The Former Ford Factory is a museum dedicated to recounting the events of WWII, and its aftermath. According to the museum, it started out as a factory for developing cars by the Ford Motor Company, and subsequently used by the British and Japanese to develop their military vehicles. It is also the place where the British surrendered unconditionally to the Japanese. This makes the Former Ford Factory an important location in the history of Singapore.

There are 4 zones in the Former Ford Factory, Zone 1: About the Former Ford Factory, Zone 2: Fall of Singapore, Zone 3: Becoming Syonan, Zone 4: Legacies of War and Occupation. Zone 1 serves as the backstory and reception area of the Former Ford Factory. Upon entering Zone 2, visitors can instantly feel the change in mood from the pleasant reception area into a dark and gloomy area. One thing interesting is that there are pictures of planes around the start. Along with the various newspaper articles hanging from the ceiling at different heights, this made it seem like the newspapers are masquerading as aeroplanes during an air raid. This sets in well with the tone of this zone.

Between Zone 2 and Zone 3 is a boardroom that is supposedly the place of surrender. The choice to place helmets on the table served as visual cues, and the transcript of surrender served as important cues to imagine what happened then. It was interesting to note that the museum froze the clock at 6.20, which was the start of the surrender talks. The use of AR also helped us to imagine what happened.

Zone 3 was dyed in red.

The colour choice of the museum for each zone was interesting. In the pamphlet provided, Zone 1 is in a shade of green, zone 2 in grey, zone 3 in red and zone 4 in blue. In the museum though, I felt that zone 1 was mostly white, while zone 4 was mostly grey, instead of green and blue respectively. The tone of the colour was interesting. Zone 1 being a reception area, so making it white is practical and pleasant. Zone 2 was the war period and making it black really highlighted the gloominess of war. Zone 3 was during the Japanese Occupation, and red highlighted how there was blood, anger and rage throughout the period. Zone 4 was mostly grey, which really emphasized that even though war was over, life was still tough for people then. Overall, the museum made good use of colour.

Another thing interesting is that the museum asks thought provoking question,

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The museum made effective and creative use of visual cues. In Zone 1, there are pictures of planes around the start. Along with the various newspaper articles hanging from the ceiling at different heights, this made it seem like the newspapers are masquerading as aeroplanes during an air raid. Zone 3 had a replica of a lorry right beside the Sook Ching Massacre portion, with a video showing on it. There was also decoration of cameo nets as a ceiling at the guerilla warfare portion, allowing visitors to feel like they were in a jungle.

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The museum also made use of numerous thought-provoking questions around the exhibitions. These questions are usually placed after a paragraph of information and relates back to it. However, I can’t help but feel that the questions are not exactly bias proof. One example was “What would you do if you knew your neighbour or close family were acting as informants for the Japanese?”. This was placed under a paragraph of how people went to take revenge on those known informants. The question after it seems to invoke the visitor to empathise with what happened then and why people acted as they did, especially after reading a paragraph of what happened.

One interesting thing I noted was that there were many Japanese visiting the museum when I visited. Although they were most likely on a tour group, it was interesting to note how they came to this out of the place museum instead of the National Museum. This place probably has more significant and cultural impact to them as compared to other museums.