

Each photograph tells a story; the palace horse who bit a pesky tourist; beans which guarantee stinky breath and our beloved 'Carcosa' captured before developers 'move in' on this quintessentially English house.

Forty quirky photos made into a memory card game by Belgian mother-of-two, An van Daele. Children love the cards, ladies adore their 'oh so-chic' turquoise box, but locals find them baffling; "ahyorr, why take photos of my cendol lah?" Fair point really; but where in Europe can you buy a magenta coloured jellied-worm infested drink in a plastic bag?



### Humble Beginnings

November last year saw An scouting around for a new project; the role of settling her family into life in Kuala Lumpur achieved following their move from Hong Kong. A girlfriend's timely suggestion, combined with An's flare for photography, and a plan was hatched: the creation of a Malaysian themed memory game for her two sons – seven and 10 years old. However, several flights and many hours later spent snapping the delights offered by Kota Bharu to Malacca, to Sabah and Sarawak, the plan evolved into marketing the game to the expatriate community as a novel memento of Malaysia.

Six months on and the first batch of *Magical Malaysia Memory Game* arrived from a carefully selected local printer. The response to the game has been very positive, says An, with people buying it as a farewell gift, an end-of-year present for a teacher, a gift to entice friends to travel here, or just as a fun game for children to play. Even Petronas Twin Towers Gift Shop and *Kinokuniya* bookstore have snapped up a bundle of boxes for sale at their stores.

She paid particular attention to covering the mix of cultures here, "taking photos that typify Malay, Chinese and Indian customs;" a fact not lost on these outlets.

**Expect your powers of observation to be tested...**

I admit to buying the game, three in fact. The kaleidoscope of colours of all that is Malaysian such as endangered orang-utans, the 'Wau' kite, Malaysia's national symbol, enticingly exotic beaches, are

beautifully embodied in the paired cards; although not all are typical. Expect your powers of observation to be tested: the rows of beehive shaped incense coils containing red-carded wishes that grace Chinese temples had me stumped. Then, there's the photo of red-coloured matchboxes taken in a Malacca market: if you look closely each box displays an animal from the Chinese zodiac. For a former high-flying number-crunching actuary, An has a keen artistic eye.

The *Royal Selangor's "Melon Teapot"*, made in honour of the famous pewter company's founder, was the most challenging to take says An, because of the strong spotlights and reflective nature of the glass cabinet used to display the teapot with its unusual melon stalk-shaped lid.

### Is it more than just a game?

I asked Marios Genethliou, a UK qualified speech and language therapist, who runs his own private practice for children with speech and language difficulties in Damansara Heights. He bought the game because he "immediately saw its educational potential!". As the memory cards contain interesting and familiar scenes, children are keen to talk about what they see, which helps to "widen vocabulary and develop good conversational skills," says Marios. The game has a useful directory explaining the origins of each photo.

Although the game's objective is simple - to identify the position of picture pairs - "it involves two complex and vital cognitive skills: short-term memory 'STM' and

working memory 'WM'", says Marios. STM holds small amounts of information for between four to nine seconds, but long enough for it to be manipulated in WM, allowing the brain to use it before the information is discarded. He uses the game during therapy sessions to improve the amount of information, and duration over which it is held in STM.

On the subject of memory, it is true, An did photograph a horse guarding the Royal Palace that had, moments earlier, bitten a tourist who got too close for comfort. The horse turned to face the lady, closed its jaw around her denim jacket sleeve, and ripped it clean off. A deadpan comedian in the making, its mounted guardsman did not flinch an inch throughout the whole debacle!



*The Memory Game stock is limited, and will be on sale at the lower price of RM75 at the British, Manza and American Christmas fares or direct from An.*

*Why wait: be sure, and secure yourself one today:*

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