In search of Singapore’s past

Young Singaporeans are responding to the rapid pace of change by documenting lost places and memories

By BERNARD DUKE

Not much is saved of life in Singapore, but the National University of Singapore (NUS) is trying to preserve the past by sourcing old images, posters and signs from residents’ houses and the streets. The research project, entitled “The Singapore Image”, has already produced a database of more than 1,000 images of the island’s past.

“I was struck by the sense that a lot of places in my memories have vanished,” said one photographer, who recently launched a blog about Singapore’s lost places.

Virtual tours of forgotten places

“Tong Bahru

The formerlash of a colonial-era working-class settlement, Tong Bahru was once home to thousands of people. The area was once a series of shophouses and small homes, but today it is largely deserted.

“When it gets too noisy, you lose your identity. People who grew up here lose their childhood They can’t visit places they used to go in.

“App for heritage trails

There are few maps available to guide visitors around the island’s historical sites. However, a new app is being developed that will allow users to explore Singapore’s past.

At first, it was just for a few stories from residents. Then we started to realize that their personal and collective histories were very much linked.

Old playgrounds and school crests

His playgrounds are gone

When water (beach) was my playground. For me, my childhood was defined by the beach. It was a place where I could play and explore, where I could lose myself in the sound of the waves and the feel of the sand. It was a place of adventures, fun, and imagination.

He comes up with a classification system for the beach, grouping them by their topographical features: sandy areas, rocky areas, and areas with vegetation such as mangroves or swamps. Each location is then mapped on a grid, revealing its unique characteristics.

He has also been working with researchers to develop a mobile app that will allow users to explore the history of the beach. The app will include images, videos, and audio recordings, providing a comprehensive view of the beach’s history.

The app is set for release later this year. It is expected to be a valuable resource for anyone interested in the history of the beach, and will help to preserve the memories of those who grew up there.