

Foreword

It has been almost three years since the pandemic disrupted everything we had then believed to be “the norm”. The Academy had closed the year 2019 with a very optimistic vision for the arts and culture, with an international conference on the theme of *The Future of Culture, Culture for the Future*. The futurists who had spoken at that conference had predicted a bright future for the arts despite the disruptions caused by technology and the geopolitical tensions caused by trade tariffs, increasing tension-ridden bilateral relations between the US and China, and increasing divides across the globe due to widening income gaps, greater intolerance, and the unprecedented rise of misinformation due to social media.

Two months later, in January 2020, COVID-19 took over everyone’s lives, livelihoods, and well-being, not to mention creating economic turmoil all over the world.

Since then, our arts and culture sector has shown remarkable resilience and adaptability through collaborative co-creation and active digitalisation. Supported by the Arts and Culture Resilience Package (ACRP) of about SGD75 million between 2020 and 2022, our artists and arts organisations continued to create art, celebrate our cultural heritage, and deeply engage audiences through digital means when physical activities were not possible.

Our arts companies have digitalised their content and experimented with virtual offerings. Our museums have also experimented with virtual festivals and outreach programmes including interactive virtual exhibitions. Our national orchestras have reached out to new audiences virtually, bringing classical music to the people and helping to bring what was once considered as being only for the elite to the masses, bringing joy and solace at a time of fear, mental stress and economic uncertainties. With borders closed, we reached out to, and engaged new international audiences through digital platforms. Over the last few months, since our borders were re-opened and restrictions almost fully relaxed, audiences have been enjoying the return of physical activities across all art forms and practices.

As we move from operationally ready and crisis mode to COVID-resilience, this issue of *Cultural Connections* looks at how we continue to build on our strengths and forge forward confidently in the year ahead. What new skills are necessary to enable us to operate and survive in this new environment?

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What will the role of the arts, culture and heritage be in the three new economies—the green, creative and care sectors?

As I look back, the pandemic, while taking its toll on peoples' lives and the stability of businesses in the sector, has also reinforced the value of the arts on societal and individual wellbeing. Many of us will no doubt recall instances when the sound of music, the rhythm of dance and movement, and the solace of the written word provided comfort and healing during the darkest moments of the past two years.

I hope you will enjoy reading the 10 essays written by our local and international thought leaders that discuss various aspects of **LEARNING, UNLEARNING AND RE-TOOLING FOR THE FUTURE**.

Rosa Daniel (Mrs)

Dean, Culture Academy Singapore

Editor-in-Chief's Note

This issue of *Cultural Connections* explores the theme of **LEARNING, UNLEARNING AND RE-TOOLING FOR THE FUTURE** through the twin tracks of **Creative Economy**, and **Building Cohesive and Liveable Societies**.

The disruptions, new opportunities and challenges brought on by technology, the pandemic, and the on-going geopolitical tensions caused by the crisis in Ukraine and frosty US-China relations have all contributed to greater uncertainty locally, regionally and globally. What would the arts and culture's role, contributions and value be in this new normal? What needs to take shape for the sector to remain resilient, valuable and sustainable? What Blue Oceans are out there for the sector to swim in and reinvent itself so that it can take advantage of this rebirth after a major pandemic? Our esteemed writers try to answer these questions and more in this issue.

Professor Tommy Koh, Ambassador-at-Large at Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Founding Chairman of National Arts Council, and Honorary Chairman of National Heritage Board, opens this edition recounting the 30-year journey of the sector, and how it has and will continue to thrive against all odds, thanks to Singapore's visionary policymakers, government initiatives and the arts and culture community that helped to shape and advance the development of the local arts, culture and heritage scene.

Professor Kwok Kian-Woon, Professor of Sociology, Associate Provost (Student Life) of Singapore's Nanyang Technological University, and newly-appointed Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of University of the Arts Singapore, discusses three fundamental issues that cultural policymakers may address to truly enable Singapore's arts and culture scene to flourish. He argues that even as Singapore progresses in a challenging new era, it is imperative that our cultural policy evolves to embrace a deeper and broader understanding of the arts and culture.

Coming from an adjacent sector, Mr. Keith Tan, Chief Executive Officer of Singapore Tourism Board, discusses what he believes the role of arts and culture can be in the new normal and discusses the notion of cultural capability and its intangible and unlimited value in bolstering our national economy, global brand positioning and social cohesion.

Complementing Keith Tan's essay, Mr. Low Sze Wee, Chief Executive Officer of Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre, discusses the complex dynamics of the past decade, especially during the pandemic, encompassing destabilising shifts in the global and local socio-economic, digital, health, and environmental arenas, and how these scenarios have birthed a new age of change. He identifies four principles which can help guide cultural organisations through turbulent times.

Professor Ramon Pacheco Pardo, Professor of International Relations, King's College London, and KF-VUB Korea Chair, Brussels School of Governance, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, discusses the important

role that a nation's creative economy can play in the new normal for the extension of soft power. Using South Korea as an example, he illustrates how the dynamism of the Korean cultural economic model and the contemporary Korean understanding of topical issues have enabled its creative industries to develop diverse cultural products with a global appeal.

Dr. Hilmar Farid, Director General for Culture at Indonesia's Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, emphasises the need to prioritise sustainability in our development initiatives and practices worldwide, with locally-specific, culture-based policies that promote economic resilience, cultural diversity, environmental health and social equity.

Looking back at the past two years, Mr. Paul Tan, PhD candidate at Nanyang Technological University, and former Deputy Chief Executive at the National Arts Council, reflects on the aspects of the arts that endure even as artists, audiences, and the community that supports art-making confront the future.

And to share how an arts company survived the ravages of the pandemic, Mr. Huzir Sulaiman, co-founder and Joint Artistic Director of Checkpoint Theatre, shares how Checkpoint Theatre innovated, bravely navigated new opportunities and reinvented itself to remain sustainable, relevant and resilient in response to the pandemic.

Rapid change has taken place worldwide within the arts, culture and heritage sector due to evolving infrastructure, technology, attitudes, and audience demographics and engagement. Referring to this evolving landscape, Mr. Scott Smith, Managing Partner of Changeist, Amsterdam, and the co-author of an international study on the Future of Culture, talks about five skills that the global arts and cultural sector must learn in order to thrive in the new economy.

We round up this issue with a thought piece by Ms. Yeoh Chee Yan, Senior Advisor to Singapore's Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, and Chairman of the National Heritage Board. She discusses the future of the arts and culture sector in post-pandemic Singapore, and explores the roles that arts and culture can play as Singapore re-emerges stronger from the pandemic.

I hope you will enjoy reading this issue as much as the team had in bringing it to you.

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