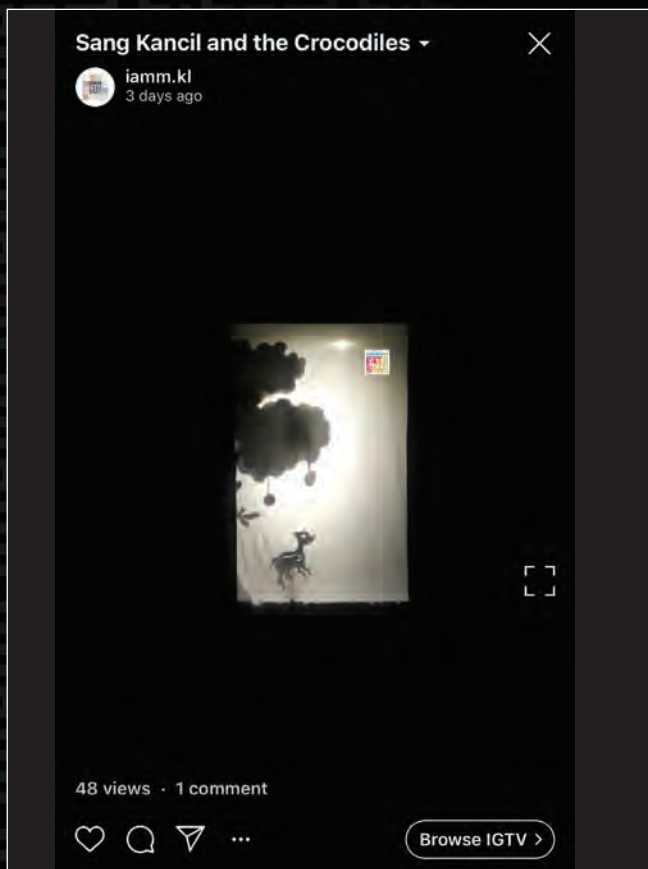


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The content of our online Weekend Workshops still reflects Malaysian traditions and Islamic Arts collections. For our arts and crafts activities, the creations are inspired by IAMM collections and Islamic histories. For storytellings, we have shifted the original storytelling format to a Wayang Kulit (shadow puppet) theatre show. We are bringing the popular Malay folk story Sang Kancil to our stage. We thank Institut Terjemahan dan Bahasa Malaysia for their generous permission to adapt their Sang Kancil series for this programme.

IAMM is committed to serving family and school learners. Despite the museum being allowed to open, the new SOP still prohibits children under 13 years of age and school/university groups from visiting (*at time of writing). Therefore, we have adapted some of our education programmes and resources to support parents, teachers and students in their efforts to keep learning at home during the pandemic.

These resources, designed to support our young and lifelong learners, draw inspiration from the richness and diversity of the IAMM collection. We welcome you to download and explore these online resources on our website. We hope that they will support you in understanding Islamic art better.





The Future

Malaysia has been highlighted as one of the best countries in the world in its response to managing the outbreak of COVID 19 efficiently. The efforts of the government and its machinery, together with the support and sacrifices of its people in combating this global pandemic, gives Malaysia hope for a better future. As per scheduled at this stage, the country will go through seven phases of MCO – Phase 1: MCO from 18 till 31 March, Phase 2: MCO from 1 till 14 April, Phase 3: MCO from 15 till 28 April, Phase 4: MCO from 29 April till 3 May, Phase 5: Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) from 4 till 11 May, Phase 6: CMCO from 12 May till 9 June and Phase 7: Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) from 10 June till 31 August 2020.

The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia is now back to business as usual since reopening our premises to the public from 11 June 2020. In Malaysia, all state museums across the country were allowed to resume operations by 16 June 2020 – definitely a positive development for the museum sector in the country. For us to continue our operations, we have to ensure the safety and well-

being of our staff and visitors. To achieve this, the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia will employ preventive measures and Standard Operating Procedures on its premises as issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Government of Malaysia.

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