



Steve La Hood, director of Story! Inc., unveils the conceptual design for the First National Discovery Museum. The interactive museum, located in a historic building near Pak Khlong Talat, will open in May next year.

# Museum aims to make history fun

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For some people, visiting museums is like taking medicine. It's not always fun, but it's good for you.

But Steve La Hood, director of Story! Inc, which has created the content and conceptual design for the new First Discovery Museum, has pledged to make the experience sweeter.

"Knowledge can come to you in an entertaining way," said Mr La Hood, a New Zealander whose portfolio includes a Lord of the Rings exhibition for the New Zealand National Museum.

Creating a museum does not only consist of "placing a stone and having a text say it comes from 2000 BC", he told a press conference held to unveil the conceptual design for the First Discovery Museum, due to open in May next year.

Financed by the National Discovery Museum Institute (NDMI), the museum

will be located in an old building near Pak Khlong Talat, Bangkok's flower market, in Phra Nakhon district. It will be dedicated to explaining the origin and history of the Thai people.

The NDMI has invested 150 million baht in state-of-the-art technology to present the history of Thailand. This includes an interactive programme which allows visitors to take part or feel they are taking part in the events described. For instance, visitors will be able to take part in iron smelting, or bartering farm goods through an interactive computer programme.

The museum will show various facets of Thai history, including original settlement in the area and cultures since the Suvarnabhumi era of over a thousand years ago. It will also feature information on ethnic groups, religions, beliefs and crucial events such as the 2004 tsunami.

"This museum aims to show how people who were living here before this country

was established evolved themselves into this country. At the end, visitors should know that Thais are comprised of people from various cultures and ethnic groups.

"This museum wishes to celebrate the diversity of cultures in Thailand. I hope Thais will be proud," said Mr La Hood.

The museum will be located in a three-storey building that was once the home of the Commerce Ministry. The 86-year-old building was designed by Mario Tamagno, the Italian architect who designed many palaces in Thailand during the reign of King Rama V.

The NDMI spent 85 million baht restoring the building, earning it this year's best conservation award from the Association of Siamese Architects Under Royal Patronage.

The NDMI plans to open another three discovery museums, and is eyeing the Rattanakosin area — Bangkok's old town — as an ideal site.