

Foreword

Each year, we adopt a theme for *Cultural Connections* and, for our 9th edition, it is “A Future-Ready Workforce—Thinking about Tomorrow’s Jobs in Culture”. As the cultural sector recovers strongly from the disruption of the COVID years, it will continue to grapple with fast-changing technologies, including generative AI, as well as the complex geopolitics and competing allegiances in a turbulent world. To grow jobs and sustain careers, our cultural workers need to be equipped with mindsets and competencies that position them well to succeed.

This year’s issue leads with insights from Permanent Secretary Tan Gee Keow, who spent five years at the helm at MCCY. Drawing on her experience, including during the pandemic, she speaks of how the arts and heritage uplift our spirits and help Singaporeans connect with one another. From the vantage point of her new role in the Public Service Division of the Prime Minister’s Office, she shares her thoughts on how culture and creativity connect to the strategic work on leadership and the transformation of the public service in Singapore.

This issue also features a lively discussion with four expert panellists representing institutions, arts practitioners and administrators. It reminds us of the dynamic energy and collaborative possibilities of those who work within the ecosystem.

There is a strong technological slant in this edition. We have essays that cover how technology impacts arts education and training at the pre-tertiary and university levels, with writers asking if we need to rethink existing approaches to teaching the arts. Other writers consider the impact technology might have on roles in the cultural sector: How will traditional roles evolve with the power of AI? How would the management of museum inventory or the documentation of national archives be affected? For this edition, I have also penned an essay on how different roles in culture can impact the liveability of our cities.

Providing a personal take, Angelita Teo—the National Museum of Singapore’s former director who now leads the Olympic Foundation for Heritage and Culture—underscores the importance of a growth mindset for a purposeful, sustainable career in culture. Lawyer Joy Tan, an arts-lover who has served on different boards of arts companies, reflects on the cultural landscape in Singapore and argues for a creative, right-brained leadership.

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So how might the nature of work change for our artists and other cultural workers? What kind of capacity building or resetting of mindsets may be required for the arts and heritage sector to continue to inspire humanity and reflect our diversity? I hope readers of this year's edition of *Cultural Connections* will get new insights and wisdom from this collection of essays.

Rosa Daniel (Mrs)

Dean, Culture Academy Singapore

Editor-in-Chief's Note

Why do parents still fret about their kids choosing a path in the culture sector in an age when we talk about multiple pathways and broadening the definition of success?

Certainly, among my contemporaries, I still hear worries about prospects when one of their children chooses to pursue training or a career in culture. I often respond by assuring them that those who work in arts and heritage find deep purpose and fulfilment, and that the material rewards, even as a freelancer, are not as dire as they imagine. It's good to talk to the children to understand their motivations, I add, and remind them that forcing a square peg into a round hole can have negative consequences.

Commissioning these essays this year, and working closely with the writers, has further strengthened my sense of optimism. The writers from this edition of *Cultural Connections* invite us to take a step back and evaluate what is important, and eloquently articulate why the arts and heritage will always be a vital, vibrant aspect of human society. Technology, especially AI, is not to be feared but embraced and understood for its possibilities and limitations.

Certainly, in Singapore, with strong, enlightened support from the relevant government agencies, commitment from individual and corporate patrons, as well as big-hearted foundations, there will be a plethora of opportunities.

The enabled, empowered individual starting their professional journey must play their part too. It helps if there is a core of positive values. From this year's essays, my takeaways include: adaptability and resilience, the courage to innovate and apply creativity across different sectors, and an openness to new knowledge and opportunities.

The future can be boundless.

Paul Tan (Mr)

Editor-in-Chief, *Cultural Connections*

