NOTHING QUITE surpasses the value of gifts that are sent straight from the heart - and ever more so if they serve the common good of many - with nothing more than just in the good name of charity. In this regard, it is gratifying to note that we do not pale in comparison to philanthropists around the world in the mastery of this art. Even though we have our share of our misgivings - the scandalous revelation of a large charity’s misreporting of accounts, the less than satisfactory service performance report of late, just to name a few - as a nation, we can truly sing about the generosity of our people. The numerous times we have stood together - as individuals or corporations - and supported causes that benefited our community as a whole bear glowing testament to this fact. Taking a walk down the memory lane, we noted some of the many contributions that have enhanced the sights and sounds of Singapore in recent years and will go a long way in creating a legacy in the republic.

Lee Kong Chian Reference Library, National Library

Located in Victoria Street, the heart of Singapore’s arts, culture, learning and entertainment hub, the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library occupies seven out of 16-storeys of the new National Library building, which reopened its doors to the public in July this year. Named in honour of the late philanthropist Dr Lee Kong Chian - founder of the Lee Foundation - which gave a S$60 million donation towards the library, the Lee Kong Chian Library now offers over 500,000 reference items, of which 90 percent are available to the public as open-access materials. This is the second donation from the late Dr Lee who in 1953, spearheaded free library public services in Singapore with a donation of S$75,000 to build the National Library at its former premises in Stamford Road.

Through the generosity of the Lee Foundation headed by his son, Lee Seng Gee, Singapore today boasts of a modern library. Not only does it stand out as an architectural beauty, housed within the National Library, the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library also serves as the premier stop for research needs of the
THE LEE KONG CHIAN REFERENCE LIBRARY SERVES AS THE PREMIER STOP FOR RESEARCH NEEDS OF THE PUBLIC ON THE SUBJECTS OF SINGAPORE AND ASIA, AND PROMISES TO ACQUIRE, ORGANISE AND MAKE ACCESSIBLE KNOWLEDGE TO EVERY INDIVIDUAL.

The Lee Kong Chian Reference Library housed in the new National Library stands tall and proud in seven out of the 16-storeys of the building.

public on the subjects of Singapore and Asia, and promises to acquire, organise and make accessible knowledge to every individual. More importantly, it will build a network of knowledge assets and advance the intellectual heritage of Singapore and South East Asia.

Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore

The Faculty of Medicine of the National University of Singapore was renamed the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine in honour of the late Dr Yong Loo Lin, whose family established the Yong Loo Lin Trust and in April this year, donated $8100 million to the Faculty. This unprecedented amount is the largest single gift to a tertiary institution in Singapore by a private benefactor. Together with the Government’s dollar-for-dollar matching, the gift amounted to a $200 million fund that will be channelled towards accelerating the development of eight areas in the Faculty including Ageing/Neurosciences, Cancer, and Infectious Diseases – which are important to Singapore’s health needs.

The generosity of the Yong Loo Lin family towards the improvement of education in Singapore was passed down by the late Dr Yong Loo Lin - a strong believer in the value of education who ensured that his two daughters, Yong Siew Yoon and the late Yong Siew Toh, had a good education. The family’s kind acts of giving also saw through several other significant improvements in our arts and academic scene. In 2003, the Trust donated $25 million to NUS for its Conservatory of Music which was renamed the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music. And in 1996, $2.5 million from the Trust was used to establish the Yong Loo Lin Professorship in Medical Oncology.
Created from the desire to benefit students and the community at large in their quest for knowledge, the Lien Fung’s Colloquium was established by Mrs Ho Lien Fung – a philanthropist and wife of former Singapore Ambassador, the late Ho Rih Hwa – at Singapore Management University since 2003. The Colloquium aims to promote awareness and appreciation of cultural and societal issues, with a particular focus on everyday life, within the student community as well as the general public through lectures, talks and other events.

Owing to Mrs Ho’s well-meant efforts and her deep interest and understanding of cross-cultural issues, the colloquium serves to inspire and satisfy the quest for a broader knowledge of an inquiring population here. In her role as the ambassador’s wife, Mrs Ho was also active volunteer, well known for her philanthropic efforts and regular support for community initiatives and theatrical groups. The colloquium is Mrs Ho’s second gift to SMU, the first being the establishment of the ‘Ho Rih Hwa Leadership in Asia Public Lecture Series’ in honour of her late husband’s business and entrepreneurial achievements in 2001.

Liu Kang Gallery, Singapore Art Museum

In 2003, Singapore’s then only living pioneer artist Liu Kang, 96, donated his lifetime’s work – comprising more than 300 paintings and drawings, which were previously kept in the privacy of his home away from the public eye – to the Singapore Art Museum of the National Heritage Board. Historically, this donation marked the largest and the most significant donation presented to the Board, who has placed the Liu Family collection in the Liu Kang Gallery at the Museum.

A legacy in the local visual arts scene, Liu whose artistic journey spanned the time from the 1930s to now, was renowned for his founding work in the Nanyang style and also in depicting the creative energy of Singapore in the course of the 20th Century. Liu’s donation of his treasured art chronicles offers us timeless insight into the complex cultural development of Singapore and the physical landscapes of the Southeast Asia region.

In August 2005, the Singapore Art Museum also received a donation of 95 Works from Times Publishing Ltd, described as the largest single corporate donations to SAM. The donation comprises 94 paintings and a sculpture by eminent Singapore artists such as...
The Singapore Art Museum named one of its galleries after artist Liu Kang who donated many of his works including his family art collection to the museum.

The Faculty of Medicine of the National University of Singapore was renamed the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine in honour of the late Dr Yong Loo Lin, whose family donated $100 million to the Faculty.
A LEGACY IN THE LOCAL VISUAL ARTS SCENE, ARTIST LIU KANG WHOSE ARTISTIC JOURNEY SPANNED THE TIME FROM THE 1930s TO NOW, WAS RENOWNED FOR HIS FOUNDING WORK IN THE NANYANG STYLE AND ALSO IN DEPICTING THE CREATIVE ENERGY OF SINGAPORE IN THE COURSE OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Chua Mia Tee, Cheong Soo Pieng, Choo Keng Kwang, Shi Xiangtuo, Ng Eng Teng, Seah Kim Joo and Lee Boon Wang. It represents the work of important Singaporean artists in the period of the 1970s and early 1980s.

The museum scene has also been enhanced by the generous donation in January 2005, when Tan Sri Khoo Teck Puat’s Khoo Foundation gave a substantial sum to enable the acquisition of the Tang Treasure, part of which will be exhibited in the new Singapore Maritime Silk Route Museum.

Preservation of Peranakan Architecture and Culture

Peranakan culture received a great boost when Agnes Tan, the youngest child of the late Tun Dato Sir Tan Cheng Lock gave $4 million to the National University to promote Peranakan culture and architecture. The money will be used to buy one of the last remaining authentic Peranakan houses in Singapore at 157 Neil Road. The house belonging to the Wee family which had occupied it since 1860 will be purchased, restored, renovated and preserved to showcase its unique architecture. The 100-year-old house will be renamed in honour of Tun Dato Sir Tan Cheng Lock Baba House and become a centre for exhibitions, talks and performances. Tan who lived in Singapore had remained out of the limelight and made news in 2003 when her estate gave the University $1.5 million to set up the Tun Tan Cheng Lock Centre for Architecture and Urban Heritage. Two shophouses were acquired in the heart of the historical city of Malacca in Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock, which was restored and used as an extension of the NUS Department of Architecture.