

Foreword

The arts, culture and heritage scene in Singapore has grown tremendously since the publication of our nation's first formal plan back in 1989. This plan by the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts (ACCA)¹ envisioned a city with a bold and exciting arts and heritage landscape, comprising national museums dedicated to Singapore's history and Southeast Asian arts; a world-class performing arts venue; and statutory boards focused on growing Singapore's arts and heritage sector.

Almost three decades later, I am glad that Singapore has achieved all these and more. Singapore is now a vibrant cosmopolitan city with an arts and heritage scene which is internationally celebrated and respected. We have artists, artistes, scholars as well as arts and heritage professionals doing excellent work all over the world, flying Singapore's flag high.

Back home, many Singaporeans attended an arts event or activity in 2015. In the same year, museum visitorship also reached an all-time high of 3.75 million. More Singaporeans also believe in the value of arts and culture, and recognise that Singapore's arts and cultural landscape has become more vibrant.² All these would not have been possible without the passion of the arts and heritage community, and the close collaboration among the public, private and people sectors.

The Government has, and will continue to, invest in the sector to promote artistic excellence, enhance professional capabilities, and make arts and heritage a part of our everyday lives. Over the past five years, Government funding to the arts and heritage sector has increased from S\$344.2 million in 2011 to S\$595.7 million in 2015. This underscores the Government's belief in the sector and its value in making our city a home for all citizens.

Indeed, our arts and heritage sector can form common platforms and bridge differences across race, language or religion. It can bring our people closer together, and nurture a more caring, cohesive and confident nation.

The Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth will also continue to engage various communities to hear what they would like to see in the arts and heritage landscape. These engagements are also about discussing what roles different communities can play in enlivening this landscape and contributing to its richness for years to come. The next chapter of Singapore's story needs to be written together, taking into consideration Singaporeans' aspirations for our arts and heritage scene.

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This second volume of *Cultural Connections* is dedicated to this theme of how arts and heritage can contribute to the creation of liveable cities. We are very privileged to have public sector leaders from the arts and culture sector, as well as eminent diplomats and scholars contributing to this volume.

I hope you will enjoy reading their thoughts as much as I have.

Rosa Daniel (Mrs)
Deputy Secretary (Culture),
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Notes:

1. The ACCA Report was followed by three Renaissance City Plans issued between 1999 and 2008, and later by the Report of The Arts and Culture Strategic Review Committee in 2012.
2. In the “Population Survey on the Arts 2015” by the National Arts Council, 88% of Singaporeans indicated that the arts gave them a “better understanding of people of different backgrounds and cultures”, while 78% of Singaporeans agreed that the arts “say who we are as a society and country”. Also, 79% of Singaporeans indicated that “the arts scene in Singapore has become more vibrant in the past five years”, compared with 64% who responded to the same question in 2013.

Editor in Chief's Note

This second issue of *Cultural Connections* looks at how the arts, heritage and culture contribute, and indeed are essential elements, to the making of liveable cities. This theme will be of interest not just to heritage and culture practitioners but also readers involved in city planning, architecture and public policy related to urban development.

The editorial team is especially honoured to have worked with a line-up of illustrious contributors who have shared their insights and experiences in essays that examine the links between the arts and heritage and liveable cities.

Professor Tommy Koh, who wears many hats and is perhaps best known as Ambassador-At-Large at Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs opens this issue of *Cultural Connections* with a wide-ranging and international take on what makes cities great and how the arts and heritage sectors can breathe new life into cities regardless of their size. This theme returns in Michael Koh's essay on how the preservation of historic districts can contribute to a more liveable city, using examples from Singapore as well as other great cities across the world.

Our next eminent contributor is Dr Mathew Trinca, Director of the National Museum of Australia and Co-Chair of the Australia-Singapore Arts Group. Dr Trinca puts forth a very strong case for the arts as a central element in the making of creative cities and that arts or heritage events are increasingly moving away from passive "arts consumption" by the audience towards more active, engaged and interactive forms of participation that entails greater dialogue and even co-creation.

Benson Puah, as Chief Executive Officer of Esplanade – Theatres On The Bay in Singapore, extends Dr Trinca's argument in his detailed and insightful account of how the Esplanade, Singapore's leading performing arts centre, has endeavoured to make the arts and culture an essential and enjoyable part of life for all Singaporeans.

Paul Tan, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Singapore's National Arts Council, offers a view from both Japan and Singapore that explores how support for the arts from all levels of society can help to make a country home, truly, for everyone.

And if you had thought that Singapore's status as a liveable city was a recent achievement, the next essay will make you rethink this assumption. Professor Derek Heng offers a thorough and thoughtful account of how people in fourteenth century Singapore lived and the surprising sophistication of their culinary and cultural practices.

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Finally, we round up this issue with an essay by Charmaine Toh, Curator at the National Gallery Singapore, that looks at how living in different cities has influenced the practice of one of Singapore's eminent contemporary artists, Tang Da Wu.

I hope you will enjoy reading this issue of *Cultural Connections*.

Thangamma Karthigesu
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