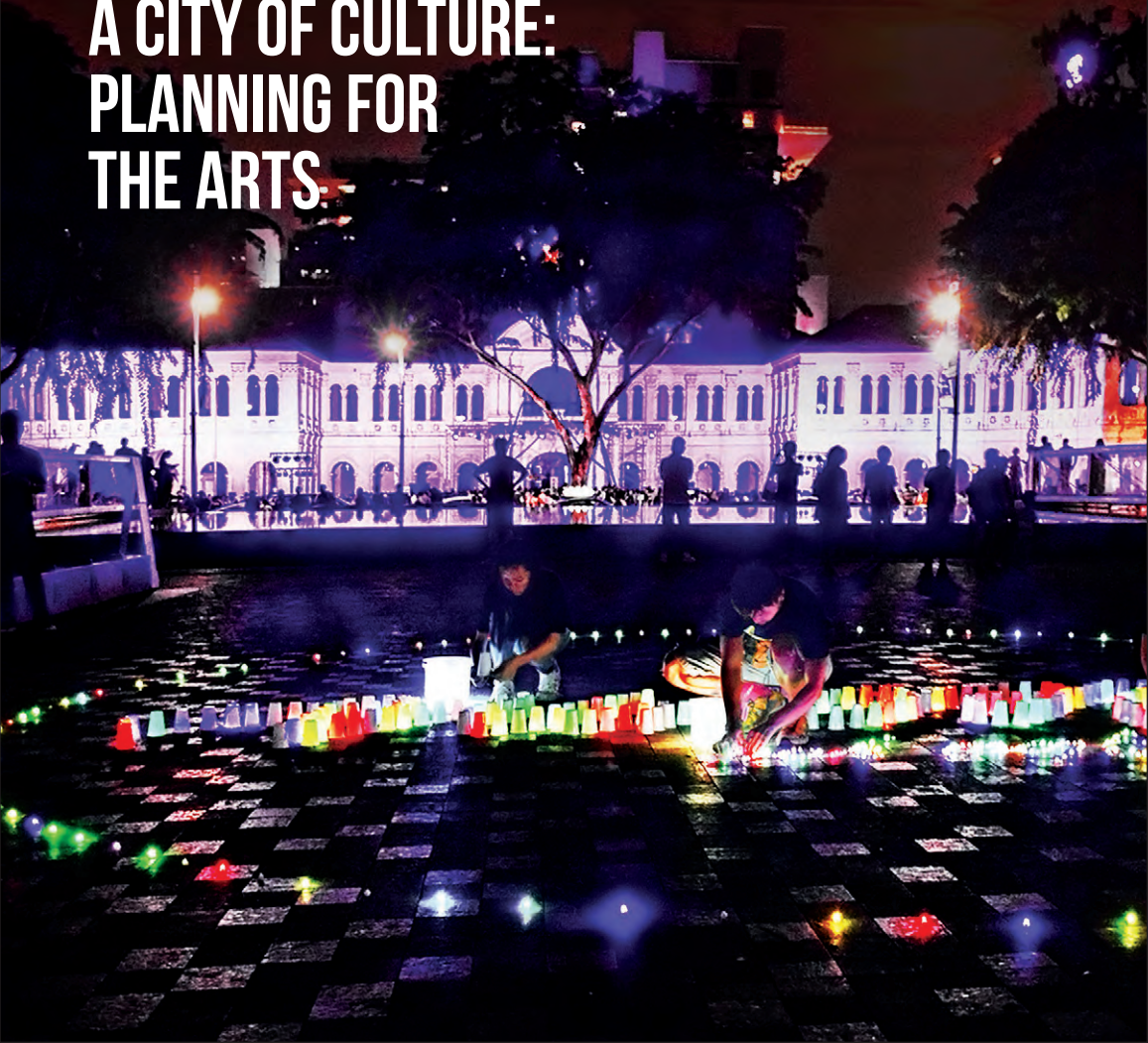


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A CITY OF CULTURE:
PLANNING FOR
THE ARTS



**A CITY OF CULTURE:
PLANNING FOR
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URBAN SYSTEMS STUDIES

A CITY OF CULTURE: PLANNING FOR THE ARTS

CENTRE for
LiveableCities
SINGAPORE

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The “Very Wishing Exhibition”, an interactive light art installation by Singaporean artists Lee Wei Lieh and Danica Tan as part of the Singapore Night Festival 2015. Their work sought to create words and patterns using light, to inspire ideas, hope and reflection for all who pass by.

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FOREWORD

Since its independence, Singapore has made tremendous progress in supporting culture and the arts for its diverse population. In the past there were pockets of institutions and spaces for the arts, but the formation of the Advisory Council for Culture and the Arts (ACCA), chaired by the late President Mr Ong Teng Cheong, and the Council's subsequent landmark report in 1989, represented a key turning point in the transformation of the arts landscape in Singapore. It laid a firm foundation for the provision of cultural infrastructure and facilities, including the iconic Esplanade, Theatres on the Bay. It was also instrumental in the formation of our key governing organisations in arts and culture, namely the Ministry of Information and the Arts (which evolved into the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) and then the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth today), the National Arts Council and the National Heritage Board. These organisations bolstered the city's momentous developments in the 2000s, when we advanced three phases of the Renaissance City Plans, and later the Arts and Culture Strategic Review in 2012.

It has to be said that the 1990s and early 2000s were significant periods to realise the value of the arts for the economy and society. At the national level, particularly through the 2002 Economic Review Committee, the arts was recognised as a force for originality and inventiveness, that could be fused with business and technology to spur enterprise, and help foster Singapore's creative economy for the nation's long-term growth. This built on earlier efforts by the Economic Development Board in the 1980s, when spirited officers sought to make Singapore a global city with new, higher value-added investments in the cultural and creative industries later promoted by MICA and its agencies, and in doing so, provide greater opportunities for local and international talents to make their mark in our city, and on the world stage.

This progress aligned with the recognition to nurture creative manpower and cultural capital. This did not mean confining skills training to the traditional sense of performance or fine art, but extending the influence of the arts to all other sectors and opportunities, be it in media, architecture and design, research and development, engineering and more. While Singapore has had a strong focus on "left-brain" logical thinking through the emphasis on science and mathematics, there was a need to nurture the "right-brain" creative training, in order to expand our imagination, deepen sensibilities and inspire innovation. In this way, we can foster a collective force of well-balanced, cultured people, a society

reflective of our values, and bold in our progress as a knowledge-intensive economy. Education is key. I was glad when our government recognised this as an essential part of our human capital development in the late 1990s, providing greater funding support and recognition for our private arts institutes, NAFA and LASALLE. This was a significant step in the right direction for a Creative Singapore. Investments were later made to establish the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music and the School of the Arts, and our schools continue to integrate the arts in co-curricular activities and in pedagogy.

More than 20 years since the ACCA report, Singapore's arts and cultural development continues to mature, and it is a story worth sharing. The Centre for Liveable Cities' Urban Systems Studies is a series of retrospective studies, to document Singapore's urban development experience over the past five decades, and distil the key changes and underlying principles that brought us to where we are today as a highly liveable and sustainable city. The topics in this series have predominantly centred on the more "hardware" aspects of our built environment, covering sector-specific knowledge in water, transport, housing, urban redevelopment and more. It is thus timely that the series incorporates the more intangible aspects of urban living, that are equally important in realising the outcomes of a sustainable environment, competitive economy and, above all, a higher quality of life.

A City of Culture: Planning for the Arts captures Singapore's journey in transforming our urban landscape for culture and creativity, through years of master planning, strategies and programmes. There have been successes, and also lessons learnt along the way. I hope readers will find this account useful and informative. May this book also serve as an insightful guide for our current and future generations of urban planners, policy-makers, cultural practitioners and administrators, to build a distinctive global city, and an ideal home for its people to live, work, play, learn and care.

Dr Tan Chin Nam

Former Permanent Secretary for the
Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts

PREFACE

The Centre for Liveable Cities' (CLC) research in urban systems tries to unpack the systematic components that make up the city of Singapore, capturing knowledge not only within these systems, but also the threads that link these systems and how they make sense as a whole. The studies are scoped to venture deep into key domain areas the CLC has identified under the Singapore Liveability Framework, in an attempt to answer two key questions: how Singapore has transformed itself into a highly liveable city within the last five decades, and how Singapore can build on our urban development experience to create knowledge and urban solutions for current and future challenges relevant to Singapore and other cities through applied research. *A City of Culture: Planning for the Arts* is the latest publication from the Urban Systems Studies (USS) series.

The research process involves close and rigorous engagement of the CLC with our stakeholder agencies, and oral history interviews with Singapore's urban pioneers and leaders, to gain insights into development processes, and distil the tacit knowledge gleaned from the planning and implementation, as well as governance of Singapore. As a body of knowledge, the Urban Systems Studies, which cover aspects such as water, transport, urban redevelopment, and sustainable environment, reveal not only the visible outcomes of Singapore's development, but the complex support structures of our urban achievements.

The CLC would like to thank the National Arts Council and National Heritage Board, and all those who have contributed their knowledge, expertise and time to make this publication possible. I wish you all an enjoyable read.

Khoo Teng Chye

Executive Director
Centre for Liveable Cities

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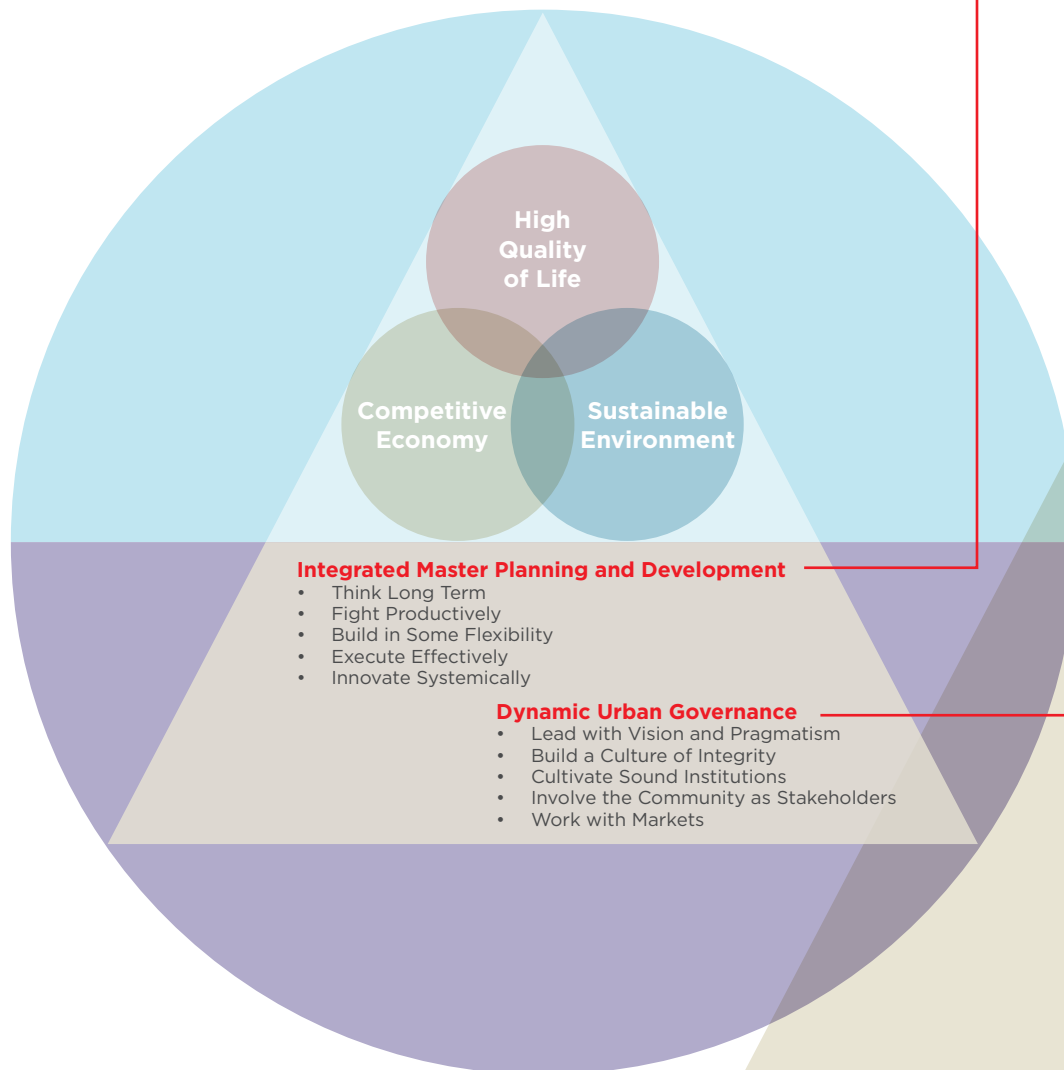
The Centre for Liveable Cities is grateful to the urban leaders and experts who shared their insights and experiences through the interviews conducted as part of the study process, including (in alphabetical order) George Yeo, Lee Tzu Yang, Dr Liu Thai Ker, Dr Tan Chin Nam and Professor Tommy Koh. The Centre is also grateful for the inputs and assistance provided by the National Arts Council and National Heritage Board in the publication of this study.

The writer, Mercy Wong, would like to extend her thanks to colleagues and cluster mates for their support and encouragement, and peers working in the sector for their candid conversations on arts and culture in Singapore. In particular, she would like to thank Michael Koh and Sophianne Araib for their guidance and advice, Wu Wei Neng for his editorial inputs, as well as Nicole Chew and Hazelina Yeo for their support in the production process. While there are various intricate layers in the study of culture and the arts, the writer hopes this documentation serves as a humble contribution to understanding the planning and development behind the arts and cultural landscape of Singapore.

THE SINGAPORE LIVEABILITY FRAMEWORK

The Singapore Liveability Framework is derived from Singapore's urban development experience and is a useful guide for developing sustainable and liveable cities.

The general principles under **Integrated Master Planning and Development** and **Dynamic Urban Governance** are reflected in the themes found in *A City of Culture: Planning for the Arts*.



Integrated Master Planning and Development

Think Long Term

The landmark 1989 Report of the ACCA laid the foundation for a holistic approach towards future development of the arts and culture in Singapore, complemented by the 1991 Civic and Cultural District Master Plan for urban planning and development. Subsequent reports and urban planning aimed to chart the long term direction for the city's growth.

(see *Charting New Directions*, p. 22)

Build in Some Flexibility

When land was limited, traditional spaces and facilities were adapted to cater for culture and the arts. Libraries were incorporated into shopping malls frequented by crowds, and theatre and workshop facilities were incorporated into library buildings and community centres. Within the Esplanade, where plans to build mid-sized theatres were postponed, corridor spaces, corners and atriums were curated to showcase the arts to the public.

(see *Expanding Space for the Arts*, p. 63)

Dynamic Urban Governance

Lead with Vision and Pragmatism

Political leaders and senior public service officers championed a vision for Singapore's arts and cultural growth. The late President Ong Teng Cheong led the first blueprint for the arts, and former Minister George Yeo led the realisation of the city's major cultural institutions and projects in the 1990s. Public agencies in turn sought to work with industry leaders to envision and execute future artistic and cultural developments. This included the year-and-a-half-long consultations with artists and practitioners through the sector-led Arts and Culture Strategic Review (ACSR).

(see *Looking Ahead*, p. 85)

Involve the Community as Stakeholders

Over the years, there was increasing involvement of the artistic community and public support in the planning and development of arts and culture in the city, with its share of successes and challenges in the engagement process. Urban plans and programmes also sought to involve all types of audiences, to make arts and culture a more integral and integrated part of everyday life.

(see *Long Term Planning for the Civic District*, p. 90)

OVERVIEW

A thriving city is made up of not just buildings and businesses, but also of people and their ways of life.

To build a liveable city, planners and policymakers need to carefully consider the role and development of culture, and ensure that these considerations are embedded in the early stages of urban planning and progress. Culture is intricately linked to all aspects of political, economic and social life. A city's culture is revealed from the way it is planned, built, developed and adorned. Each choice made by a government and its people indicates what they care about and their values, from the creation of innovative and sustainable developments, to the protection of heritage and nature, to the fostering of empathy and respect amidst growing diversity. In turn, all these factors influence how residents live, work, play, learn and care.

Over time, culture and the arts cultivate the physical and emotional identity of a city. They shape the colour and character of the urban landscape, inspire thought and stimulate action, challenge norms and provoke minds. As an expression of collective memory, culture reinforces a people's rootedness and identity, and so strengthens the resilience of the people in the face of upheavals and disruptions. A shared culture that fosters and celebrates respect for the histories and values of its people facilitates common dialogue and mutual understanding across ethnic, religious and social groups.

This Urban Systems Study documents Singapore's journey towards shaping the urban development of culture and the arts. In Singapore's early years of independence, national artistic and cultural initiatives were employed to strengthen the common bonds of nationhood amongst the various ethnicities and cultures of an immigrant society. However, coordinated state support for cultural development was relatively ad hoc, until the landmark 1989 Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts cemented Singapore's vision and approach for more systematic development of the arts and culture. Subsequently, the state-led Renaissance City Plans elevated the city's ambition to be a global, cosmopolitan, cultural capital, and the sector-led Arts and Culture Strategic Review continued to put forward recommendations for the city's cultural development.

Over the years, government agencies have worked across the urban planning, cultural, economic and education sectors, championing infrastructural development, programmes and funding behind the scenes, weighing the trade-offs and implementing change. They have also sought to engage the ecosystem of stakeholders and patrons across sectors to garner feedback, support and collaboration. These efforts have had their share of successes and setbacks.

Strong infrastructural development has been the bedrock of Singapore's growth; however the provision of physical space alone cannot foster a creative and cultured city. Equally important has been the need to educate and nurture the sensibilities and skills required for culture and the arts to enliven the environment and economy, and ultimately improve society's well-being and quality of life. Throughout the decades, the arts has provided an avenue to promote a sense of national unity, diversify a fragile economy, and encourage creative talents to build a more vibrant, lively and gracious city. It has also been a focus of contestation, when the state had to navigate its ambition to be a distinctive Global City for the Arts amidst criticisms over the lack of physical and creative space for the local arts and cultural community.

To integrate culture into everyday urban life is to foster a more civilised, creative and resilient society, capable of expanding the people's imagination and passion to make a better city and home. The journey continues.

CHAPTER 1

BUILDING A NATION THROUGH THE ARTS (PRE-INDEPENDENCE TO THE 1980S)

“Singapore needs a harmonious, stable and evolving cultural environment... [where] the culture of the various communities can co-exist, interact with one another and eventually integrate with one another, thereby slowly and naturally evolving a distinctive national culture. This is our long term objective.¹”

S. Rajaratnam, former Minister of Culture

MINISTRY OF CULTURE

Singapore was often described by local and international critics as a “cultural desert”: a city lacking in vitality, vibrancy and artistic creativity. The city had existing cultural establishments which were legacies from the colonial era, such as the Capitol Theatre (one of Singapore’s first and finest cinemas), Victoria Memorial Hall (now known as the Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall), and the Raffles Library and Museum (now the National Museum of Singapore),² all of which would later serve as foundations for the city’s cultural scene. At that time, however, some of these institutions, which were primarily built for the British, had a perceivable lack of engagement with the various local cultures of the population. When the majority was concerned with basic livelihood, with the arts deemed high-brow pursuits for the elite, these places were akin to “dusty storehouses of moribund art”,³ hardly receiving any funding or visitors.

Be that as it may, Singapore in reality was rich in cultural life as a multi-ethnic society of people across geographies. Founded in 1819 as a British trading settlement, Singapore comprised immigrants from multiple

countries such as China, India, Indonesia, and further afield in the Middle East. There was no common culture to speak of, but within the various ethnic cultural groups, people continued to acknowledge and practice the heritage and beliefs of the countries and villages from which they originated, with the attendant cultural and religious buildings built over time to support their different customs. This did not go unnoticed; as early as 1937, a “Cultural Improvement of Singapore” charter was drafted under the “Friends of Singapore” society, comprising both colonial officers and local residents, to promote and preserve Singapore’s diverse artistic, historical and cultural institutions.⁴

When Singapore attained internal self-government in 1959, there was a fear of conflicts and discrimination arising among the various races and ethnicities. It was highly uncertain whether the transition from colonial rule would naturally lead to peace between the various communities. The government felt a need to create a common Malayan culture⁵ — a common identity and way of life that did not divide the communities, but instead encompassed the elements across the various cultures to which Singaporeans could relate, and one that they could call their own.

Thus the Ministry of Culture was established in June 1959, with Sinnathamby (S) Rajaratnam as Minister. Its task was to make “a conscious and deliberate effort to help shape a Malayan culture”,⁶ promote racial harmony, and achieve a sense of belonging where there was none. The arts was employed for this cross-cultural nation-building effort, guided by the policy to involve the major ethnic groups of the population, and to engage the everyday person on the street.⁷ Monthly “Art for Everyone” exhibitions were held at community centres throughout the island, and shows staged at the Singapore Conference Hall were made affordable to showcase the arts to as many people as possible.

Efforts were also made to promote the arts as a means to cultivate a sense of graciousness and aesthetic value, against the threats of supposed decadent and immoral lifestyle influences from Western popular culture. From 1959 to the 1980s, the Ministry of Home Affairs led campaigns against “yellow culture”, which were supported by the Ministry of Culture to build a healthy, “wholesome” Malayan culture. This included the banning of obscene publications which depicted nudity, violence and sex; forbidding rock ‘n’ roll music from the airwaves; and discouraging males from having long hair, given its association with deviance and hippie sub-culture.⁸

Literature, music and the fine arts, although exhibited selectively, also served a role in nation-building. It was hoped that these would cultivate civic consciousness and a sense of beauty and respect for one's environment, and reflect the values which would be ultimately meaningful for Singapore:

"A society that lives by bread alone cannot be perceptive to aesthetic values. Such a people regard art as a social redundancy. On the other hand, where gracious living for the people has become a social objective, and where the people as a whole have spontaneously taken to the cultivation of improved living in Singapore, art can become a living force. A pollution-free, green, clean Garden City will inevitably aestheticise our citizens... our sense of beauty will be sharpened and refined; and society will assume further colour and tone."⁹

Jek Yuen Thong, former Minister of Culture

SHOWS FOR THE PEOPLE

From 1959 to the early 1960s, a key initiative by the Ministry of Culture was a series of concerts across the island referred to as the "Aneka Ragam Ra'ayat". Loosely translated from Malay as the "People's Variety Show", these concerts comprised open air shows for the man on the street to enjoy, showcasing cultural performances from the different communities, mainly from the Chinese, Malay and Indian ethnicities into which the Singapore population was categorised.

The idea was seeded by then Minister of Culture, S. Rajaratnam. Rajaratnam sought to encourage a sense of harmony amongst the population, and to not confine the appreciation of music, arts and culture to a privileged few.¹⁰ Such artistic performances would serve as a medium for people to understand and appreciate one another's ethnic cultures to help foster greater tolerance and unity amongst the diverse population. In turn, greater tolerance could reduce serious concerns over the potential outbreak of racial conflicts in a fledgling nation where many different ethnicities lived in close proximity. In an era when bread-and-butter issues were foremost on people's minds, the shows were made free of charge to anyone who was keen to attend. To make them accessible to all ages and income levels, they were held not only in the city centre, but also in the city outskirts, in parks and rural areas of the island.

The Aneka Ragam Ra'ayat series debuted at the Singapore Botanic Gardens, and was opened by then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. This was a symbolic venue; just as imported flora had taken root in the Botanic Gardens and produced new strains on Singapore soil, Lee expressed hope that:

"... in the course of time, out of the interaction of our rich and varied cultures, we will be able to breed a new strain of culture — a Malayan culture... [The Aneka Ragam Ra'ayat] is part and parcel of our search for a national identity. Here, under open skies, Malays, Chinese, Indians will I hope, discover the materials for a national art and national culture."¹¹

Lee Kuan Yew, then Prime Minister of Singapore



Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew delivering his speech at the opening of the Aneka Ragam Ra'ayat at Singapore Botanic Gardens (1959).

Photo from the Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

The concerts were later brought to more rural areas, such as Bukit Panjang Village, where crowds numbered up to 7,000, comprising not just residents of the host village but also people from other villages (or 'kampung') who would travel to see the show.¹²

These performances were a noteworthy feat — state-supported multicultural performances on the same stage were a novelty at a time when many communities were insular. The Aneka Ragam Ra'ayat later took on more propagandistic tones, when performances were staged more frequently towards Referendum Day in 1962, with slogans, skits and banners urging audience members to vote for Singapore's merger with Malaysia.

THE THREE WORLDS

Beyond the open-air shows of the Aneka Ragam Ra'ayat, cultural performances as entertainment were also occurring in the leisure grounds of the city. From the 1920s to the 1970s and 1980s, the trio of amusement parks — New World, Great World and Happy World,¹³ located in Jalan Besar, River Valley and Mountbatten respectively — housed a myriad of activities and rides which were accessible and affordable for people of all ages and income levels. The fun and the risqué coexisted within these grounds, where visitors could enjoy the host of carousels, carnival games, hawker stalls and sporting matches. There were also cabaret halls where wealthier patrons could hire dance hostesses, watch vaudeville acts, or join social dances with live bands.

These venues were also regularly used for different cultural stage performances such as Peking Opera, Cantonese Opera, Malay '*Bangsawan*' (a type of Malay opera through improvised song and dialogue), and '*Wayang Kulit*' (a form of theatre through puppet shadow play). These shows featured not only epic myths and legends, but also prosaic yet entertaining stories of people's daily lives, hopes and anxieties.¹⁴ Besides theatre, park-goers could watch films

at the open air cinemas. As the world experienced the "Golden Age of Hollywood", the "Golden Age" of Malay Cinema blossomed regionally. Singapore was then a renowned centre for filmmaking in Southeast Asia, with the likes of legendary director P. Ramlee, and a slew of locally-produced films depicting comedy, drama and social commentary, under the studios (since folded) of the Shaw Brothers and Cathay Organisation.¹⁵

Later, the spread of television and radio, commercial cinemas and other dedicated arts and entertainment attractions rendered these parks obsolete. The three "Worlds", totalling about 9.2 ha of land, were eventually demolished and redeveloped for residential and commercial use.



The Globe Theatre at Great World Amusement Park in Zion Road (1962).
Photo courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

THE PEOPLE'S THEATRE

The Aneka Ragam Ra'ayat set the stage for Singapore as a more permanent home for performing arts in the city-state. Former Minister Rajaratnam imagined an iconic space for the people to commemorate the nation's self-governance, illustrate the rich cultures of the people, and be a place where Singaporeans, regardless of race or religion, could connect with and be proud as a nation. At a time when Singapore was forging its own path, he envisioned an enduring landmark in the social memories of Singaporeans,

"... not as different communities... but as a united people who are determined to be masters of their own destiny. [And] when the ceremonies are over... there will be a national theatre not only as a permanent reminder to us of a great event but also as a permanent reminder to future generations of what we, of today, have accomplished and handed to them."¹⁶

S. Rajaratnam, former Minister of Culture

This was the foundation for Singapore's National Theatre. It was Singapore's first independent theatre, funded by the government and the public, symbolising joint cooperation and commitment towards Singapore's development. A planning committee was formed, chaired by Rajaratnam, and the National Theatre Fund was launched during Loyalty Week of 1959, with people from all walks of life invited to contribute. The project met with initial scepticism; critics questioned whether people would be willing to part with their money for a cultural venue while their thoughts were focused on daily survival.

Fortunately, public response gradually warmed. Various campaigns and donation drives were run by supporters and voluntary organisations, including the well-known 1961 "Brick Sale" in which souvenir "bricks" were sold for \$1 each to raise funds.¹⁷ The National Theatre Trust was formed to manage the theatre development and steer its role as an institution for culture and the arts in Singapore and Southeast Asia. Due to the generous contributions by civic organisations and the general public, it came to be known as the "People's Theatre". By the time the theatre was completed, public contributions amounted to nearly 40% of the total budget required.¹⁸

Local architect Alfred Wong of AWP Pte Ltd submitted the winning design for the National Theatre, over four other local architects. His design was heavily influenced by the national flag — the red and white

five-pointed facade and the grand fountain at the theatre entrance represented the flag's five stars and crescent moon. The theatre was built next to the Van Kleeef Aquarium, between River Valley Road and Clemenceau Avenue.



Aerial view of the National Theatre (1985).

Photo courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

Officially opened on 8 August 1963, the 3,490-seat theatre (with an open lawn behind the seats catering for an additional 10,000 people) was the site of many local and international concerts and cultural performances. People could watch from under its distinctive cantilevered steel roofs; or, if they could not get tickets, climb along Fort Canning Hill just behind the open air theatre to catch a glimpse of the show.¹⁹ The theatre hosted university convocations, lectures and programmes at a low fee. Given its symbolic design and intent for national unity, it was also the perfect site for historic speeches and rallies. It bore witness to the Malaysian Solidarity Convention in early 1965 which was an attempt to salvage the merger between Singapore and Malaysia; and a decade later hosted the celebration for Singapore's 10th anniversary of independence.

In June 1983, a four-man committee was appointed to study the safety of the National Theatre structure as plans were under way to build an eight-lane expressway next to the theatre. The report found that its cantilevered

roofs, welded joints and general workmanship were structurally unsound, of substandard quality, or did not meet safety standards. The committee advised that the theatre should not continue to operate unless major repairs were undertaken to strengthen the roof structure, and the theatre was closed in January 1984.²⁰

The public provided mixed feedback to the press on the theatre's closure and possible removal. Some suggested it might be time to construct a new National Theatre as the existing one had lost its former ambience, comfort and relevance while incurring increasing maintenance costs;²¹ and it was also impacted by disruptive traffic noise and declining audience levels. Others vehemently argued for retaining the current theatre, given its unique historical significance. Eventually, the government announced its pragmatic decision to demolish the theatre, while acknowledging its contributions. It was torn down in 1986, with the 1,774-seat Kallang Theatre becoming the alternative venue for theatre performances.²² Today, heritage markers by the National Heritage Board, and a scale replica of the iconic facade by architectural historian Lai Chee Kien, which was placed during Singapore's 50th anniversary celebration, silently commemorate the People's Theatre.

HOUSING THE ARTS

The National Theatre was a landmark institution for Singaporeans; however, the arts were not solely concentrated within theatre walls. Artists desperately needed space to practice their craft before they could present their shows on the stage.

The Cultural Affairs division of the Ministry of Community Development (MCD)²³ surveyed artists and found that many were renting spaces within homes, schools and other temporary venues for rehearsals. Proper rehearsal spaces were wanting and appeals were made for existing arts facilities to be repaired. However, there was a misperception that artists already had adequate spaces of their own:

"In the mid-1980s, we went to the Ministry of Finance for money to do up the Far East Command College building in Fort Canning as an arts centre. Our request was rejected. I remember being asked, "Why do the artists need this when they've got the theatres?" My answer was, "nine to twelve months of work goes on before a show, and they're working at home!"²⁴

Juliana Lim, former arts administrator

In the 1980s, the Land Office under the Ministry of Law regularly circulated a list of disused government buildings which were available for rent, such as vacant school premises, with charity organisations being the main bidders for the listed spaces.²⁵ In 1985, MCD officers hatched an idea to transform disused buildings into affordable studios and rehearsal spaces for the arts, and the Arts Housing Scheme (AHS) was born. Some of the buildings were in a state of disrepair, and lease periods were short (typically three years). Despite these drawbacks, artists and arts groups made best use of this available space in land-scarce Singapore. Under the AHS, the Land Office²⁶ charged artists a heavily subsidised nominal rent of \$10 per month, with an additional sum for utility services. Artists bore the renovation costs, which could amount to over \$7,000 per unit, through donations and revenue from their activities.²⁷

The Telok Ayer Performing Arts Centre, formerly Telok Ayer Primary School, became the first arts housing space under the scheme, occupied by several performing arts groups for rehearsals, painting of props, equipment storage and the like.²⁸ More arts housing spaces soon followed, with the most well-known being The Substation, which is located within the Civic District along Armenian Street.²⁹



The former Telok Ayer Performing Arts Centre. The site has since made way for commercial development.

Photo courtesy of Choo Yut Shing, <http://flic.kr/p/6rRbsZ>, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

THE SUBSTATION: A HOME FOR THE ARTS

Transformed from an abandoned power station, The Substation was founded in 1990 by the late theatre practitioner and arts activist, Kuo Pao Kun, who envisioned the first multidisciplinary arts space for the local community, especially for budding artists, to create and experiment without fear of failure. With his bold vision of developing a distinctive Singaporean artistic repertory, The Substation was awarded the site of the former power station on Armenian Street.



Facade of The Substation at Armenian Street (1991).

Photo from the Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

Due to the high renovation costs, The Substation was the first site under the Arts Housing Scheme (AHS) to receive a grant to help adequately repair and refurbish the facility. A total of \$1.07 million was provided for the building's reconstruction, while the Practice Performing Arts Centre Limited (PPACL) bore the \$480,000 cost of retrofitting the building.³⁰ The Substation was officially opened on 16 September 1990 by then Minister for Community Development, Wong Kan Seng.³¹

Over time, The Substation became a gathering point for people across artistic disciplines. It has faced the challenges of being financially sustainable while remaining affordable and accessible to all arts groups.³² Some have also criticised The Substation for losing its position and relevance to the local arts community, for instance, due to the loss of adjacent spaces over time, such as the old S11 coffee shop in front of the former National Library building, as well as The Substation's garden. While slightly messy and less curated, these sites enabled ground-up place-making, spontaneous social and creative interactions, indie flea markets and musical performances, and a sense of community and vibrancy. Since then, the old National Library and S11 coffee shop have been demolished and the Singapore Management University constructed,³³ while the garden now houses a commercial food and beverage business.

Today, The Substation hosts a range of programmes and residencies to support local emerging artists, and houses facilities such as a 108-seat theatre, dance studio and classrooms. Despite its challenges, it continues to be an independent home for artists and the public to interact, explore and create.

After the AHS, the Semi-Residential Status in Theatre scheme (SRSIT) was launched.³⁴ Discussions between MCD officers and artist groups recognised that the development of professional and semi-professional groups had been hampered by the lack of rehearsal and performance spaces. High rental costs were a huge financial burden, and often the government grant provided to the artists would simply be used to pay the state for rental of theatres under MCD's care. The SRSIT was initiated to help alleviate this issue, and enable arts practitioners to produce more works of higher quality.

In essence, the scheme provided eligible artists up to 12 days annual rent-free use of one of MCD's theatres for rehearsals and stage performances, as well as priority booking of theatres a year in advance instead of the existing nine months. Later, these artists were exempted from entertainment tax, as long as proceeds were credited towards the groups' future performances. In return, artists were expected to stage a production every quarter, of at least three performances each, half of which should be new, and preferably local, works. They were also expected to achieve at least 75% attendance rates at each show.

To draw up these assessment criteria, MCD officers surveyed the capabilities of arts groups, including the activity levels of current MCD grant recipients and their attendance records. The SRSIT was granted based on the groups' artistic standards and performance records, and whether their needs could be met by MCD's theatres. Ineligible artists could apply for other MCD assistance schemes.³⁵ By improving the predictability of venue bookings and lowering costs, the SRSIT proved quite effective in promoting the growth and professionalism of theatre groups and local playwriting, although its terms were criticised for being too stringent.³⁶ As a "semi-residential" scheme, it also helped avoid the exclusive use of a venue by any one performing arts group.

SUPPORT FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Over the years, more initiatives were rolled out to provide greater exposure to the arts, not only to promote nation-building and provide entertainment, but also to enable a deeper sense of artistic engagement among Singaporeans.

Towards the late 1970s, advisory committees were appointed by the Ministry of Culture to guide the development of the arts in its various forms, such as the visual arts, literature, choral music, dance and drama. These committees comprised eminent artists and practitioners in the field and the move was a signal to the arts and culture community, and

to the public, that the government was committed to nurturing the soul of the city, now that bread-and-butter issues had largely been resolved. A Development Unit, under the Cultural Programmes Section of the Ministry, was set up in September 1986 to strengthen links with cultural organisations and determine their plans, capabilities and problems so that the necessary support could be offered. Dialogue sessions were held between the Ministry and cultural organisations, as a platform for feedback and discussion on how both sides could play a larger role in cultural promotion.³⁷ In future years, the production of annual events such as the Singapore Arts Festival, and the provision of grant schemes, encouraged the professionalisation of arts companies, helping them grow through conditional financial and publicity support.

In terms of education, long-standing private institutes, namely the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) which was founded in 1938 and later the LASALLE College of the Arts (LASALLE) which was established in 1984, offered classes and diploma programmes. Their affiliations with overseas universities allowed students to pursue arts-related degrees abroad. The former Baharuddin Vocational Institute was the first tertiary school offering vocational training in the applied arts, in areas such as graphic design, dressmaking and carpentry. It was believed that the graduating cohorts, equipped with artistic skills and aesthetic sense, could help strengthen Singapore's competitiveness by producing good designs for export.³⁸

Further initiatives were introduced within the formal education system, many of which still exist today. A dedicated Music Elective Programme (MEP), and subsequently the Art Elective Programme (AEP), allowed selected schools to offer music and art respectively as 'O' or 'A' level examination subjects. Helmed by the Ministry of Education (MOE), these programmes aimed not only to instil a sense of creativity and an appreciation of the arts, but also to train students' conceptual and critical thinking.³⁹ Beyond music and the arts, a Theatre Studies programme was established at the junior college and university levels. These programmes further embedded the value of the arts in Singapore's education system.

This growing emphasis on the arts and culture was made possible by enlightened national leaders who shared the vision for a more creative, cultured society. Former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the late Dr Goh Keng Swee, was one such leader. He emphasised that, in spite of its material success, the city should not overlook or neglect its artistic development. A lover of classical music, Goh remarked that Singapore's lack of a symphony orchestra was "a minor scandal". Ever practical, he also noted that a taste for the arts nurtured cultivated and rounded individuals, which was not without economic value for the nation's growth.⁴⁰

DR GOH KENG SWEE: AN EARLY CHAMPION FOR MUSIC AND THE ARTS

Dr Goh is often known as the architect of Singapore's economic development, but is perhaps lesser known for his ardent support for enriching the cultural life of the city.⁴¹ Efforts to persuade the formation of a professional orchestra had failed in previous years, until an opportune time in March 1978 when Dr Goh hosted a lunch with Lee Pan Hon, Singaporean violinist and head of the renowned Ulster Orchestra at the time. Invited colleagues included Ong Teng Cheong (at the time acting Minister of Culture), Joseph Yuvaraj Pillay (then Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Finance), Bernard Tan (then Head of the Music Department at National University of Singapore), and Tan Boon Teik (then Attorney-General of Singapore⁴² and who would later assist in the legal incorporation of the orchestra); all of whom heard from Lee about the orchestra and how it was managed. Dr Goh's strategy to obtain buy-in from his colleagues at the lunch proved successful, when a joint paper to Cabinet from the Ministries of Culture, Defence, Education, Finance and Law proposing a new orchestra was later submitted and approved.

This resulted in the formation of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) in 1979, with Dr Goh as Patron. The Victoria Memorial Hall, renamed the Victoria Concert Hall that same year,

completed extensive refurbishment and became the orchestra's home. Dr Goh's conscious decision to push for a national orchestra paved the way for the professionalisation of more performing arts groups, such as the Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO) and Singapore Dance Theatre (SDT). It also enabled the exposure of live classical music in Singapore, providing a chance for young talents to pursue their musical passions as a professional career.⁴³

As Member of Parliament for the Kreta Ayer constituency, Dr Goh was also supportive of the construction of the Kreta Ayer's People's Theatre (KAPT) at the Chinatown District, as a permanent space for Chinese arts and culture. Built in 1969 through public donations, and managed by the KAPT Foundation which was once chaired by Dr Goh, the theatre remains one of Singapore's important ethnic performance venues, keeping Chinese arts and cultural practices, in particular Chinese opera, alive.



Dr Goh Keng Swee being greeted on arrival at Victoria Concert Hall for a concert by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (1986).

Photo from the Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

A distinguished leader for the sector was the late Ong Teng Cheong, former President and Minister of Culture. He laid the foundation for further growth in the arts, and continues to be well respected by the arts community and the public years after his passing. A trained architect, Ong was also a skilled pianist, and was passionate about the arts and its value in uplifting the nation where,

"... cultural excellence will not only enhance the graciousness of our life-style but also help to strengthen the moral fabric of our society, since moral and ethical values are embedded in the traditional art forms."⁴⁴

Aware of the Ministry's constant struggle to obtain state funding for the arts, Ong established the Singapore Cultural Foundation, an endowment fund with the target to raise \$5 million to fund arts competitions, events, publicity and exhibitions, and support local talents. Beneficiaries included playwright Stella Kon and author Catherine Lim, who both later became icons of the Singapore arts scene.⁴⁵

The enrichment of culture, however, could not be solely the government's responsibility. The Foundation invited the public and corporations to make tax-exempted donations, and appointed a Funds Appeal Committee comprising 31 members across the business community, garnering generous private sector support for the nation's cultural projects.⁴⁶ However, playing "fairy godmother to the arts" was not all smooth sailing. The Foundation had to cope with applicants defaulting on their grant responsibilities, critiques on the extent of its influence, and constraints in funds and manpower in an environment where the arts were not considered a priority. Over the next 10 years, the Foundation evolved from a passive administrator of funds to a more active player, identifying deserving groups which needed money. It also became more stringent and consistent. Within its means, the Foundation assisted the establishment and upgrade of new organisations and facilities, and invested in local and overseas training, focusing on the ultimate benefits to the arts landscape.⁴⁷

Under Ong's charge at the Ministry, the Cultural Medallion was also established to publicly recognise Singaporeans who made important contributions to the arts and cultural scene, and uplift the status of the arts. Thereafter in 1983, the Ministry also established a Patron of the Arts Award to recognise organisations and individuals who had supported the work of the arts sector.

Ong would later become the architect of Singapore's first blueprint for the arts; a momentous leap forward for the planning and development of arts and culture of Singapore.

CHAPTER 2

UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF THE ARTS (THE 1980S TO 1999)

“ We have reached a stage in our economic and national development when we should devote greater attention and resources to culture and the arts in Singapore. Culture and the arts add to the vitality of a nation and enhance the quality of life. While the Government will do all it can... ultimately, it is people, as individuals and organised groups, who will make culture and the arts ‘come alive’.⁴⁸

Goh Chok Tong, former Prime Minister of Singapore

CHARTING NEW DIRECTIONS

The initiatives of the 1980s came at a time when Singapore was re-evaluating its strengths and directions. In the mid-1980s, then First Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and his team wrote a paper highlighting their ideas for the future of Singapore. With Singapore's basic needs satisfied, it was time to aim higher.⁴⁹ This document, released in 1984, came to be known as “Vision 1999”, a strategy for national excellence under which Singapore would aspire to have a developed economy, high educational levels, and a cultivated society.⁵⁰

Against this backdrop, in 1985 Singapore experienced its first economic recession since gaining independence. A high-level Economic Committee was formed, chaired by then Minister for Trade and Industry Lee Hsien

Loong, to address prospects for the nation's economy and define long-term strategies for sustainable growth. In its 1986 report the committee concluded that, apart from a weaker external economy, the construction slump, excessive savings and high business costs had eroded competitiveness and investor confidence. It was no longer sufficient for Singapore to be an industrial centre. A series of structural reforms was initiated to steer Singapore beyond the manufacturing sector.

At this time, the services sector was experiencing rapid growth and offered the greatest potential for Singapore to diversify and strengthen its economy. Policies were developed to nurture services exports and grow local capabilities and enterprises.⁵¹ The arts and entertainment was identified as a potential service category amongst 16 other categories, part of a larger push for the culture and entertainment industry to make Singapore a vibrant place in which to live, and attract tourists and highly skilled talent to its shores.⁵² The Ministry of Community Development (MCD) was tasked to oversee domestic policy developments, while the Economic Development Board (EDB) was tasked to attract international investments and promote the industry.⁵³

Within the EDB, a Services Promotion Division was established to oversee the expansion of the services arm, covering the spectrum from medicine and information technology to creative, leisure and exhibition services. Resources were injected to attract international investors, boost the development of necessary infrastructure, and encourage businesses to establish headquarters in Singapore. By 1990, the strategy to grow the services arm as a pillar for the economy was bearing fruit, and a Creative Services Strategic Business Unit was formed within the EDB to focus on grooming the creative sectors for the economy.

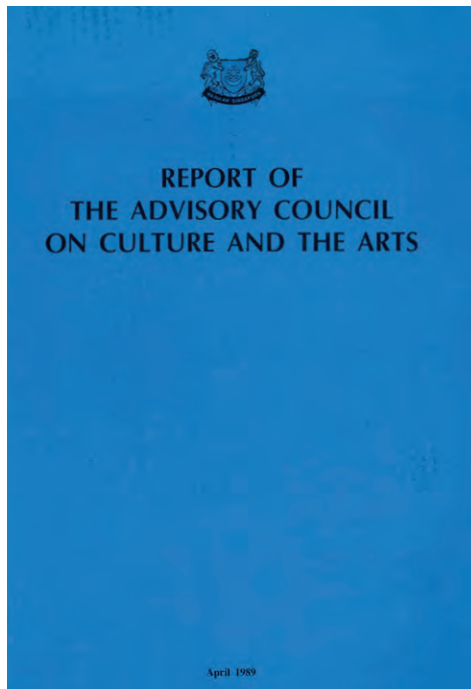
Officers within the MCD continued to push for arts growth, including setting up an internal database using surveys to track audience numbers and preferences. Still, the availability of funding for arts promotion was a significant challenge; in 1987, the combined budget for the Ministry's Cultural Affairs division, National Library, and heritage departments amounted to only 0.2% of the government budget. Private sponsors and other non-government sources contributed up to 90% of budgets for various arts and cultural activities.⁵⁴

This state of affairs began to change with the formation of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts (ACCA) in April 1988, appointed by the office of the first Deputy Prime Minister to review the current state of affairs for arts and culture, and make recommendations to transform Singapore into a culturally vibrant society by the new millennium.

A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH THROUGH A BLUEPRINT FOR THE ARTS

The formation of the ACCA was an unprecedented effort to take a holistic and systematic approach towards Singapore's cultural development. Chaired by then Second Deputy Prime Minister Ong Teng Cheong, ACCA comprised leaders from the public and private sectors who were dedicated to advancing tripartite cooperation between the government, corporate and civic organisations, and the public at large. It assessed the progress made to support the arts, preserve the city's heritage, and promote reading habits among the populace, and proposed measures to encourage a more well-informed, creative and gracious society, sensitive to its multicultural makeup and heritage.⁵⁵

Under ACCA, four committees, 25 subcommittees and various working groups were established to study the specific areas of heritage, literary arts, performing arts and visual arts. Over the next year, more than 130 meetings were held between ACCA and its committees and working groups. Field trips and dialogues were held with over 200 representatives from the arts and media industries, and interested parties were invited to send their feedback and suggestions to ACCA.

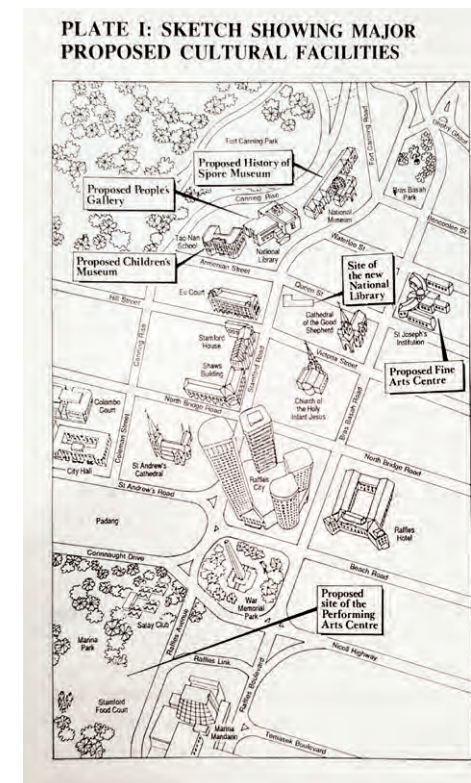


The ACCA, chaired by the late President Ong Teng Cheong, comprised the following members: Robert lau; Tay Kheng Soon; Prof Edwin Thumboo; Yeo Seng Teck; Arun Mahizhnan; Chia Kee Koon; Hawazi bin Daipi; Er Kwong Wah; Leslie Fong; Ho Kwon Ping; Haji Suhaimi Jais; Koh Cher Siang; Loy Teck Juan; Wong-Lee Siok Tin; and Dr Vincent Yip.

Image from the Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts (1989).

During the exercise, the committees did a stocktake of existing amenities and activities for the arts and culture, identifying the gaps and possible solutions. They recognised that there was only a small pool of Singaporeans with a sustained interest in the arts and culture, which was due to a lack of knowledge or awareness. Despite this, leadership was committed to shift public attitudes and habits, and foster an interest and appreciation in the arts over time. This required several improvements: streamlining public organisations which oversaw policies on the arts, heritage and culture; providing more purpose-built cultural facilities and infrastructure; improving the education system; and increasing assistance to the arts.

The ACCA's eventual report became Singapore's first blueprint for the arts, cementing the foundation for the rich arts and cultural offerings of the city today. It also became affectionately known as the "Ong Teng Cheong report", with many recognising Ong as the mastermind who championed the value of culture and the arts, and its place in national development.



The report proposed for major cultural facilities in the city centre.

Image from the Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts (1989).

LEADING THE CHARGE

While in the past the arts were practiced within different ethnic communities, or employed to support nation-building ideals, the ACCA report now brought arts and culture to the fore. The government was ready to integrate and plan for the arts and culture on a national scale to achieve a better quality of life for society.⁵⁶ The report marked a turning point for the sector, leading to the formation of key institutions for more coherent policy-making and development of the arts and culture.

The Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA) was established on 28 November 1990, merging the arts and heritage divisions of the MCD and the information divisions of the Ministry of Communications and Information. George Yeo, who was then beginning his political career as Minister of State for Finance and Foreign Affairs, served as MITA's first Minister until 1999. As a patron of the arts since 1988, Yeo's tenure was defined by rapid progress in the arts, heritage and reading landscapes, to realise the vision of ACCA.



Minister for Information and the Arts George Yeo unveiling the MITA logo at the 1993 annual dinner and dance. The logo was designed by Yeo as a stylised representation of the Taoist *yin* and *yang*, in green (representing nature) and red (representing the life of civilisation).

Photo from the Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives Singapore.

The National Arts Council (NAC) was formed in September 1991 as a statutory board under MITA. It merged the functions of the Cultural Services Division of MCD, the Singapore Cultural Foundation, the Festival of Arts Secretariat, and the National Theatre Trust; taking over the management of the existing Victoria Theatre, Victoria Concert

Hall, Kallang Theatre, and Drama Centre. The Council was vested with the statutory functions to promote excellence in the arts, provide an environment conducive to artistic practice, and encourage greater recognition and appreciation of the arts.⁵⁷ Over the next decade it would initiate numerous grant schemes to assist artists and arts groups, reach out to local audiences, and sharpen its international profile.

Later, the National Heritage Board (NHB) and the National Library Board (NLB) were established, in August 1993 and September 1995 respectively. The NHB was formed through the amalgamation of the National Museum, the National Archives and the Oral History Department,⁵⁸ with the mission to promote awareness and appreciation of Singapore's national heritage and its links with the world.⁵⁹ The NLB would become the custodian of knowledge in Singapore, with the mission to encourage reading and learning through its libraries and information services.⁶⁰

On the economic front, the EDB established the Creative Services Strategic Business Unit in January 1990 under the leadership of Dr Tan Chin Nam as as EDB's Managing Director. Dr Tan believed in the importance of the arts and creative manpower for the city's growth. Singapore already had a strong emphasis on logical "left brain thinking" through its focus on mathematics and science. There was now a dire need to nurture creative "right brain thinking" through the arts — this would not only foster "a collective force of well-rounded and cultured individuals", but the "fusion of arts, business and technology" through the integration of both "left and right brain thinking" would create tremendous value and innovation.⁶¹

The unit, headed by Mr Raymond Kesavan as Director, led the investment promotion of Singapore as a creative hub, targeting global players in film and music, design, media, arts and entertainment. A blueprint known as the "Creative Services Development Plan" was drawn up in 1991, when 17 task forces for these four sectors brainstormed and implemented ways to market, facilitate and develop Singapore into a global arts hub.⁶² As former EDB senior officer Christine Khor recalled, the mood was energising:

"My mission became 'arts for economy's sake', to complement the National Arts Council's (NAC) agenda of 'arts for arts' sake'. What was — and is — unique about the EDB is its dynamic mix of strategic planning and daring to do. I felt this coursing in my blood daily. Energy levels were always so high in EDB, the sky was literally the limit. So we began to dream and to flesh out our dreams, inspired by our leaders."^{63,64}

The unit's functions subsequently shifted to the Lifestyle Services division of the Singapore Tourism Promotion Board (STPB),⁶⁵ where Dr Tan later served as Chief Executive, to continue promoting the arts and creative industries for growth.

PLANNING FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Alongside organisational changes to governmental institutions, plans were set in motion to meet the growing need for cultural and entertainment venues in the city, and enliven the urban landscape for culture and the arts.

The 1986 Conservation Master Plan by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) was the city's first conservation plan, laying the foundation for urban conservation to be accepted and to succeed in Singapore. Entire districts were conserved in the Central Area, and buildings were gazetted for conservation or underwent adaptive reuse. Private developers were offered incentives to facilitate this progress. While trade-offs had to be made between economic and heritage objectives, the exercise proved that urban conservation could be successfully balanced with redevelopment.⁶⁶ This helped shift development priorities towards more intangible cultural values,⁶⁷ and paved the way for a more detailed master plan in 1988, drafted specifically for the Civic and Cultural District.

Known as the birthplace of modern Singapore, the 105 ha Civic District, bounded by the Singapore River, Clemenceau Avenue, Orchard Road, Bras Basah Road and Esplanade Park, housed a wealth of architecturally and historically important buildings dating back to the colonial era. These included the City Hall and Supreme Court, the Istana, Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall, the National Museum and the former St. Joseph's Institution, all of which have become key institutions for culture, heritage and the arts today.

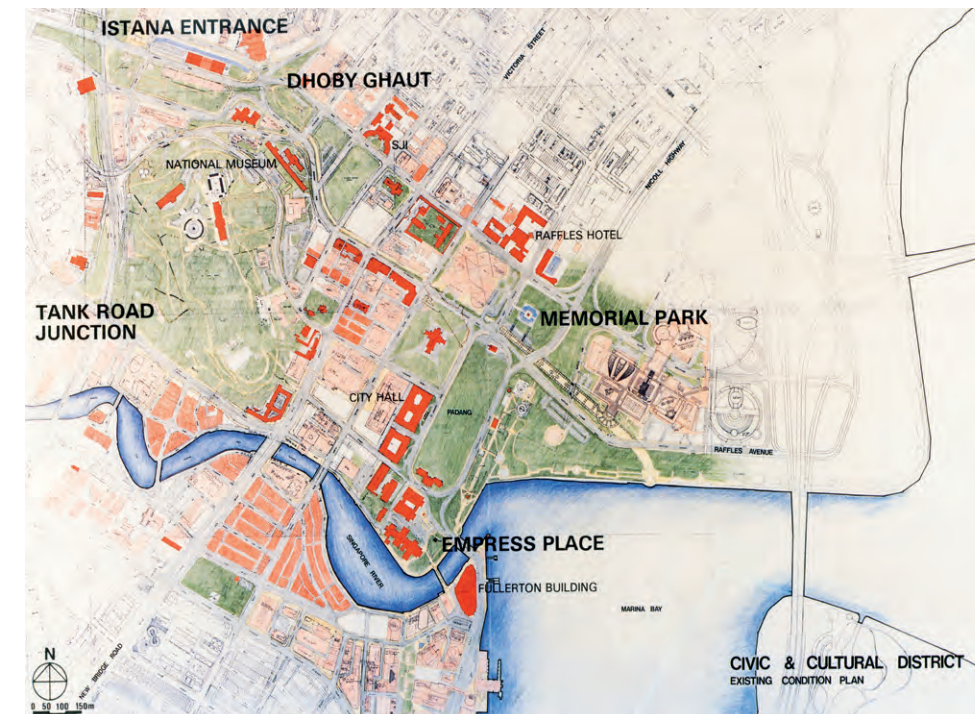
Despite its wealth of physical assets in the form of unique European neoclassical buildings and wide green spaces, the Civic District was very much underutilised or in a state of dilapidation; a far cry from popular developments along the nearby Orchard Road corridor and Marina Centre.⁶⁸ There was a need to revitalise the district, link it seamlessly with surrounding zones, and enhance its identity as a historic and cultural hub.

A systematic design process was adopted. The master planning process began with a thorough evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the district. Besides its rich built heritage, the district was already a centre for cultural and recreational activities, with open spaces and landscaped parks and a network of roads and trains servicing the area. However, this was marred by issues including inaccessible landmarks, disjointed routes, and weak landscaping where the grandeur of historical buildings was obscured by greenery. There was also a lack of good urban design. The overt presence of utilitarian bus stops, car parks and complex traffic junctions conflicted with the elegance of the surrounding buildings.

Planners also studied how other cities implemented planning systems in their historic areas, such as Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington D.C. which links the White House to the Capitol Building, as well as the Embankment along the River Thames in London.

Following this evaluation, a three-pronged approach was adopted: to define the Civic District into eight key identity zones characterised by their layout and function; to connect these zones through a strong network of linkages, including a ceremonial route for official events and dignitaries, a heritage link and historical trails through Fort Canning Park and the Bras Basah area; and to retain the district's traditional character through sensitive treatment, ensuring that new developments blended in with existing buildings.

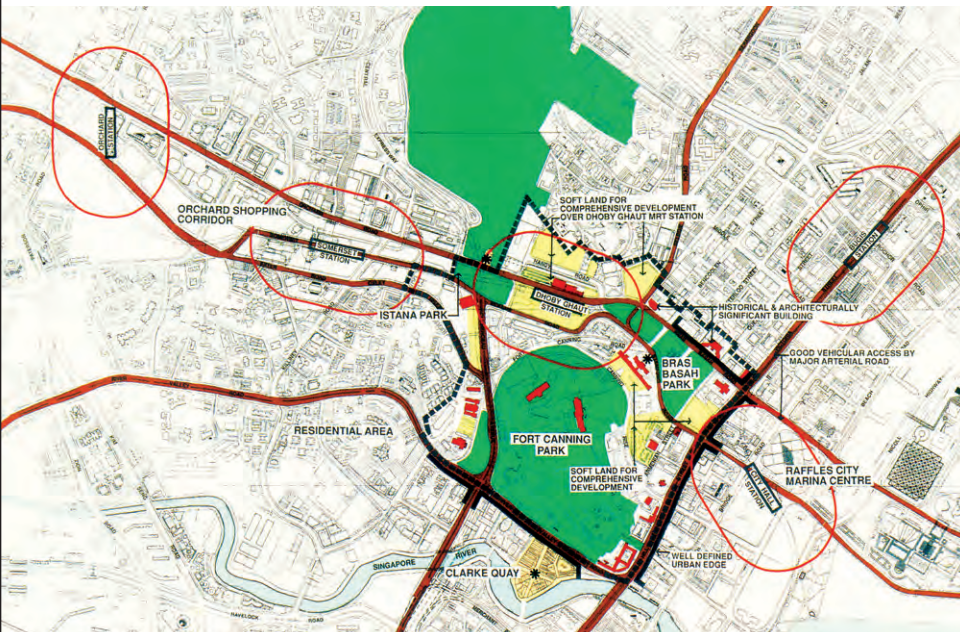
The draft plan also laid out a strategy to execute the rehabilitation in phases, with funds partly drawn from the national \$1 billion Tourism Product Development Plan for the restoration and upgrading of historical areas to boost Singapore's appeal.⁶⁹



The Civic and Cultural District Master Plan (1988).
Image courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority. All rights reserved.

This was URA's first guide plan released to the public, and a major public engagement exercise to determine the future of the heart of Singapore. Then Deputy Secretary for the Ministry of National Development (MND), Lim Hng Kiang, remarked, "ideas are not the monopoly of civil servants", in recognition that the private sector and the public wanted to participate more in the city's development.⁷⁰ A two-week-long exhibition was held to garner public feedback, as well as dialogue sessions with over 160 professional architects, city planners and professional bodies,⁷¹ before the Civic and Cultural District Master Plan was finalised in 1991.

The plan was later complemented by the Museum Development Guide Plan (DGP)⁷² in 1997, guiding detailed land use planning and development for the museum planning area within the Central Area, bounded by the Orchard corridor, River Valley and adjacent Rochor. The Museum DGP delved into the historical background, strengths and weaknesses of the 83 ha area, before recommending its enhancement as the "Institutional Hub and 'Green Lung' of the Central Area".⁷³ The proposals aimed to safeguard sites for future institutional use, improve pedestrian accessibility to open spaces and parks, and enable special controls for gazetted national monuments, conservation buildings and architectural projects within the precinct.



Strengths and Opportunities Plan of the Museum Planning Area (1997).
Image courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority. All rights reserved.

The Civic and Cultural District Master Plan contributed to the larger and longer-term Concept Plan in 1991. "Living the Next Lap: Towards a Tropical City of Excellence" was a comprehensive development strategy intended to guide the city's physical planning and growth up to year "X", when the population would reach four million, and help realise a city balancing work and play with culture and commerce.⁷⁴ Supporting the Concept Plan was a document named the Culture Master Plan.

According to then Section Head of Urban Planning at URA, Michael Koh, the Culture Master Plan was a year-long study carried out within the URA in 1991, as part of the Concept Plan review, to recommend suitable planning provisions for cultural facilities in Singapore. Surveys from the flagship Singapore Art Festival found that there had been a four-fold increase in arts group participation over the previous decade, as well as an increase in public participation in festival events. It was forecast that, as Singapore reaches year "X" with its associated population and tourism growth, people would become more educated, affluent and mobile. This correspondingly meant that there would be a much higher demand for arts and cultural facilities within the city.

As part of the study, the team examined case studies of international cultural centres, including Hong Kong, New York, Barcelona, Greater London, and Glasgow. It found that the making of a successful and vibrant cultural district required a combination of factors, such as proximity to transport nodes, retail outlets and restaurants; ease of walkability of the district; availability of a critical mass of facilities for international, regional and national activities; as well as opportunities for adaptive reuse of disused buildings. In addition, a comparison revealed that Singapore was lagging behind these cities in the standard of its provisions for the arts and culture. As a result, it was proposed that the city aim to achieve at least similar planning standards to those of Glasgow, which had a similar population size to Singapore and was selected in 1990 as the European City of Culture.

Given future planning scenarios under the Concept Plan, more facilities needed to be built across the island. The Concept Plan argued for half of the city's cultural facilities to be located within the Central Area as it was believed that this would help build a critical mass of specialised facilities, able to attract and sustain renowned international and nationwide events, facilitate the exchange of ideas, and allow the arts to flourish. The other half of the facilities could be decentralised and distributed amongst regional and town centres to locate such facilities closer to residents; and these facilities could cater for more community-oriented activities and recreational arts in public spaces, where there were lower operational costs and a smaller audience catchment.

A stocktake of existing arts and cultural spaces was carried out, and the land take requirement for each category of facilities was computed to determine future site selection and distribution. Based on the projected need and distribution, the plan proposed for sites to be safeguarded for cultural facilities, and proposed incentives for private developers to provide such facilities. State-owned buildings, originally intended for residential and commercial use, were instead identified for adaptive reuse into arts practice and learning facilities. Site selection criterion for proposed cultural facilities were made clear, such as proximity to major transport nodes, pedestrian routes and parking provisions; being able to support shopping and food and beverage areas; compatibility to surrounding land uses; and having a sufficient catchment area to sustain the facility.

The Culture Master Plan was eventually handed over from URA to MITA for further study. A number of ideas within the plan, such as safeguarding sites and conserving buildings for the arts, and distributing cultural facilities beyond the Central Area, would later be realised. Other ideas within the plan which have yet to be realised include the restoration of old buildings as “House Museums” at historic districts and the heartlands,⁷⁵ intended to commemorate the culture and history of these areas beyond the city centre and close to residents’ homes.

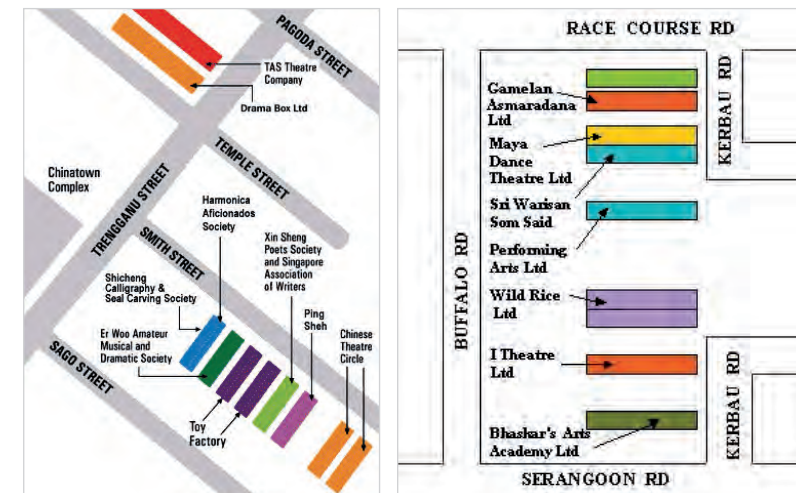
RETAINING THE OLD

Within the NAC, an Arts Facilities Advisory Committee was formed in 1993, led by Council Board Member and former URA Chief Planner, Dr Liu Thai Ker, to advise on the planning and development of facilities for the arts. NAC officers worked closely with URA over the next few years, linking arts housing with conservation planning where pre-war bungalows and disused shophouses were adapted for reuse. The NHB was closely involved in the development and management of these conserved buildings.

From a more ad-hoc approach to arts housing in the past, the agencies now began identifying key areas in which the arts could locate and help revitalise those areas. This began with the Waterloo/Rochor district for the arts. Historic buildings at Selegie Road and Waterloo Street were occupied by the Chinese Calligraphy Society of Singapore, Dance Ensemble Singapore, and the Young Musicians’ Society Ltd. By 1999 the entire Waterloo Street Arts Belt was completed, with the opening of Sculpture Square at the former Baba Church building on Middle Road. A

refurbished pre-war bungalow on 42 Waterloo Street served as the home for the ACTION Theatre, equipped with a 112-seat studio theatre, outdoor performance spaces and rehearsal classrooms.⁷⁶ When all the available historical buildings along Waterloo Street had been used, agencies turned their focus to available spaces by the river. Old warehouses along Robertson Quay were identified and converted into spaces for the arts, where the Singapore Repertory Theatre, Theatreworks, and the Singapore Tyler Print Institute are now located, offering arts activities by the Singapore River.⁷⁷

More arts belts were established along Chinatown and Little India to inject vibrancy to the cultural districts and enable exchanges and interactions between artist tenants. These cultural districts blended the arts and heritage, and embodied the city’s cultural wealth, diversity and legacies. Rows of shophouses were converted into venues for traditional, modern and avant-garde arts groups. Spaces were provided for smaller local ethnic arts groups, and western style artistic activities. Along Smith Street in Chinatown, troupes specialising in Beijing and Teochew Opera became neighbours to calligraphy artists and poets; while Kerbau Road at Little India today houses two of Singapore’s foremost Indian and Malay ethnic arts groups, Bhaskar’s Arts Academy and Sri Warisan Som Said, alongside contemporary artists and the established local theatre practice W!LD RICE.



Maps of Arts Belts in Chinatown (left) and Little India (right).
Images courtesy of National Arts Council.



The former Tao Nan School building, which housed the Asian Civilisations Museum. Today, it is home to the Peranakan Museum.

Photo from the Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

There was also prominent re-use of old school buildings to house the arts. In 1998 NAC successfully converted the former Telok Kurau West Primary School into Telok Kurau Studios, the first visual arts studio complex providing over 20 artists and groups an affordable space to gather, collaborate and exhibit their works. On a grander scale, two other old school buildings became significant landmarks, marrying the arts, heritage and culture within the Civic and Cultural District — the former St. Joseph's Institution which was transformed into the Singapore Art Museum (SAM), and the former Tao Nan School on Armenian Street which first housed the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) from 1997, and later the Peranakan Museum since 2008.⁷⁸ Both school buildings were gazetted as national monuments, in 14 February 1992 and 27 February 1998 respectively.

The 1990s was marked by a rapid expansion of the arts and cultural sector. By the end of the decade, the number of arts housing facilities grew from nine to over 30 buildings, offering spaces for 71 arts groups and artists. Where there had been only two museums in Singapore since the mid-1800s,⁷⁹ within the span of just a decade in the 1990s several more national museums and arts and heritage institutions were established under MITA, NAC and NHB's watch, such as SAM, ACM, the Singapore Philatelic Museum and the Ng Eng Teng Art Gallery.⁸⁰

Housing cultural facilities within old buildings was no easy feat, however, as the decades-old structures required meticulous and costly repairs and conversion. For instance, the ACM at Armenian Street, which aimed to showcase the arts and heritage of cultures in Singapore and across Asia, faced a host of issues on a limited budget, such as the installation of proper climate control and security facilities, and staff had to perform multiple roles.⁸¹ Its next home at Empress Place Building, which once housed a Chinese history museum from 1989 to 1995, would take another seven years to renovate and complete because of the complex and costly engineering works involved to sensitively convert the building. This was a frustrating delay, but it presented an opportunity to build up a good collection of artworks and artefacts, rely less on loans from private collectors and prototype smaller exhibitions at its existing location before curating larger displays at Empress Place.⁸²



Interactive art installation by Chinese artist Deng Guoyuan inside the Singapore Art Museum, for the Singapore Biennale 2016 titled "An Atlas of Mirrors".

Photo courtesy of Choo Yut Shing, <https://flic.kr/p/Rh7jz8>, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.



The Asian Civilisations Museum at Empress Place today.
Photo courtesy of Lucian, <http://flic.kr/p/65bVfk>, CC BY-NC 2.0.

Yet, in the mid-1990s, there was a perceptible lack of interest in and awareness of the value of arts, culture and heritage, by both the media and the general public. Dr Kenson Kwok, Founding Director of the ACM, recalled that some people thought the exhibits were only replicas, while others were unable to fathom that Singapore could be in a position to display renowned, high quality works, despite all the efforts to secure significant collections worth over \$100 million in total. In particular, the team tried to persuade many Hong Kong collectors to relocate their collections to Singapore during the 1997 handover of Hong Kong to China, when there was palpable uncertainty over Hong Kong's future. Dr Kwok lamented,

“We really busted our guts to get really top quality loans from Hong Kong... [but a] reaction to our new museum — in a way disinterest, certainly from the point of view of the media. Because I will never forget that when we opened Armenian, there was a tiny article about maybe three by two inches in size in the papers... So, I was so angry with this because I know that it's very rare that a new museum opens in any city..

There may be some lack of awareness in just how significant a museum opening is. Because a brand new museum opens very, very infrequently. After all there was no new museum opening in Singapore since the Raffles Museum and Library opening in the late 19th Century.”⁸³

Despite the challenges, the successful conservation and adaptive reuse of iconic historic buildings in the 1990s would later bolster efforts to retain the landmark, classical-style Supreme Court and City Hall buildings for culture and the arts. The opening of these buildings as a national gallery for Singapore and Southeast Art in the 2000s became a widely anticipated event for the media and the general public.

A HOME FOR THE MINISTRY

Another significant building which was retained in the late 1990s was the Old Hill Street Police Station, located at the junction of River Valley Road and Hill Street. Officially opened in 1934, it was the largest government building in Singapore and had been used by one of the city-state's oldest government bodies, the Singapore Police Force. Its 2.5 ha floor space served as a police station with offices and lodgings for inspectors and constables, and then in the 1980s it was occupied by various government organisations.⁸⁴ Given its historical significance and striking neoclassical architecture, the building was gazetted as a national monument on 18 December 1998.



Old Hill Street Police Station (1982).

Photo from the Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.



Old Hill Street Police Station today.

Photo courtesy of National Heritage Board.

Former Minister of Ministry of Information and the Arts, George Yeo, took a keen interest in the conservation and reuse of old buildings and, when the building was made available for reuse, he decided the building should be converted into the headquarters for MITA, despite some scepticism from ministry staff. Compromises had to be made. As a former police station, the building had a grand, formidable presence, intended to intimidate unlawful labourers and criminals. With the change of use, alterations were proposed to make the building appear friendlier and more accessible to the public.

However, the Public Works Department (PWD) resisted the proposed alterations to the conserved building, so Yeo suggested painting the window shutters along the facade to brighten it. His original idea was to allow officers to choose their own colours from a palette, and decide with fellow colleagues how they would like to coordinate and paint the window shutters.⁸⁵ Eventually, after he left to head the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the 927 window shutters were painted to achieve the distinct, rainbow-like appearance seen today.

BUILDING THE NEW: ESPLANADE, THEATRES ON THE BAY

While efforts were made to adapt historical buildings and expand existing facilities, there was also a strong push to construct new, specialised infrastructure for the arts and culture. One defining achievement following the 1989 ACCA report was the building of a national performing arts centre — known today as the iconic Esplanade, Theatres on the Bay.

The idea was mooted back in the 1970s, when then Minister for Culture, Ong Teng Cheong, shared his desire for an arts centre for local arts and cultural activities to flourish.⁸⁶ There was a dire need for new performing arts venues; the existing Victoria Theatre and Drama Centre were ill-equipped for large-scale professional performances, while arts groups also had to make do with venues such as conference halls, which were not designed to stage arts performances. With the release of the ACCA report, coupled with “The Next Lap” national development plan for the next 20 to 30 years, the government finally decided to proceed to build the Esplanade.

This would become one of the most ambitious projects in Singapore’s evolution as a vibrant global hub for the arts. Prior to the ACCA report, the Ministry of Community Development hired Richard Brett of renowned theatre consultancy, Techplan, to provide advice on what such a project would require. A number of locations were proposed, including the site of the current National Library. Finally, a site at the developing Marina Bay was earmarked for a grand performing arts centre.

Upon endorsement of the ACCA recommendations, a steering committee was formed to guide the centre’s development, with Ong as Chairman. The committee knew that the centre had to be iconic, incorporate both Western and Eastern influences, and suit its function as a place for the artistic community and the public.⁸⁷

Trips were made to renowned arts centres and concert halls around the world,⁸⁸ to learn from them, generate project ideas and concepts, and decide on the best acoustic and theatre consultants for the project. The committee learnt the importance of appointing acoustic consultants early, to work with the architectural team on the centre’s design. In 1992, acoustician Russell Johnson of Artec Consultants (USA), and theatre planner David Staples of Theatre Project Consultants (UK) were appointed. They were intimately involved in the project, from the initial briefings to architectural firms to ensuring the Esplanade rivalled world-class venues and their exacting acoustical standards.

The Singapore Arts Centre Company⁸⁹ was incorporated under the NAC, working closely with the international consultants and the joint architectural team (Singapore-based DP Architects and London-based Michael Wilford and Partners⁹⁰), to oversee the project’s implementation. The steering committee then formed three Advisory Groups — Design and Aesthetics, Commercial, and Users — the latter serving as the interface between the committee and the performing arts community during the consultation process.

When Ong became President of Singapore, Minister George Yeo took over as steering committee chairman. Ong remained as an advisor at Yeo’s invitation. According to Yeo,

“[Ong] had a great respect for the individuality of the architects... on the big things, he would state his views. And when architects made their presentations, many of us would instinctively want to talk about details, but he would just make his points and leave it to the architects to work out the expressions, respecting them as professionals and as artists... So that impressed me, that... to work well with artists, you have to respect them as artists. When you commission someone to do a work, you can give your views, but if you start saying ‘I want this but I don’t want that’, then you might as well not have had an artist do it for you.”⁹¹



President Ong Teng Cheong being greeted by Minister for Information and the Arts George Yeo, upon arrival for the exhibition of the new arts centre, the Esplanade (1994).

Photo from the Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

Built at a total cost of \$600 million, the project would take a total of 10 years to complete, from the early days of the Singapore Arts Centre Company (1992), to its design unveiling (1994) and ground-breaking ceremony (1996), through to the Esplanade's opening ceremony in 2002.⁹² Every detail for the centre was considered, from the acoustics, stage configurations, and quality of changing rooms, down to the provision of a mix of arts, retail and community uses within the complex.⁹³

The Esplanade faced its share of issues. The challenges of building on marine clay led to delays in construction and strained the budget. The high project costs also meant it could not rely on government funding. Many later credited Yeo's leadership for securing additional funds for the project. The construction of the Esplanade was eventually heavily subsidised by the then Singapore Pools Pte Ltd, a national public lottery body which is now a wholly owned subsidiary of the Singapore Totalisator Board (Tote Board). For many years, lottery tickets featured the image of the Esplanade Theatres, and proceeds were channelled towards its construction.

A key requirement was the provision of mid-sized theatres in the Esplanade, which could seat 500 to 900 people. Such spaces were crucial for the local arts community to showcase and sustain their works:

"What a lot of our groups need is not larger theatres, but smaller theatre which can seat between 400 to [sic] 600 people. They can't fill up the Victoria Theatre or the Kallang Theatre, but they can get full houses for three nights at a smaller theatre."⁹⁴

Roger Jenkins, former director of STARS Community Theatre

The initial model of the Esplanade provided for two medium-sized theatres (a 750-seat theatre and a 400-seat theatre), along with the larger 2,000-seat theatre and 1,600-seat concert hall. At the eleventh hour, a Cabinet meeting was called to deliberate the financial feasibility of the Esplanade and Yeo, who was overseas at the time, rushed back to Singapore to push for the project to be realised.

A decision was made to develop the Esplanade in phases, by building the largest spaces first and the mid-sized theatres later (at an indefinite stage). It was argued that the larger theatre and concert hall formed the centre's core, and that these had the capacity to draw the major

productions and audiences required to sustain the centre's operations. This, in turn, would fuel the growth of Singapore's arts and culture landscape. Yeo had to agree to this compromise, leaving the mid-sized theatres to be fought for at another time.⁹⁵ It was still important to establish the Esplanade as a step forward in Singapore's development for the arts, to have a venue of international quality, and reach out to the global arts community.

This did not sit well with the local arts community, who expressed vehement scepticism over the Esplanade's bias towards foreign and international acts. Professor Tommy Koh, Chair of the User Advisory Group at the time, was tasked to make the unfortunate announcement,

"This was the result of a last-minute compromise in the Cabinet, to which I was not privy. At the press conference, the announcement was very badly received. The local arts community was indignant and felt that I had betrayed them."⁹⁶

Following the completion of the first phase of the Esplanade's development, its management explored various means to fulfil the needs of the local arts community. It sought to provide an alternative arts space by converting its rehearsal rooms into black-box style theatres and recital studios. Open areas and corners became flexible arts spaces; the main entrance's concourse became a performance space in the evenings, while walls and corridor spaces were employed to showcase visual art and installations.

Today, the Esplanade has become a beloved destination in the city, a distinctive waterfront icon with its once-controversial "durian-like" spiked domes. Under the leadership of CEO Benson Puah and his team, it sought to be an arts centre for everybody, reaching out to diverse arts groups and audiences from all walks of life, and dispelling criticisms that it catered only to elite audiences and prestigious foreign shows. As Singaporean theatre practitioner and former Nominated Member of Parliament Janice Koh attested,

"Look at the Esplanade... There was a fear that it would stifle the multitude of voices, vacuum up resources and ticket sales, and wipe out smaller players. It has done none of those things. With the right management, you can create a major arts centre that fosters diversity and raises cultural literacy."⁹⁷



The Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay.

Photo by Mori Hidetaka, courtesy of Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay.

About 70% of the Esplanade's activities and programmes are free of charge, and the centre has established platforms to showcase and collaborate with local groups and emerging artists. Beyond art spaces, the Esplanade offers community and retail attractions to support a broader range of activities.

To Prof Tommy Koh, the decision not to include medium-sized theatres in the Esplanade was a grave mistake which led to misconceptions that the centre was built primarily to entice foreign investments and visitors, while marginalising the local arts community. He and others have urged the government to fulfil the centre's earlier vision.

There has been some progress. On 10 April 2017, the Esplanade announced plans to build a new 550-seat flexible waterfront theatre to meet local artists' needs and bridge the gap in performance venue sizes. The current government is able to fund one-third of the estimated \$30 million cost, and the Esplanade aims to stage fundraising activities and garner public support to cover the remaining costs. This is a welcome addition to other performing arts spaces that agencies have sought to provide over the years, including the highly-booked Drama Centre at Victoria Street, and for-hire medium-sized theatres housed within the campuses of LASALLE, School of the Arts, and the University Cultural Centre at the National University of Singapore.⁹⁸

FUNDING SUPPORT

Provision of physical spaces for the arts had to be complemented with funding and programming support for the sector's growth. The NAC introduced more than 14 financial assistance and grant schemes during the 1990s to support aspiring and established artists. These included seed money to form professional arts companies, annual and project grants to finance artists on a long-term or ad-hoc basis, grants to defray artists' overseas travel and training expenses, as well as scholarships and bursaries for students pursuing the arts. Film was also recognised as a core art form by NAC.⁹⁹ The Singapore Film Commission was established in 1998 with seed money to support the local film industry, and a project grant awarded for the Singapore International Film Festival to discover and develop local film talents through the Silver Screen Awards.

However, the available budget for financial support was limited, and this had to be spread thinly across all beneficiaries. NAC tried to sustain such funding, even in the face of the 1997/98 Asian Financial Crisis and economic downturn. Arts funding relied heavily on corporate sponsors, donors, patrons and philanthropists — groups that statutory boards continuously engaged and encouraged. Hearteningly, private donations increased over the years. Originally, individuals, businesses and associations had to donate a minimum of \$50,000 in any one year to qualify as a Patron of the Arts, and there was no scheme or award to encourage and recognise willing donors who wished to contribute smaller amounts. To remedy this, NAC introduced an Arts Supporter award for sponsors donating between \$10,000 and \$50,000. Such contributions were significant to the growing arts scene.

In addition to their continuing recognition of Patrons and Friends of the Arts,¹⁰⁰ the NAC formalised the Special Accounts scheme to facilitate fund-raising for arts groups, in which donations to arts groups would be channelled through the council to allow such donations to qualify for tax exemptions. In 1993, eight special accounts were opened with about \$310,000 in donations and, by 1999, a total of \$9.5 million in sponsorship for arts groups was channelled through 55 special accounts administered by NAC. Endowments and trust funds were also set up by the government to support flagship arts companies and cultural heritage collections.

The NHB further relied on corporate and individual benefactors for loans and donations of historically or culturally valuable artefacts, and launched the Patron of Heritage Awards in 2006 to recognise these contributions. Donations of artefacts valued at less than \$1 million qualified for single

tax deductions, while donations valued at more than \$1 million enjoyed double tax deductions. Foreign lenders qualified for Goods and Services Tax (GST) waivers while their collections were on loan to NHB. Within NHB, a business development unit was set up to explore joint projects and funding to market the city's culture, such as seeking to obtain corporate support from Prudential Assurance Company for the development of Singapore's first permanent heritage trail in the Civic District.¹⁰¹ Revenue opportunities were also sought through leases of facilities and spaces in museums, and the sale of limited edition items based on major ongoing exhibitions.

The state engaged in partnerships with the corporate sector, encouraging firms to sponsor arts and culture programmes as a form of strategic marketing and corporate social responsibility. One example was NAC's discussions with OCBC Bank that resulted in the launch of its Arts MasterCard in 1995, providing cardholders with privileges and discounts for shows and performances. This was mutually beneficial: it appealed to a viable consumer market segment for OCBC, promoted local support for the arts, and contributed a significant increase to corporate sponsorship by pledging a percentage of cardmembers' spending towards the arts.¹⁰² Another major partner was Shell, through its scholarships to arts students seeking to pursue full-time tertiary studies abroad, and its sponsorship of arts outreach activities with NAC. Through close engagement, these corporate partners continue to be long-standing supporters of the local arts and cultural scene.



The Patron of the Arts Awards continue to recognise the generous contributions by organisations and individuals to the arts and cultural development of Singapore.

Photo courtesy of Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth.

BETTING ON CULTURE AND THE ARTS

The Tote Board also plays a major role in public funding for culture and the arts. Established in 1988, this statutory board under the Ministry of Finance is vested with the legal right to oversee and regulate betting and gaming operations in Singapore under its proprietary agent, the Singapore Turf Club, which manages horse racing and totalisator operations, and Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, which manages sports betting and lottery operations.

The Tote Board tends to be associated with legalised gambling activity, through ensuring that the Singapore Turf Club and Singapore Pools conduct their businesses responsibly, but it may be lesser known that the Tote Board adopts a socially conscious mission: to provide equitable opportunities to vulnerable groups, build resilient communities, and enhance the quality of life for Singaporeans.¹⁰³ As directed under the Singapore Totalisator Board Act, surpluses generated from betting and gaming activities are channelled to the Tote Board to be distributed for “public, social or charitable purposes” such as education and health, as well as “for the promotion of culture, art and sport generally in Singapore”.¹⁰⁴

In fulfilling this function, the Tote Board has been an instrumental grant-making entity for the development of arts and culture in Singapore. The Board set up its first trust fund in 1989 for the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO), which subsequently paved the way for similar trusts for the Singapore Dance Theatre (SDT) and Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO) in the 1990s. The Board helped to fund major arts infrastructure, including the building of the Esplanade over seven years and its recurrent costs thereafter; the construction of the School of the Arts campus, Singapore’s first national pre-tertiary arts school; and refurbishment works in converting the old Supreme Court and City Hall buildings into the National Gallery Singapore.

The Tote Board continues to support the local arts scene today, and partners with the National Arts Council to administer the Arts Fund. The Fund is managed by an independent committee of arts specialists and administrators, which assesses performances and exhibitions for their artistic merit and ability to demonstrate benefits to the arts scene and community. Additionally, the Tote Board Arts Grant, launched in 1995, promotes arts appreciation amongst students and subsidises the cost of arts education programmes. It disburses the grant in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MOE) to mainstream and special education schools, while consulting with NAC on the official list of arts programmes eligible for the grant each year. These activities are either endorsed specifically under the NAC-Arts Education Programme (NAC-AEP),¹⁰⁵ also funded by the Tote Board, or under the broader category of Public Arts Programmes comprising more ad hoc public performances and exhibitions. In particular, a condition of the grant is that at least 60% of its annual amount allocated for schools must be used for programmes delivered by Singapore arts groups, in support of the local arts industry.



REACHING OUT

While resources were invested in infrastructure and in supporting artists, there was also a renewed focus on promoting arts and cultural appreciation for everyone. As related by former CEO of NAC Choo Thiam Siew,

*"It [was] time to shift the attention to audience development because you got artists, you got artwork but always the gallery is half-filled and the concert hall is 'half house'."*¹⁰⁶

The Singapore Festival of Arts continued to grow from the 1970s, through the 1980s and 1990s, as the largest calendar event for the arts community and the public. It comprised a mix of ticketed and free performances by professional and new artists, for arts enthusiasts and the general public to enjoy. The Festival of Asian Performing Arts (FAPA) was also introduced in 1993, merging various existing events¹⁰⁷ into one primary platform focusing on Asian artists and art forms. This provided a balance with the more Western-centric programming for the Singapore Festival of Arts. In 1999, the two festivals were merged into the Singapore Arts Festival, covering local, regional and international performances under one roof.

A slew of arts and cultural outreach programmes was also introduced, in partnership with corporate organisations. Often, such events were staged in public spaces and in the heartlands so that public enjoyment was not confined to typical arts venues. Such programmes were organised by NAC, working with various organisations, including Esso to bring concerts to parks, with M1 Limited to organise free jazz concerts, with NHB and Nokia Singapore to launch Singapore's first visual arts festival, and with TV12 and Raffles City to bring "Arts in the City" through free lunchtime performances in the Central Business District every first Friday of the month. NAC also launched a Community Outreach Grant to encourage arts groups to bring performances to the heartlands, public parks and community centres, and worked with long-time corporate partner, Shell, and grassroots organisations to bring the arts to housing estates under its Community Arts series.

These efforts complemented initiatives by the People's Association (PA), a statutory board which implemented arts and cultural activities through its grassroots network, in support of its overarching mission to promote harmony and social cohesion. Through its annual National Day Parade performances and Chingay Parades, the city's largest street performance and float parade, the PA played a key role in making arts and culture accessible, showcasing and celebrating the ethnic and cultural diversities of the Singapore population. To stimulate greater public appreciation for culture and heritage, the NHB organised travelling exhibitions and flagship

events such as Heritage Day, which waived museum admission fees and encouraged visitors to donate historical and cultural items, and oversaw the formation of the Museum Roundtable in 1996 to bring museums and heritage galleries closer to the public.¹⁰⁸ In addition, niche media channels were set up featuring wider coverage of local and international art and culture, such as television channel Arts Central and arts radio station PASSION99.5FM.¹⁰⁹

Efforts to reach out to the greater public went beyond national boundaries. Singapore also forged overseas ties through bilateral cooperation and cultural exchanges. Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) were signed with key cultural partners such as Scotland (Scottish Arts Council) and Australia (Arts Victoria), facilitating collaboration and a deeper mutual appreciation of each society's arts and culture. Singapore artists were able to carry out study visits, travelling exhibitions and performances to other cities, while foreign artists came to Singapore to practice, perform and exchange knowledge.

Culture, heritage and the arts was also employed as a form of cultural diplomacy for Singapore. An example was the staging of the blockbuster exhibition "Alamkara: 5000 years of India" at the ACM from 1994 to 1995, a result of cultural cooperation between Singapore and India, with Singapore cultivating its relations with India at the highest level. "Alamkara" enabled cross-cultural exchanges between top experts and curators in Singapore and India, showcased the rich and diverse history of Indian civilisation through art and artefacts, and drew a record number of 165,000 visitors, one of the highest attendances for a cultural exhibition in Singapore.

CREATIVE SINGAPORE

Could the arts and culture become an economic driver for Singapore's growth? Studies were carried out to estimate the economic value to Singapore of cultivating the arts and culture sector. Estimates by the NUS Centre for Business Research and Development suggested that every \$1 million spent on arts and cultural activities would generate 1.66 times that value to the economy, generating more incremental income than the banking industry (1.4 times) or the petrochemical industry (1.35 times).¹¹⁰

Singapore Tourism Board (STB) also commissioned a study to understand the impact of the arts and entertainment industry on Singapore's economy. This study, undertaken by Nanyang Technological University (NTU) from 1997 to 1998, estimated that, by 2002, every \$1 spent on the arts would generate an additional \$1.80 of income in related industries.

By this time, the EDB and Singapore Tourist Promotion Board (STPB) (later STB) had likewise identified the arts and creative sectors as sources of growth, and sought to attract investors, talent and audiences to Singapore. These economic agencies focused on industry promotion and tourist cultural policies, alongside Singapore's domestic efforts in urban planning and development for local arts and culture.¹¹¹

There was good reason to promote cultural tourism and arts-based industries in Singapore. Strategically located in the Asia-Pacific Region, the city serves as a transport and communications hub. Regional growth in the early 1990s encouraged arts-related entrepreneurs and businesses to come to Singapore due to its positive living and business environment, creating multiplier effects for the local economy. Having a more vibrant arts and culture industry would attract both tourists and creative talents, enhancing the city's economic competitiveness and quality of life.¹¹²

In pursuit of this goal, EDB's Creative Services Strategic Business Unit convinced international arts powerhouses to choose Singapore as their Asia-Pacific headquarters. These included top musical production companies such as Cameron Mackintosh and the Really Useful Group by Andrew Lloyd Webber, while the Kallang Theatre staged a series of international Broadway hits including *Cats the Musical*, *Les Miserables*, *Phantom of the Opera* and more, with the recognition that for every dollar spent on a theatre ticket, six or seven more are spent on related services such as meals, lodging and souvenirs.¹¹³ The successful entry of top galleries and auction houses such as Sotheby's and Christie's also facilitated the growth of the visual arts industry and of ancillary services and related businesses, such as arts storage, arts handlers and conservation services.

STPB would later inherit EDB's task of supporting Singapore's growth into a global city for the arts. In the mid-1990s, NAC worked closely with STPB, under an Arts Regional Marketing Committee, to capture the largely untapped arts tourism market. For more permanent arrivals to Singapore, the Foreign Artistic Talent Scheme was introduced in 1991. This was a highly selective programme which was jointly administered by NAC and the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) for foreign arts professionals who wished to become permanent residents of Singapore.¹¹⁴

Not everybody was convinced by Singapore's emphasis on international blockbuster productions and large-scale infrastructure. Some felt that this

approach reduced opportunities for smaller local arts groups, and that the benefits did not fully trickle down to the local industry because foreign productions brought along their own support services. They argued that Singapore had to go beyond merely being a venue for blockbuster acts — it also had to develop its own brand of Singaporean arts and cultural offerings.

Others noted that there had been successful partnerships between local and international arts groups. Local art entrepreneurs had been able to enter the international art industry following their experience in working with foreign experts; while foreign acts which had established headquarters in Singapore had implemented community programmes to reach out and engage local youth.¹¹⁵

As the turn of the millennium signalled a shift towards the information and knowledge economy, it was vital to nurture a strong spirit of creativity and innovation in helping Singapore achieve a competitive edge. The field of the arts was deemed important in encouraging people to foster a passion for learning, challenge traditional boundaries and mindsets, and explore new possibilities.

Artistic skills could also translate into capabilities across industries including design, media and entertainment, further complementing the city's technological and economic progress. Realising the full potential of the arts would make Singapore a more competitive, refined and lively place.¹¹⁶ These broad shifts inspired several national initiatives, such as the MOE's "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation" to reduce classroom rote learning, and the Ministry of Manpower (MOM)'s Manpower 21 plan to build a capital of talent. These initiatives shared similar goals of promoting lifelong learning and the development of artistic and creative talent.

In June 1997, then Deputy Prime Minister Tony Tan announced the formation of a committee to redefine the role and purpose of Singapore's two long-standing private arts schools, LASALLE-SIA¹¹⁷ and NAFA. Dr Tan Chin Nam, as CEO of STB and later Permanent Secretary of MOM, was tasked to lead the committee, which comprised representatives from the government, as well as arts education, business and arts communities, with then Senior Minister of State of Education Peter Chen as advisor. The committee recognised that the knowledge economy of the future required creative, culturally sensitive talent. It made four key recommendations in its 1998 report, "Creative Singapore: A Renaissance Nation in the Knowledge Age".

One significant outcome was the extension of polytechnic-level funding to both LASALLE-SIA and NAFA for their diploma programmes, so that arts students could pay lower school fees, and schools could employ and develop well qualified teachers and administrators. The committee also recommended establishing an Institute of the Arts to conduct local university degree programmes in visual and performing arts. Given its complexity, however, this institute has not yet been established. Nevertheless, variations of this idea became reality, with the founding of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music in NUS in 2003, and the School of Art, Design and Media in Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in 2005.

By the end of the 1990s, the arts and culture landscape had grown through global cultural exchanges, facilities support, training and community outreach. As the government began planning for a Global City for the Arts for the new millennium, parliamentary debates argued that the level of state support was still insufficient to enable Singapore to compete with other cities of culture. It highlighted that “per capita funding for the arts of \$7 per year [was] very low compared to cities like Hong Kong, where the spending [was] \$24 per capita per year; London, \$108 per year, and even in the state of Victoria in Australia [where] the arts spending come to \$15 per capita per year.”¹¹⁸

Parliament also recognised that, while government arts funding might not meet expectations, other forms of support were equally important. Foundations, organisations and individuals continued to be strong patrons of the arts, and formidable partners for the government to work with, to facilitate the development of arts and culture. In the absence of heavy state intervention, audiences’ and artists’ desires and preferences would shape and determine the future evolution of Singapore’s arts scene, in line with its unique experiences and character.¹¹⁹

These ideas and discussions about the future of the arts and culture sector crystallised into the next landmark plan for Singapore — to become a world-class Renaissance City of the 21st century.

CHAPTER 3

CULTIVATING A GLOBAL CITY FOR THE ARTS (FROM 2000 TO 2010)

“ Our real concern is not with objects but the mentality of our people. In the new world we are entering, it is important to be good at science and mathematics, but it is not enough to be only good at science and mathematics. We must also have artistic sense. With science and mathematics, we can produce accurately and efficiently. But to create high value, we must also produce artistically... Our intellectual development and our artistic development are like the *yin* and *yang* in Chinese thinking. Balance is very important.¹²⁰

George Yeo, former Minister for Information and the Arts

THE RENAISSANCE CITY

A decade after the first blueprint for the arts, the state re-examined its strategy for the development of the arts and culture in Singapore. Now that the key institutions and infrastructure (the “hardware”) had been

developed, it was time to focus more on the “software”. On 9 March 2000, Minister for Information and the Arts, Lee Yock Suan, announced the “Renaissance City Report”, a vision for the city-state to be an outstanding cultural centre in a globalised world. Singapore, already a strong hub for trade and business, would become a Global City for the Arts. Its unique confluence of Eastern and Western cultures would attract international players to its shores, while cultural and heritage development would strengthen Singaporeans’ sense of national identity and belonging.

This was aligned with the new national vision for Singapore, “Singapore 21”, which had been unveiled a year earlier, to foster cohesion and resilience amongst Singaporeans and make the city a home:

“We need to go beyond economic and material needs, and reorient society to meet the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, cultural and social needs of our people. Our concept of competitiveness must therefore recognise that the robust and successful societies of the future will be those that place people at the centre.”¹²¹

Goh Chok Tong, former Prime Minister of Singapore

Prior to the release of the report, the Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA) had commissioned the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) to examine the concept of a Renaissance City as a viable image of Singapore’s future development.¹²² A debate ensued. Some felt that the historical connotation and process of the Renaissance, as depicted in Italian and other European cities, was not a fair comparison with Singapore’s context, and risked propagating a romantic notion of arts and culture as an emotional activity, a luxury separate from pragmatic, economic activity.

Nonetheless, the concept helped to question past assumptions about Singapore’s cultural development, and envision new possibilities. Culture should no longer be treated as secondary and separate from the economy and society’s well-being, but as inextricably linked. It should also cater for the development of a more liberal and diverse society, multicultural yet syncretic in nature,¹²³ which would mean a more complex but culturally vibrant city. Artists felt that a true Renaissance City should not be defined just by rapid increases in the number of venues, foreign performances and tourist arrivals, but by enabling local artists to create new content and expand artistic boundaries, and for the Singaporean society to be proud of their own talents, with maturity and an open mind to the multiplicity of world views expressed through the arts.¹²⁴

Following the report's launch in 2000, the term "Renaissance City" became a catchphrase for the city's cultural development in its path towards becoming a knowledge-based economy. Singapore would become a cosmopolitan, dynamic place encouraging aesthetic interests and continuous experimentation, respectful of its multicultural makeup and heritage while displaying a distinctly Singaporean identity. The Renaissance Singaporean would be a civic-minded, confident and active citizen with an open mind and creative sensibilities, easily adapting to a borderless world.¹²⁵ \$50 million was allocated over five years to implement key recommendations in the Renaissance City report.¹²⁶

This was a huge boost for the arts. In 2000, the National Arts Council (NAC) was able to increase its funding by 97% over the previous year, to allow over 400 artists, arts groups and students to stage activities and pursue local and overseas training. NAC also initiated funds to develop professional skills in arts administration and production, and to support research and documentation in the arts. The National Heritage Board (NHB) similarly facilitated the development of the heritage industry. Besides investing in museum and heritage promotion, the opening of the Heritage Conservation Centre in Jurong in 2000 — Southeast Asia first centralised repository and conservation facility — was a step forward in the research and care of historical collections. NHB also provided consultancy services to private heritage centres, and worked with local transshipment companies that later became reputable logistics providers to collectors and museums around the region.

A further two Renaissance City Plans were released over the following decade. In contrast to the first Renaissance City Plan in 2000 (RCP I), Renaissance City Plan II (RCP II) which was released in 2005 took on a more industry-focused approach to build up professional skills and capabilities within the arts and cultural sector. Beyond promoting the arts and heritage sectors, attention was given to applied arts such as design and media, and Singapore artists connected with the international community through platforms such as Singapore Season. Funding was increased to \$12 million per year for 2005 and 2006, and further increased to \$15.5 million in 2007.

Government agencies were also restructured to better perform their roles. NAC reorganised its functions into key clusters (performing arts, visual arts, and literary arts). This gave NAC a more holistic approach to nurturing and sustaining the arts ecosystem. Each cluster oversaw activities across the value chain in its domain, from seeding start-ups, to training artists, to the internationalisation of arts groups and businesses. NAC also established a business development unit to promote arts professionalism and entrepreneurship, and to offer platforms for

networking and collaborations. With the move towards a knowledge-based, innovation-driven economy, MITA expanded in 2001 to oversee transformations in information and communications technology (ICT), and was renamed the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA).

In 2008, Renaissance City Plan III (RCP III) was released following two years of public consultations and planning. Under this plan, the government further increased its funding commitment to \$116.25 million over the next five years for the arts, heritage and creative sectors. Building on the strategies of RCP I and RCP II, RCP III recognised that there was now increasing global competition from other cities, as well as a maturing and increasingly diverse society at home. It thus aimed to further propel Singapore as a distinctive Global City of Culture and the Arts, balancing both international and local outcomes. Recommendations included a top-class cultural and entertainment district, showcasing original Singapore and Southeast Asian content, strengthening industry capabilities, and promoting education and philanthropy in the arts. It also focused on community development, using arts and culture to engage the public in building a more gracious, inclusive society that was diverse yet cohesive. Accompanying the RCP III were the Arts Development Plan and the Heritage Development Plan, led by NAC and National Heritage Board (NHB) respectively. Both plans provided detailed recommendations for the development of an integrated ecosystem for the arts, culture and heritage sectors in support of the RCP vision.

DEVELOPING CREATIVE INDUSTRIES: MARRYING ART, BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY

The Renaissance City Plans (RCPs) were complemented by initiatives to develop arts and culture to support Singapore's creative economy. The creative industries, comprising the traditional and applied arts, had enjoyed a rapid 17.2% growth per annum from 1986 to 2000, outpacing Singapore's average annual GDP growth of 10.5%.¹²⁷ They were also contributing over 2% of national employment, and there was further potential to tap into this growth.

Leading up to the formulation of RCP II, a cultural agenda taskforce comprising representatives from the Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA), Ministry of Manpower (MOM), Singapore Tourism Board (STB) and Economic Development Board (EDB) put together a green paper on "Investing in Cultural Capital — A New Agenda for a Creative and Connected Nation" in March 2002, proposing to harness cultural capital to realise the full potential of the creative economy.¹²⁸ Their

recommendations were incorporated into the broader Economic Review Committee (ERC) report in September 2002.¹²⁹ The ERC called on the government to display clear, strong support for the arts, culture, sports and recreation sectors, which could be achieved through more funding, tax incentives and partnerships to coordinate education, public interest and public awareness.¹³⁰ Study visits were made to culture and media capitals, and consultations held with key stakeholders. These led to the formulation of a three-pronged development strategy consisting of RCP II, DesignSingapore and Media 21 initiatives, focusing on the arts, design and media sectors respectively.

The development strategy recognised that the arts and cultural sector formed the core of the creative services value chain. Areas such as industrial and game design, film and animation, advertising and architecture shared common characteristics — the fusion of art, business and technology, and a combination of logical thinking, creativity and innovation. Given Singapore's small domestic market and the dispersion of creative services across sectors, the government sought to address the challenges of high business costs, ensuring private sector participation and promoting cultural philanthropy through coordinated policy implementation.

A target was set to establish Singapore's presence as a creative hub, doubling the GDP contribution of the creative industries from 3% in 2002 to 6% by 2012. Some major initiatives were undertaken, such as the development of Fusionopolis and Mediapolis at one-north as integrated industrial complexes for research, production and exchange. Strong infrastructure development and intellectual property frameworks have also attracted several international creative agencies and studios to establish their headquarters in Singapore, alongside local start-ups and companies¹³¹ (e.g., production company Lucasfilm, game developer KOEI Entertainment, and classical arts event and talent management organisation IMG Artists). In addition, regional and niche libraries were established to organise resources, databases and information for easy access by the public.

These creative industry efforts have received recognition. In 2015, Ernst and Young published a global map of cultural and creative industries, providing an unprecedented comparative study of the economic and social contributions of cultural and creative industries around the world. As an international benchmark, Singapore ranked fifth as a global city, attracting the creative class to its shores, comparable to the likes of

established cultural and creative capitals such as London, Tokyo and Barcelona.^{132,133} Also in 2015, Singapore was designated UNESCO Creative City of Design for its efforts to foster a creative ecosystem for art and design.¹³⁴ This enabled Singapore to join the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, opening up more opportunities for international collaborations with other member cities, and investments in the creative industry for sustainable urban development.

Singapore continued its cultural engagement efforts. Within the first five years since the launch of RCP, around 13 cultural agreements were signed with government bodies in countries including China, India, South Korea, Jordan, Germany and Ireland.¹³⁵ The various arts and heritage centres developed, from the Sun Yat Sen Memorial Hall and the Malay and Indian Heritage Centres to the more recent Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre, not only promote intercultural understanding in the city-state, but also serve as common touchpoints for international visitors on the city's shared cultures and histories.

MASTER PLANNING THE BRAS BASAH.BUGIS DISTRICT

With the goal of Singapore becoming a Global City for the Arts, government agencies identified the Bras Basah.Bugis District as the arts, culture, learning and entertainment district of Singapore. This is a 95 ha area adjacent to the Civic District, comprising parts of the Museum and Rochor Planning Areas, bounded by Fort Canning Hill, Rochor Road and Beach Road. The district has a rich history. Bras Basah had been home to a number of religious, educational and multicultural institutions since the 1800s; while Bugis Street had a colourful character as a haven for risqué activities and seedy trades.

Efforts to revitalise the area began as early as 1989, when the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) sold a site through the government land sales (GLS) programme for the development of a shopping, hotel and office complex, known today as Bugis Junction.¹³⁶ Bugis Street was also redeveloped, shedding its once notorious image. To enhance accessibility, Albert Street and Waterloo Street were converted in 1996 into pedestrian thoroughfares to reduce traffic congestion, ease pedestrian flow and enliven street life. Heritage buildings were conserved to retain a sense of identity, while old buildings and shophouses along Waterloo Street were restored to house artists and cultural groups.

Building on this foundation, urban design guidelines were tailored for the Bras Basah.Bugis area to ensure that, in the long term, it would evolve into a pedestrian-friendly district with an eclectic appeal due to its mix of historic and modern developments. These guidelines provided for more varied streetscapes, coupled with activity-generating uses at ground level, to inject vibrancy to the district. The guidelines also served to enhance the pedestrian experience, improve wayfinding and allowing people to move about more comfortably — through pedestrian malls, through-block links, covered walkways, laneways at building setbacks, and elevated second storey links. Inspired by the narrow streets and city laneways of Europe and Australia, the featuring of art works and shop windows on building facades which faced laneways was also encouraged.¹³⁷ Additionally, the city's key arts education institutes were located at the heart of the district — LASALLE, NAFA and the future School of the Arts (SOTA) which officially opened in 2008. Partly due to the presence of the Singapore Management University, the first university campus in the city centre, the district had a student population of over 14,000 and took on a more youthful character. The arts schools also beautified their neighbourhoods through community art projects, incorporating students' wall murals along Waterloo Street.¹³⁸

The master planning and development behind the Bras Basah.Bugis District was internationally recognised with the 2008 Urban Land Institute (ULI) Award for Excellence: Asia Pacific.¹³⁹ The work continues, with URA overseeing the district's current and future land use and urban design. Given its national monuments and architectural heritage, the NHB was designated as place manager to build a distinctive identity for the area, rebranded as the Bras Basah.Bugis Precinct (BBB),¹⁴⁰ facilitating stakeholder relationships between artists and venue operators, and coordinating programmes to enliven the precinct.

In 2008, the flagship Singapore Night Festival was staged with the National Museum of Singapore, showcasing local and international acts along the streets of BBB at night, and providing a shared platform for the public to interact with heritage, the arts and culture in public spaces. Held annually, the festival has enjoyed rapid growth in visitor numbers, from 40,000 over one weekend in its initial years to nearly 700,000 over two weekends in 2015, with Singaporeans comprising over 80% of attendees.¹⁴¹

This increase in popularity of the Night Festival has brought new challenges, such as facilitating crowd control, coordinating road closures and ensuring a good mix of programmes. Organisers also faced operational hurdles in the use of public spaces for events, installations and performances.¹⁴² In some instances, multiple approvals need to be obtained from various government agencies. Efforts are ongoing to resolve these ground issues, and to inject continuous vibrancy into the BBB district.



The Bras Basah.Bugis Precinct Plan.

Image courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority. All rights reserved.

EXPANDING SPACE FOR THE ARTS

As the RCPs were being implemented, more was being done to expand cultural institutions in the city.

Following seven years of renovation works, the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) moved to larger premises at Empress Place in March 2003. The following year, the historic Old Parliament House opened as The Arts House, a multidisciplinary venue for the arts with a focus on literary programming. The Old Parliament House had been gazetted as a national monument in 1992. With its historical and political significance as Singapore's oldest colonial building, MICA decided to preserve it as an arts and heritage centre, jointly developed by the NAC and NHB.¹⁴³ This allayed fears that the grand colonial building would become yet another retail development. It was also the first time a major government monument had been redesignated for the arts, joining the neighbouring ACM at Empress Place, the Victoria Theatre and Victoria Concert Hall to make the Civic District the arts and cultural hub of the city.



The former Parliament House in Singapore, home to The Arts House today.

Photo courtesy of Arts House Limited.

The Old Parliament House Limited was incorporated in 2002 by NAC as a non-profit organisation, to run The Arts House and manage its programming to support the arts industry. The parliament chamber was converted to a performance venue, while office spaces and rooms became a film theatre, galleries and multipurpose spaces. The inclusion of smaller, more intimate spaces such as a 170-seat black box theatre was a contrast to the large theatres at the Esplanade, and a welcome alternative given the closing of the Drama Centre at the time. The Arts House began on a positive note, featuring mostly local and emerging groups, and offering lower venue costs for these artists.¹⁴⁴ Later in 2014, Old Parliament House Limited would merge with Arts Festival Limited to form Arts House Limited (the Arts Festival Limited was a company incorporated to manage the Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA), a revamp of the Singapore Arts Festival following a 2012 review of its operating model). This was a strategic marriage to harness the

synergy between the management of arts spaces and the management of a national arts festival into one core centre, with greater autonomy from the state. Today, the Arts House Limited manages two key landmarks in Singapore's Civic District — The Arts House, and the Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall. It also presents the annual SIFA, and runs the performing arts space Drama Centre as well as the Goodman Arts Centre and Aliwal Arts Centre as two creative enclaves for the arts and culture sector.

Some distance away, at Armenian Street, a new Peranakan Museum was established at the former location of the ACM. This building houses the world's most comprehensive collection of Peranakan artefacts. It showcases a hybrid culture which is distinctive to Singapore and the region¹⁴⁵ and, as a museum concept, is not often found in other cultural capitals of the world. The museum was officially opened on 25 April 2008, attracting over 50,000 local and overseas visitors in its first nine weeks of operation, which was more than double its initial target.

Also in 2008, the Singapore Art Museum at Bras Basah constructed its new wing, 8Q, named after its location at 8 Queen Street. In line with plans to rejuvenate the BBB as an arts and cultural destination, NHB invested nearly \$6 million in renovations to convert existing rooms into galleries for contemporary artwork and experimental art spaces, as well as food and beverage outlets on the first floor. As part of the BBB enhancements, kerbside parking lots along Queen Streets were later removed and sidewalks expanded, creating a safer and more pedestrian-friendly environment, and opening up new spaces for people to enjoy public art, pop-up events and activities.¹⁴⁶

Outside the city centre, state properties were leased out for niche arts and heritage uses, with a tenancy period of up to nine years.^{147,148} For the first time, proposals were invited from interested parties who wished to develop, operate and manage integrated arts and heritage facilities at the identified sites, often located near complementary arts, culture and lifestyle belts. The adaptive reuse of empty properties not only enabled a diverse mix of uses for economic and social needs, but also catered to a growing interest in owning private museums and studios, and saved on the costs required to build entirely new facilities from scratch.

These were pragmatic considerations to optimise urban spaces in line with state policy for the rental of state properties for temporary use. However, such a policy posed challenges, particularly for popular interim developments such as Old School at Mount Sophia, as the state had to balance its long-term development needs by claiming the space for redevelopment against pushbacks from tenants and the public who have developed an emotive sense of attachment and sentiment to the building.¹⁴⁹

THE CASE OF OLD SCHOOL AT MOUNT SOPHIA

Old School was a multidisciplinary arts and creative hub housed at the former Methodist Girls' School premises at 11 Mount Sophia, which was privately owned and managed from 2007 until its closure in 2012. Singapore Land Authority (SLA) leased the space to the Old School management for interim use, with the knowledge that it would eventually be used for future residential developments which were originally slated in the 2008 Master Plan.

The site, with its relaxed ambience, downtown location and mix of amenities, evolved organically as an attractive place for various artists and the public to gather, work and socialise. Two lease extensions were made; however, when it was time for Old School to move out, many appealed to "Save Old School", attesting not just to its potential to thrive as an arts hub, but also to the importance of conserving its campus buildings, as they were worried that the school's heritage would be lost through redevelopment. Eventually, a trade-off had to be made between arts and housing needs for a growing population. The state resumed plans to tender the land parcel for residential purposes, but with the condition that three heritage buildings be conserved, restored and integrated into the new development, which is known today as Sophia Hills.

The episode elucidated lessons in balancing competing needs and compromising effectively. While the trade-off was deemed necessary, it was also important to understand what prompted the popularity of these interim developments. In her empirical research, Prof Lily Kong examined the factors behind Old School's success as an old campus converted for creative use.¹⁵⁰ As a business-oriented development, Old School began with a focused brand strategy and marketed itself accordingly, drawing on place advantages such as the campus' symbols and heritage, and as a tranquil environment near the city centre. Tenants were carefully selected to match the vibe and place the founders had in mind. Rather than focus on a single discipline, the development housed multiple disciplines and genres, which promoted more collaboration and less competition. A mix of amenities was also strategised and injected to attract consumer footfall, and to encourage interactions and encounters for both tenants and visitors during the day and at night. Over time, Old School developed a sense of vibrancy as a hub, endearing the place to those who occupied or visited its premises.



The former Old School at Mount Sophia.

Photo courtesy of Steel Wool, <http://flic.kr/p/6Yb6dV>, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

REACHING OUT TO THE HEARTLANDS

In 2000, two arts housing facilities were co-located within community centres, offering alternative locations for arts groups. First, in May 2000, Marine Parade Community Building was upgraded to house the Marine Parade neighbourhood library and cafes, as well as professional theatre company The Necessary Stage. Subsequently, the Singapore Wind Symphony moved into Ulu Pandan Community Centre in November 2000.¹⁵¹

This provided another avenue to maximise land use and provide practice spaces for arts groups, while also bringing the arts closer to the heartlands. This was in line with ongoing reviews for the Concept Plan 2001, which focused on balancing competing land uses and making flexible use of existing spaces for various purposes, including the arts. Besides having artists as tenants, distinct community centres such as Siglap South Community Centre also built up their own arts facilities and programming, providing spaces and rehearsal facilities for school choirs and youth arts groups.¹⁵²

Following RCP III, such community centres were further used to broaden the level of engagement with arts and culture in heartland communities. In contrast to RCP I and RCP II, RCP III aimed to encourage people to go beyond being passive spectators or visitors, and to participate more actively in arts and cultural activities. Besides organising District Art Festivals (DAFs), more programmes were established at community centres to enable people to practice their artistic skills at an amateur or semi-professional level.

The NHB also began working with students and community groups in 2006 to document and develop community heritage trails, to enable residents to better understand the histories of the places in which they live. Meanwhile, the NAC and People's Association (PA) initiated Arts Community tours to bring free performances, talks and workshops to the general public; as well as a Community Participation Grant scheme to fund artist-led projects introducing the arts to the public. These were part of a larger NAC mission, the "Arts for All" Community Engagement Plan, to deepen public engagement, particularly by those who had little or no prior artistic experience.

INNOVATING THE LIBRARIES: GUARDIANS OF LITERATURE, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Apart from dedicated arts facilities, libraries also serve as important institutions for knowledge and culture, and as shared spaces for people's collective memories. Some libraries in Singapore offer arts spaces and programmes and, while traditional libraries serve only as silent spaces for reading, Singapore's libraries today serve multiple purposes.¹⁵³

The Library 2000 report provided a master plan for the development of library services provided by the National Library Board (NLB). It recommended that libraries experiment with other more participative uses, co-locate with other facilities, and collaborate with the private sector and the community to develop a network of information services.¹⁵⁴ This reinvention of libraries in Singapore is an example of innovating systemically — experimenting and adapting at the system-wide level, rather than in piecemeal fashion:

"The NLB was established following the government's approval of the Library 2000 Report in which the philosophy of prototyping was very clearly injected. We want to re-invent continuously the national library system, and therefore every branch, every new creation, every transformation and re-modelling, there must be something new! It can be technologically-based or just business model innovation. When successful, the prototype can be scaled up across the whole system. To this date, NLB is still continuously innovating."¹⁵⁵

Dr Tan Chin Nam, former Permanent Secretary for MITA

Libraries have gone beyond offering books to offering information and learning, also providing a place for people to not only read, drink coffee and socialise, but also to learn a variety of skills in topic areas including the arts, heritage and culture. Facilities, workshops and programmes are distributed across public libraries, and are made accessible to neighbourhood communities and usually free of charge. The community is welcomed as a stakeholder, as exemplified through initiatives such as the Citizen Archivist Project and the Singapore Memory Project. These initiatives use mobile and digital technology to reach out and support nationwide, ground-up efforts to document the culture, history and memories of Singaporeans.

Specific libraries provide dedicated spaces for the arts, e.g., the National Library and library@esplanade. The National Library building at Queen Street houses the Drama Centre, a mid-sized 615-seat theatre with a 120-seat black box theatre and three multipurpose function areas. This contemporary facility was developed at a cost of \$28.1 million, and officially opened in 2005.¹⁵⁶ It occupies the second to sixth storeys of the building, so library-goers can easily attend a theatre show or participate in a conference or workshop. The Drama Centre has enjoyed a high utilisation rate of more than 80%, and is popular with the arts community.¹⁵⁷

The library@esplanade, located within the iconic performing arts centre, similarly focuses on the arts, in line with the Esplanade's mission and activities. Opened in September 2002 as the city's first public library for the arts, its collections are specially curated to offer resources on music, dance, theatre and film. Visitors can also enjoy music performances and readings at dedicated sections of the library.



The library@esplanade is co-located within a performing arts centre, and equipped with facilities such as a piano practice room, screening rooms, and a silent studio.

Photo from library@esplanade, courtesy of National Library Board, Singapore. All Rights Reserved, 2017.

ART IN PUBLIC SPACES

In 2002, a Public Sculptures Master Plan was launched, identifying specific sites and pedestrian routes for the installation of sculptures, to create a more distinct and attractive urban landscape. This plan advanced earlier attempts to encourage the display of sculptures in public spaces. Previously, in the late 1980s, a Public Sculptures Committee was formed under the Ministry of National Development (MND) to encourage the donation of sculptures for public display, and in 1991 an initial sculptures master plan was drawn up. However, donor response at the time was low. As the national narrative shifted towards becoming a Global City, the initiative was updated in recognition that sculptures could enhance the visual environment and add to the cultural dimensions of the city.

The Public Sculptures Committee comprised MND and MITA, with participation from statutory boards such as the URA, NHB and NAC. A Public Sculptures Advisory Panel, comprising public and private sector practitioners, was also formed to appraise the sculptures' value and assist the committee in evaluating the suitability and merit of such sculptures for public spaces. Several aspects were considered before a sculpture was selected and placed permanently on site. Ideally, the sculptures' concept, design and size should relate with the surroundings; for instance, those with landscaped elements may be more appropriate for display at a park to enhance the natural environment, while more kinetic installations could be displayed at business and shopping districts to add to the districts' vibrant image.¹⁵⁸ Additionally, the sculptures had to be durable and easy to maintain.

As part of the initiative, incentives were provided to attract participation by individuals and corporations. Tax exemption was increased to 200% of the sculpture's value — twice as much as during the previous scheme. Donations made from estates would also be exempt from estate duty, where previously only donations specified in a will were exempt from such duty.

In 2003, NHB introduced the Public Sculptures Scheme, which evolved into the Public Art Tax Incentive Scheme, encouraging individuals and organisations to donate, commission, display or adopt public art and, in so doing, to enjoy double tax deductions.¹⁵⁹ URA launched the Art Incentive Scheme later, in September 2005, to encourage the placement of public art in the city centre by offering private building owners up to an additional 2% Gross Floor Area (GFA) above the maximum allowable area for new developments that integrated permanent art installations in their design and made the installations accessible to the public.¹⁶⁰ Beyond commercial buildings, the Land Transport Authority (LTA) initiated its Art in Transit programme, installing murals, sculptures and other artworks in its train stations. This enhanced the stations' architectural features, while showcasing Singapore's art and history and bringing art into people's daily commutes.



Map of a Public Art Walking Trail “Made in Singapore” featuring 20 art installations by Singapore artists.
Image courtesy of National Arts Council.



People interacting with “24 Hours in Singapore”, an interactive sculpture installation by Baet Yeok Kuan that acts as an audio time capsule playing sounds of everyday life in Singapore.
Photo courtesy of National Arts Council.

More recently, the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY)¹⁶¹ committed \$10 million seed funding in 2014 to establish the Public Art Trust, led by NAC. The trust addressed the challenges of maintenance and upkeep of individual artworks by having the central fund bear the maintenance costs of the artwork during its period of display. Additionally, it took on the role of commissioning art deemed impactful and meaningful to the public. It also sought to support Singaporean artists, and provide more opportunities for local talents to showcase their work.

PAINTING THE CITY

A more controversial facet of public art is the management of street art in the city. Singapore has strict policies on graffiti; all forms of graffiti, unless authorised by the state, can be considered damage to public and private property, and are an offence under the Vandalism Act.

Cases have arisen in the past in relation to unauthorised art in public spaces, and these episodes have tested the boundaries and definitions of graffiti



Mural by graffiti artist Ceno2 on the facade of The Singapura Club restaurant at Haji Lane, painted with reference to the district's heritage and multi-ethnic character of the restaurant's cuisine.

Photo courtesy of Choo Yut Shing, <http://flic.kr/p/JHnRb1>, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

and art. In 2012, businesses in Haji Lane commissioned graffiti art on the walls and facades of their premises, which were conservation buildings. While some appreciated the originality and creativity of the area's new look, the move flouted existing rules. Authorities sought to manage stakeholders' expectations with a light touch, by clarifying and refining their conservation guidelines, to ensure that a balance was struck between heritage conservation and artistic expression, and that public art matched the context and character of the surroundings.¹⁶²

Other cases tested the line between vandalism and art. In 2013, street artist Samantha Lo, known to many as Singapore's "Sticker Lady", stencilled and pasted stickers on streets and traffic light buttons. These stencils and stickers featured local cultural references and ironic commentary. Some viewed her work as a tongue-in-cheek move, while others saw it as an act of vandalism. Lo was eventually charged for mischief and sentenced to 240 hours of community service; and continues as a street artist today, working on commissioned murals and art projects, and experimenting with street art using non-permanent materials.¹⁶³

On the other hand, the government has also appropriated various forms of graffiti art, known to some as urban art or street art, to transform empty walls and spaces into urban assets. These are implemented in a more orderly and planned manner, seeking to beautify the urban landscape, enliven districts, and enhance the city's liveability. For instance, the Bras Basah Bugis district features wall murals and community art projects by LASALLE and NAFA students, with sponsorship from paint company ICI-Dulux.¹⁶⁴ Heritage districts such as Kampong Glam and Little India showcase vibrant and eclectic street art, some of which reference the rich histories of the area. Creative murals and graffiti art are also commissioned in places that attract a younger crowd, such as Orchard's *SCAPE.

PAINTING THE CITY

Continued ...

Street art projects often involve collaboration between public agencies and artists. In 2014, URA partnered with the NAC to dedicate an independent street art space at part of the Rail Corridor for a period of two years, with local urban art collective "RSCLS" engaged as curator of the space.¹⁶⁵ Spanning 40 m long and 5 m high beneath the Commonwealth Avenue viaduct, the street art space provided the largest urban canvas for artists to express and practice their craft, and a more interesting experience for users of the Corridor. Businesses and resident communities also sought to bring life to their streets and buildings, commissioning local artists such as Yip Yew Chong, who is renowned for painting outdoor murals which depict scenes of old Singapore which are relevant to the site and its surroundings.

Street art can also elevate cultural diplomacy efforts. The Australian High Commission's contribution of "50 Bridges" brought public art and performances to 50 heartland locations in celebration of Singapore's 50th Anniversary celebrations, also the 50th anniversary of Singapore-Australia diplomatic ties.¹⁶⁶ Through such initiatives, street art is legitimised as a partnership between the state, artists and the community, making art accessible in shared spaces, instilling ownership, and bringing a sense of colour to the surroundings.



Wall mural at Tiong Bahru, Singapore's first public housing estate, by artist Yip Yew Chong, depicting street hawkers and market (or 'pasar') activity.

Photo courtesy of Choo Yut Shing, <http://flic.kr/p/WR8Z3R>, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

NURTURING MIND AND SKILL

Another significant development within the 2000s was the expansion of educational pathways for youths with a passion for the arts. In the early 1970s, former Minister of Culture Jek Yuen Thong had already reflected on the value of an artistic education,

“The aim behind art education and the promotion of culture is not to train all children in school or every adult person into becoming professional artists, musicians, dancers or writers. Rather it is to nurture, to sharpen and to develop the creative instincts which are in all of us. It is also to provide us with the skill, the knowledge and the ability to appreciate the abiding values which are found in things artistic and creative so that we may become better all-round personalities.”¹⁶⁷

The combination of the 1998 Creative Singapore Report and the 2000 Renaissance City Report brought about a significant mindset shift in how people viewed the nurturing of capabilities in the arts and creative fields. Previously, the main options for studying the arts were LASALLE and NAFA, privately-funded institutions that continued to foster pathways for art and design education,¹⁶⁸ as well as some polytechnics who offered similar courses.

Today, increased state support and public funding has lent greater legitimacy to arts education, with various schemes introduced. The NAC launched its Local Undergraduate scholarship in 2001, to train professional arts administrators for the growing arts industry in Singapore. The Emerging Artists Fund was introduced shortly after, offering \$100,000 annually to encourage new and emerging artists to pursue their artistic endeavours. This was also the first time a grant scheme did not require any track record from applicants, but instead, evidence of their vision and commitment.¹⁶⁹ Later, Noise Singapore was launched in 2005 as the city’s largest youth arts platform, with the attendant Noise Matchbox Grant to provide showcase, mentorship and seed funding opportunities for emerging artists. NAC also worked with the Ministry of Education (MOE) to offer “Learn@Arts” and “Artist-in-School” programmes, in which students could watch live performances, interact with professional artists, experience the creative process of making art, and hopefully be inspired by these experiences. These programmes complemented MOE’s existing efforts such as the biennial Singapore Youth Festival, which was launched in 1967 to celebrate youth achievements in the performing arts.¹⁷⁰

Of greater significance to the development of arts and culture was the establishment of new permanent institutions dedicated to the arts, diversifying the national education system.

The opening of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory at the National University of Singapore (NUS) in late 2003 was one such milestone in Singapore’s arts development journey. Rather than a degree-granting institute for the arts, the idea of a music conservatory was deemed more feasible for its focus on grooming instrumentalists from Singapore and the region. There was a ready pool of talented musicians, and a partner had been identified for the project — the Peabody Institute under the John Hopkins University, which had an esteemed music conservatory programme.¹⁷¹ In November 2001, a memorandum of understanding was signed between NUS and the Peabody Institute to establish a Singapore conservatory of music and admit its first batch of undergraduate students in 2003. This was coupled with substantial government grants for university tuition.¹⁷²

Another major milestone was the establishment of the School of the Arts (SOTA), Singapore’s first arts school for students aged between 13 and 18 years. While there were existing tertiary institutions offering degree and diploma courses in the arts, a gap existed at the pre-tertiary level in mainstream education. Interested youths mostly pursued artistic interests through elective programmes, which were limited to a few schools, or by joining student clubs and societies. Two national committees made recommendations for a specialised school via the 2002 Committee on Reviewing Junior Colleges and Secondary Schools, and the Remaking Singapore Committee,¹⁷³ after which the Committee on Specialised Arts School was appointed in 2003 to examine the feasibility of establishing such a school.¹⁷⁴ Chaired by Lee Tzu Yang, who was subsequently appointed as founding Chairman of SOTA, this committee undertook fieldwork and dialogue with arts communities, educators, parents and students, before submitting its recommendations to MICA on the art school’s objectives, curriculum structure and operating model.

On 29 March 2004, then Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts Dr Lee Boon Yang announced the formation of a dedicated pre-tertiary arts school which would groom creative talents early, strengthen arts education in Singapore, and diversify Singapore’s education landscape.

To address concerns that enrolling in a dedicated arts school would narrow the educational or career choices for youths, the school did not offer just arts-related courses, but also the range of academic subjects available in mainstream schools (e.g., mathematics, science, languages

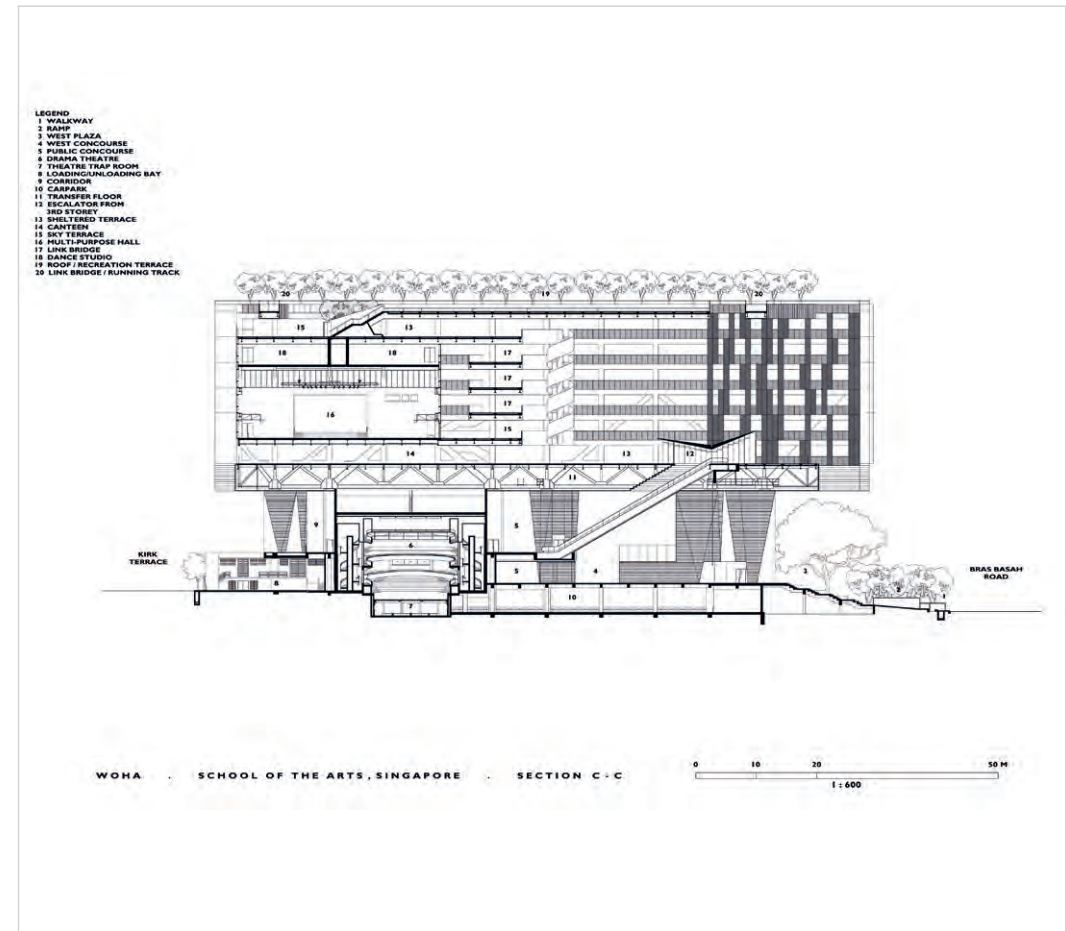
and the humanities). It was also made “permeable” with mainstream schools, allowing SOTA students to rejoin a mainstream school if they did not choose an arts specialty, and conversely for mainstream students to join SOTA if they were willing and able.¹⁷⁵ The school adopted the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma, a widely recognised qualification that provided more flexibility than the ‘O’ and ‘A’ level syllabus; and offered graduating students options to apply to a wide range of local and foreign universities.

SOTA was located in the heart of the Civic District, offering synergies with the surrounding educational institutes, cultural institutions and arts belts. Its proximity to the National Library and Drama Centre, museums and various artists in the area provided opportunities for students to learn beyond the classroom. This was a bold experiment for a new concept in Singapore’s education. SOTA opened its doors to its first batch of students in January 2008.

“... [it was] a paradigm shift, for parents to invest in their children as the next generation of career-minded people who would go into different vocations. People would question, what is the value proposition of arts in the society. But when it came across as no, we are not trying to break your rice bowl, but there are different various routes and diverse options you can go towards and this is the game plan, and explicitly telling them what the game plan was, people were then captured.”¹⁷⁶

Ms Rebecca Chew, first Principal of SOTA

SOTA continues to enhance its integration of arts and academia. In 2014, it became the first school in Singapore to adopt the IB Career-Related Programme, a two-year curriculum for exceptional students whom, after completing the school’s four-year foundation programme, aspire towards a dedicated arts career.¹⁷⁷ This programme enabled students to focus more time honing their craft and developing their portfolio, compared to the IB diploma programme. It also assured stakeholders that artistic development continues to be at the forefront of SOTA’s mission.



Architectural plan of the SOTA building, by award-winning local firm WOHA Architects. The design combines a school with professional arts venues and facilities within a 1 ha site, while providing for public spaces, green facades, and natural light and ventilation throughout the campus. Image courtesy of WOHA Architects.



The School of the Arts building. It is located at Zubir Said Drive, named after the composer of Singapore's national anthem.

Photo courtesy of Erwin Soo, <http://flic.kr/p/eaXdv7>, CC BY 2.0.

Singapore's RCPs paved the way for more infrastructure, programmes, funding and education to spur the development of the arts and culture. As the arts and cultural scene grew, it was important to track progress to obtain more support from policymakers, arts practitioners, patrons and the public. While statistical reports had previously been published on various aspects of the arts and cultural scene, the inaugural Singapore Cultural Statistics, released in 2008 by MICA, compiled all the data into a single report, providing a holistic picture of the state of the arts and culture in Singapore annually.

A decade had passed since the first RCP, and a review was again initiated for the arts and cultural scene in Singapore — this time to be led by the private sector and artistic community.

CHAPTER 4

SUSTAINING THE ARTS IN OUR CITY (FROM 2010 TO THE PRESENT)

“ The Council is often faced with the argument that expenditure on the arts should be justified by economic returns. One must look at both short and long term benefits. The arts not only provide employment and enhance Singapore as a tourist destination, they are also a catalyst for the creative energy that enlarges [the] cultural industry and fuels economic growth. We must not be impatient and kill the infant goose that will grow up to lay golden eggs.¹⁷⁸

.....
Dr Liu Thai Ker, former Chairman of the National Arts Council

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2010, the government announced the Arts and Culture Strategic Review (ACSR) to develop a vision for the arts and cultural landscape of Singapore by 2025. A steering committee was established, supported by four working committees comprising members across the public, private and people sectors.

In contrast to previous committees, this marked the first time an arts and culture review was driven by the private and people sectors, with support rather than leadership from the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA). The review sought to establish the needs and hopes of the arts community, resulting in 105 recommendations to achieve a vision for Singapore to be “a nation of cultured and gracious people, at home with our heritage, proud of our Singaporean identity”.¹⁷⁹ For ACSR Steering Committee Chairman Lee Tzu Yang, the substantial time and resources invested in the review was necessary because,

“What we attempted to do in ACSR was to think what does the community want, to bring the community in. But the community was very suspicious about anything that is initiated or sponsored by the government... so in order to win over a people you really had to give time, so we took almost one and a half years from beginning to end in terms of giving time to people to mature their thoughts, to be consulted, to come back in second phases and so on...”

So the product in fact is not just the report, the product also is whether the communities are talking together. What is the state of the relationship, between NAC and the community and whether they are using language in the same way to mean the same thing or differently.”¹⁸⁰

The ACSR recommended two strategies to achieve its 2025 vision — to integrate the arts into everyday life for all Singaporeans, and to strive for excellence in industry capabilities. More than \$270 million of government funding was committed to support the initiatives under ACSR over the next five years, with three master plans rolled out in Community Engagement, Arts and Culture Education in schools,¹⁸¹ and Capability Development.¹⁸² Agencies continued to improve dialogue, transparency and engagement with stakeholders through platforms such as the National Arts Council’s (NAC) annual “Let’s Talk” sessions for open discussions on the state of the arts in Singapore and avenues for improvement. These sessions have since morphed into more intimate, genre-specific sessions held throughout the year for in-depth discussions with the arts community.

In November 2012, an organisational change in the government re-established culture as the basis for people to bond, interact and build a common identity. Departments within MICA and the Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports (MCYS) were restructured into a new Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY), bringing culture to the fore in which arts and heritage would be integrated with sports, youth and community issues to build social cohesion and resilience.

A significant outcome of ACSR was in supporting the outreach of arts and culture to new audiences, particularly in the heartlands. Recommendations were made to open up existing infrastructure in the heartlands, such as school venues and public spaces, for artists and arts activities, which would maximise space opportunities and minimise the need to build new infrastructure. Beyond the race to be a global city with large scale events and infrastructure, ACSR proposed that it was time for resources to be dedicated to smaller scale activities with which everyday Singaporeans could identify. The People's Association (PA) encouraged community art activities, and staged the annual PAssionArts Festival, with community volunteers and neighbourhood residents. NAC worked with PA to develop a network of arts and culture nodes across Singapore as dedicated touchpoints bringing people together to participate, enjoy and experience the value of the arts where they live, work and play.



The NAC, in collaboration with partners such as PA, SAFRA, NLB and grounds-up groups like My Community, jointly organise a wide array of arts programmes year-round for all to enjoy.

Photo courtesy of National Arts Council.

Today, NAC focuses on four areas for community engagement and participation, to make the arts a more integral and integrated part of everyday life. While arts and culture nodes help bring arts to the heartlands under the “Arts in Your Neighbourhood” programme, NAC also reaches out to the senior population through “Silver Arts”; to the social sector through the “ArtReach” initiative, using the arts for wellness, intervention and therapy; and to the less able, encouraging more inclusive programming with the help of artists, special education teachers and disability professionals.

With funding support from ACSR, the National Heritage Board (NHB) was able to introduce new heritage trails to intensify community outreach, and showcase the stories of key districts and neighbourhoods. The first community museum in Singapore, Our Museum@Taman Jurong, opened in January 2013, creating a space for the community to showcase national collections in their own neighbourhood, as well as personal works and collective memories of Taman Jurong residents.

While these initiatives offered opportunities to enrich heartlands living, they faced several criticisms, such as being too insular and focused on community arts compared to the more global outlook espoused through the RCPs to improve Singapore's economic competitiveness and vibrancy. Nonetheless, the host of initiatives and ongoing efforts broadened both access and outreach of the arts to a wider audience.¹⁸³

REVIEWS FOR THE ARTS AND CULTURE

Reviewing Spatial Provisions for the Arts

In October 2009, a year-long review of the Arts Housing Scheme (AHS) was initiated to better understand how best to serve the growing and varied needs of artists. The AHS had been instrumental in providing affordable and stable spaces for artists, as well as facilities for hire such as those provided by The Substation and the now defunct Sculpture Square.

However, it was no longer viable to retain this one-size-fits-all approach. The AHS' eligibility conditions and operating model had not changed significantly in the previous 20 years; whereas the sector had grown tremendously since the scheme's inception with some 520 new arts companies and societies formed between 2000 and 2009 alone.

Extensive consultations and workshops were held, and initial findings were discussed and refined. Artists sought greater clarity on the criteria for assessing applications, allocating tenancies and renewing leases; and the public sector needed to better account for how funds were optimised. The waitlist of applicants for arts housing was growing, while

the availability of spaces depended on coordination and agreement between government agencies. It was timely to address the AHS' existing inefficiencies, and to find better ways to administer spaces for the growing arts sector.

The Framework for Arts Spaces was announced in 2010, providing greater clarity and infrastructure support for artists, as well as more targeted and diverse options to meet different needs.¹⁸⁴ The new framework allowed an additional 15,000 m² to be provided, as well as more shared facilities, short-term project studios and co-tenancy arrangements, to optimise limited space while still allowing artists to use these spaces over different durations.¹⁸⁵ It also encouraged community engagement in the arts, by incentivising the co-location of arts spaces in civic centres and commercial developments.¹⁸⁶



Aliwal Arts Centre is a multidisciplinary arts centre for traditional and contemporary arts groups, under the Framework for Arts Spaces. Located within the historic Kampong Glam district, it presents the annual Aliwal Arts Night Crawl featuring the area's rich heritage, and the Aliwal Urban Art Festival celebrating art forms inspired by international street culture. Photo courtesy of Arts House Limited.

Reviewing Arts Funding

Alongside the ACSR, the NAC also carried out a grant review, from 2011 to 2013, to streamline arts funding.

Under the New Grants Framework, the existing 14 grant schemes offered for the arts were streamlined into seven targeted, outcome-driven programmes across the value chain. This lessened the degree of confusion. Funding caps were raised, and durations extended, to enable greater certainty over a longer term horizon for grant recipients. The revised framework also made the grant applications available to more potential candidates, such as commercial arts companies.¹⁸⁷ In addition to the revised grants framework, the Arts Fund, under the Tote Board,

doubled annual funding since 2012 from \$750,000 to \$1.5 million to encourage arts groups to reach out to new audiences.

In 2014, a key milestone was the establishment of the \$200 million Cultural Matching Fund by the MCCY, under which the government will provide dollar-for-dollar matching grants for private monetary donations to arts and heritage charities. It aimed to plug a critical gap in funding both day-to-day operations and longer-term developments, attract new donors, and enable a sense of sustainability for the upgrade of institutions and capabilities.¹⁸⁸

EXHIBIT 1:

Then Existing Framework

ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ Major Grant (1, 2 Year)
- ▶ Seed Grant (Traditional Arts)

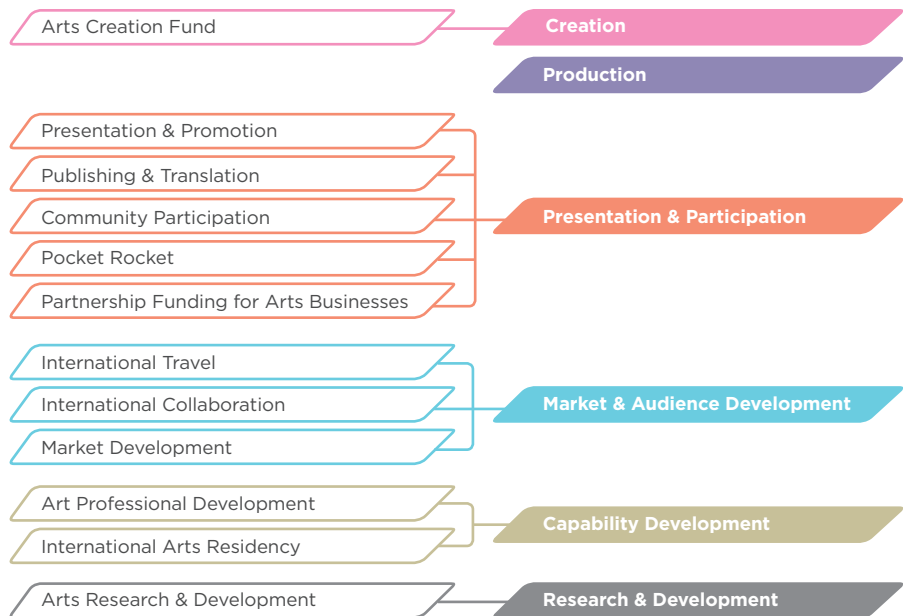
GENERAL GRANTS

- Arts Creation Fund
- Presentation & Promotion
- Publishing & Translation
- Community Participation
- Pocket Rocket
- Partnership Funding for Arts Businesses

Proposed Framework in 2013

ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ Major Grant (3 Year)
- ▶ Seed Grant (All Art Forms)



Streamlining grant schemes for the arts (2013). Following an extensive review, NAC launched a revised Major Company Scheme in 2016. Additionally, the "Research and Development" scheme has been re-named "Research". These changes better reflect the schemes' role in supporting the arts sector.

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LONG TERM PLANNING FOR THE CIVIC DISTRICT

The ACSR recognised the concentration of arts and heritage institutions in the Civic District, and saw the need to enhance its appeal as the cultural hub of the city. Specifically, this required improving the visitor experience, activating public spaces for people to enjoy, and defining a greater sense of place for the area.¹⁸⁹

The NAC and National Parks Board (NParks) were designated as lead agencies, to ensure strong place management and programming.¹⁹⁰ Events were required to complement the civic and cultural character of the district, while also aligning well with nearby place management efforts in the Marina Bay and Bras Basah Bugis Precinct, and heighten the district's identity as a signature destination.

More infrastructure works were implemented to improve pedestrian connectivity and comfort, construct shared walking and cycling paths, and address the shortage of amenities such as restaurants and cafes. More green spaces were opened up as informal spaces or activity corridors, such as the forecourts of the Victoria Theatre and Esplanade Park.

Over the years, the Civic District has become the springboard for programmes such as the Singapore Heritage Festival, the NHB's signature islandwide outreach event since 2004. Public art installations are curated within the district, as distinct visual landmarks. The district has also become the focal point for "Car-Free Sundays", a multi-agency initiative to turn the city centre into a pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly district with a host of activities, on the last Sunday of every month. Another major step has been the provision, since 2013, of free entry to national museums and heritage institutions to all Singaporeans and Permanent Residents.¹⁹¹

The 2015 opening of a new cultural institution, the National Gallery, introduced a welcome addition to the Civic District. The gallery showcased the largest collection of Singapore and Southeast Asian art in the region. Over \$500 million had been invested in the project, with French architectural firm, studioMilou, winning the bid to sensitively design and adapt the iconic colonial structures of the former City Hall and Supreme Court into a visual arts institution for Singapore. Previous successes in adapting historical and public buildings for arts and cultural uses had laid the foundation for this ambitious endeavour:

"When George Yeo was the first minister of MITA, he had a great interest in conserving old buildings. And it was he who decided that he wanted to move his ministry into the Old Hill Street Police Station,

even though a lot of the staff members didn't like it. He was insistent that we should reuse this old building. Nobody else wanted it. He very bravely said that he would make this the home of MITA. And it was also he who decided that we would reuse two historic old school buildings: SJI and Tao Nan as museums as well as the colonial secretariat building [at] Empress Place. So these were all the result of George Yeo's vision to reuse historic buildings. I think the success of these initiatives — SJI, Tao Nan and Empress Place — had emboldened some of us to then make a bid, many years later, for two iconic buildings — City Hall, Supreme Court — to be retrofitted to become a new museum. We felt that given their histories, they shouldn't be turned into a hotel."¹⁹²

Professor Tommy Koh, Ambassador-at-Large at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former Chairman of the National Heritage Board

The project took 10 years, facing considerable scepticism from within the Cabinet as well as competing proposals to put the historic buildings to other uses such as government offices, heritage tourism or commercial development. However the leadership and persuasiveness of Dr Lee Boon Yang, former Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts, and the late Dr Balaji Sadasivan, former Senior Minister of State for Information, Communications and the Arts, bore fruit.¹⁹³ Today, the once intimidating national monuments invite people from all walks of life to enter, and to be inspired by art.



National Gallery Singapore occupies two national monuments, the former Supreme Court and City Hall.

Photo courtesy of Tony Hisgett, <http://flic.kr/p/R5r1Rt>, CC BY 2.0.



Aerial view of the Civic District in the evening.

Photo courtesy of William Cho, <http://flic.kr/p/nHjYIM>, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

While the Civic District is now livelier than before, stakeholders have raised several proposals for improving the area's place-making and management. During consultations, different stakeholders have advocated distinct identities for the district, ranging from "a place balancing solemnness and vibrancy", to "a place where old meets new".¹⁹⁴ This divergence has posed challenges for promoting a single core identity for the district. Arts and cultural institutions could also be better planned and integrated with areas in which people eat, work and play, so that people can easily access arts and cultural sites during their normal routines rather than having to deliberately detour in order to do so.¹⁹⁵ There was also seen to be a need to balance the memorable, but possibly transient, impact of large scale festivals with long term structural improvements in the Civic District. As a more attractive venue, it could facilitate community-oriented, spontaneous ground-up activity all year round, to enable a more sustained vibrancy and liveliness to the area.¹⁹⁶

In 2016, the government announced a \$3 million boost over the ensuing three years to ramp up place-making efforts in the Civic District, so as to deepen the area's distinctive character. It is a work in progress, as all parties seek to make the Civic District a unique and more pleasant area contributing to a better quality of life.

Place-making efforts across stakeholders also extended beyond the Civic District, with areas such as Keong Saik Street, Orchard Road and parts of Kampong Glam made temporary "car-free" zones with road closures. This helped facilitate various community-initiated activities, e.g., art-making and street performances, helping to enliven public spaces while making arts and cultural appreciation and participation more accessible.

BEYOND THE CITY CENTRE: CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT FOR VISUAL ART

Prior to the Arts and Culture Strategic Review (ACSR), a nationwide review was initiated to strategise Singapore's next phase of development. The Economic Strategies Committee (ESC) was formed in May 2009 to make key recommendations on the city's priorities for sustained and inclusive growth as it faced a more diversified and globalised economy.¹⁹⁷ The committee recognised that, while Singapore was highly recognised as a business-friendly and liveable city, it was still lagging behind in global city standards in the area of culture, while other competing Asian cities such as Hong Kong and Seoul had begun developing master plans to accelerate their own cultural development and become hubs for the arts.¹⁹⁸ The committee emphasised the need for Singapore to keep pace with such cities in order to be recognised as a cultural capital.

Gillman Barracks (formerly known as Gillman Village) was thus identified to become a prominent contemporary arts industry cluster, anchored by a mix of related business and recreational uses. Formerly built for the British Army during Singapore's colonial days, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) had recognised Gillman Barracks as a site with unique architectural and historical characteristics, surrounded by lush greenery and nature trails. It was also ideally located near the Civic District



Location of Gillman Barracks, in proximity to nearby arts, culture and lifestyle belts (2011).

Photo courtesy of Economic Development Board.

and arts belts at Little India and Chinatown, as well as lifestyle business clusters along Wessex Estate and Holland Village. Additionally, contemporary art as a genre had dominated the visual arts industry, with increasing local and regional demand from middle to upper class consumers. It was viewed as having the versatility to draw on both the traditional fine arts and other industry fields such as architecture, design and mass media, thus adding to its potential for growth.

Gillman Barracks opened with fanfare on 15 November 2012; however it quickly faced challenges, with low sales and footfall as well as poor amenities.^{199,200} A majority of its original gallery tenants chose not to renew their leases. Government agencies decided to make the venue more accessible and convenient in order to enhance the visitor experience and not cater solely to niche crowds. Infrastructure, programming and public outreach were improved by working with tenants, associations and partner agencies such as the Singapore Tourism Board (STB). The Economic Development Board (EDB) and NAC also set up a Gillman Barracks Programme Office in 2015, to strengthen its identity and appeal.

BEYOND THE CITY CENTRE: CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT FOR VISUAL ART

Continued ...

Today, the situation has improved, with a more diverse tenant mix, affordable food and beverage outlets and complementary retail stores. Though it remains uncertain whether the increase in footfall will translate to increased sales for commercial galleries, there is greater optimism for the cluster. Gillman Barracks is now home to respected galleries such as Chan + Hori Contemporary and FOST Gallery,²⁰¹ as well as art education organisation Art Outreach Singapore and independent charity Playeum, which encourages play and creativity in learning, particularly amongst disadvantaged children. The introduction of the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore as an arts research centre within Gillman Barracks, with its residency programmes and curatorial work, provided a key platform for exchange between scholars, practitioners and art enthusiasts.²⁰² Anchor events such as the annual “Art after Dark”,²⁰³ public art trails and family-friendly programmes bring more activity and liveliness to the area.



Gillman Barracks' signature event Art After Dark during Singapore Art Week 2017.
Photo courtesy of Gillman Barracks.

CONTINUING SUPPORT

The state of the arts and cultural landscape has progressed, as Singapore grows to become a global city and a home that can engage and inspire its people. The Singapore Cultural Statistics 2016 has shown an overall increase in arts and cultural activities, with an attendant increase in consumption. There was also a steady increase in the nominal value-add of the sector, from \$1.42 billion in 2009 following RCP III, to about \$1.7 billion in 2014. In particular, the level of support was high during the city-state's 50th anniversary in 2015, as all across the island people celebrated through a wide range of events, visiting the nation's cultural institutions and landmarks, and participating in the various arts and cultural offerings that year.²⁰⁴

As the city continues to modernise, there is a need to preserve existing traditional practices and keep them alive for future generations to understand and enjoy.

To achieve this, the NAC launched a master plan for the performing arts, including a traditional arts plan to nurture the next generation of talents and audiences for the traditional arts.²⁰⁵ Funding to traditional arts groups doubled from 2011 to 2015, and a further \$25 million was committed to the traditional arts scene until 2020. NAC continued its strong support for the development of traditional arts practices, with these groups comprising more than one-third of recent Major Grant recipients. \$7 million has also been invested in the redevelopment of the Stamford Arts Centre,²⁰⁶ to be opened in 2018 as a dedicated space for traditional arts groups to rejuvenate their practice, collaborate with contemporary artists from surrounding arts belts, and remain relevant and interesting to new audiences.

In terms of heritage, the NHB commissioned a nationwide survey on tangible and intangible cultural heritage, in 2015 and 2016 respectively.^{207,208} This national repository can enhance Singapore's understanding of its past and cross-cultural appreciation, help deepen citizens' sense of shared identity, and guide heritage planning. In 2017, MCCY announced the development of a strategic Heritage Plan under NHB; a holistic national blueprint to guide the heritage sector. The plan aims to take stock of past efforts and envision long-term goals for the sector for 2030 and beyond. The first edition of the plan is expected to be released in 2018, following extensive consultations with government agencies, heritage stakeholders and the public, charting new strategies and initiatives for the next five years until 2022 towards achieving this long-term vision.



Traditional puppetry performance by Ching Kang Huay Kuan at Bukit Pasoh during the Singapore Heritage Festival 2017.

Photo courtesy of Choo Yut Shing, <https://flic.kr/p/UzDdxP>, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Beyond policies and schemes, there remains a balancing of the state-artist relationship in the city. The state had taken a more forceful stance in the past when dealing with artistic and social critiques, from executing the Internal Security Act²⁰⁹ against theatre practitioners in the 1980s, to an almost 10-year-long funding veto from 1994 to 2003 against performance art and forum theatre, with authorities concerned that unscripted acts and unplanned audience participation posed risks to public order.²¹⁰ State funding was also conditional on the need to safeguard a sense of social harmony and national values, even as the arts may challenge the status quo. As the arts landscape expands, complementing new urban plans and programmes is a growing metaphysical space for dialogue and debate between state, artist and businesses, and the public, to foster support from all sectors for culture and the arts, and realise its value for the city.

CONCLUSION

“ A civilisation is defined as much by its arts and culture as it is by its technology, its power or its prosperity. Creating jobs, attracting investments, training and upgrading workers, staying competitive in the world economy — these are all essential. But ‘man does not live by bread alone’. Human beings need the arts and culture to nourish our souls... We certainly do not wish Singapore to be a first-world economy but a third-rate society, with a people who are well off but uncouth. We want to be a society rich in spirit, a gracious society where people are considerate and kind to each other, and as Mencius said, where we treat all elders as we treat our own parents, and other children as our own children.²¹¹

Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore

Through the transformational journey of Singapore from a perceived cultural desert to the city for culture and the arts that it is today, two key principles stood out.

First, master planning has played a critical role in developing the arts and cultural landscape of the city. These long-term plans included the inaugural 1989 blueprint for the arts, three successive editions of the Renaissance City Plans, and the Arts and Culture Strategic Review.

These broad frameworks were fleshed out through supplementary plans and reports to review and amend the status quo, and push for new developments in infrastructure, programming, education and funding. Planning for the arts and culture was not a smooth or linear process, but rather iterative and, at times, resulting in dead ends or shelved proposals. Planning was challenging because Singapore’s plans did not consist simply of physical spaces and technocratic policies. They attempted to articulate and define the nation’s cultural values and priorities, and the appropriate place for the arts and culture in a rapidly modernising society. This then laid the foundation for the spaces and schemes which followed.

Second, collaboration across stakeholders was important to achieve progress. While government plans and funds helped facilitate growth, equally crucial was the need for private sector support (e.g., through curating spaces and programmes, or corporate giving), and for the people to be invested in the arts (e.g., as paid audiences, volunteers or philanthropists). Collaboration and coordination across disciplines also requires listening to various perspectives, resolving on the challenges and trade-offs needed in support of a common vision:

“We need planners who think along different time frames. Within the planning process, we must have not only engineers, architects and mathematicians, but also philosophers, historians and artists in the conversation. We should be multi-dimensional and organic. Otherwise, it is cold, it’s just an engineering facility. There should be a sense that... ‘Oh, if I didn’t include a historian or a philosopher, the deliberation of what we are trying to create, which is a habit for human beings enabling them to flourish fully, is simply not complete.’ It’s like an orchestra without certain key instruments which cannot stir the human soul.”²¹²

George Yeo, former Minister for Information and the Arts



People enjoying free outdoor concerts at the Esplanade Outdoor Theatre.
Photo courtesy of Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay.

Beyond tangible spatial planning and development is the intangible space for the expression of alternative ideas, narratives and debates, on issues that resonate within a society. At times, the right to artistic expression is contested, and the boundaries of individual and state responsibility collide. Sometimes, stakeholders disagree over what is civil and tasteful, or what is offensive and unnecessary. Singapore has a reputation as a strict city with a tough stance on censorship in the interest of maintaining order and social cohesion, especially on issues dealing with politics, race and religion. This metaphorical space for the arts has opened up over the years, and while what was once deemed taboo has become more acceptable now, the understanding between the state and artists continues to be tested when controversial works arise.²¹³

In an increasingly open and vocal society in which information is readily accessible and views are often diverse and complex, Singapore continues to balance the need for regulation with the need for safe spaces — for art-making, and for fostering discussion and debate that will hopefully engender mutual respect and trust.

To develop the arts and culture of a city, there must be a fundamental understanding of what the arts and culture mean to its people. In the 1989 blueprint for the arts, the arts and culture was seen as an essential part of everyday life, and not just as an afterthought in urban development. This message has been consistently repeated in each subsequent plan. It is challenging to foster a mindset that the arts and culture is necessary for a mature and empathetic society. To do so requires constant dialogue and communication between state actors, artists and practitioners, and the general public.

Above all, Singapore's experience shows that leaders need to define a vision and plan for the arts landscape, and commit to its realisation. Champions within the public service, and amongst eminent thinkers, artists and practitioners, influenced the evolution of this vision. Their approach was planned, challenges were overcome, and ideals adapted to suit practical realities. They continue to work tirelessly for the arts and culture in Singapore, fostering pride and identity amongst Singaporeans and boosting their sense of place in the world. This can inspire others, and nurture more champions for the development of culture and the arts in Singapore.

1800s

- ▶ Beginnings of the National Library and the National Museum of Singapore, housed in the Singapore Institution.

1905

- ▶ Opening of the Victoria Memorial Hall, later renamed the Victoria Concert Hall in 1979.

1937

- ▶ Drafting of the "Cultural Improvement of Singapore" charter.

1938

- ▶ Establishment of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA).

1959

- ▶ Formation of the Ministry of Culture.
- ▶ Launch of the Aneka Ragam Ra'ayat.

1960

- ▶ Opening of the National Library building at Stamford Road.
- ▶ Formation of the People's Association (PA), employing arts and cultural activities in support of its mission to foster racial harmony and social cohesion.

1963

- ▶ Opening of the National Theatre at River Valley Road.

1965

- ▶ Opening of the former Baharuddin Vocational Institute, Singapore's first tertiary school for manual and applied arts.
- ▶ Opening of the Singapore Conference Hall.

1969

- ▶ Establishment of the Kreta Ayer People's Theatre.

1971

- ▶ Formation of the Preservation of Monuments Board (PMB).

1977

- ▶ Launch of the Singapore Festival of Arts.

1978

- ▶ Establishment of the Singapore Cultural Foundation.

1979

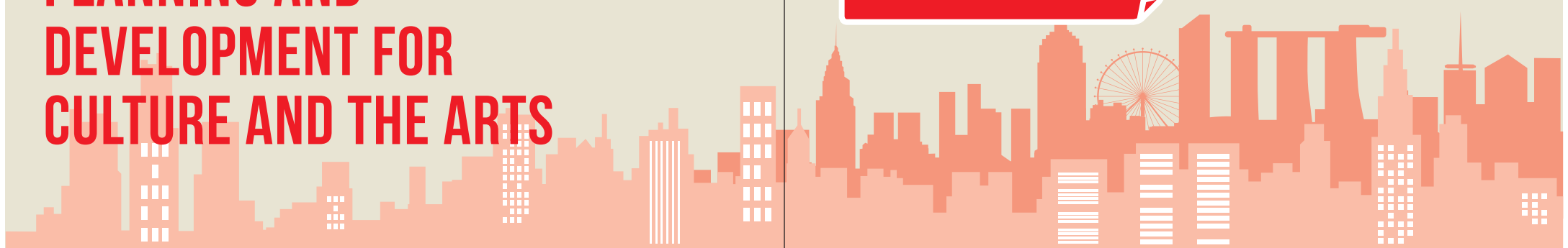
- ▶ Establishment of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra.
- ▶ Launch of the Cultural Medallion.

TIMELINE: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Before 1960

1960

1970



1982

- ▶ Launch of the Music Elective Programme.

1983

- ▶ Launch of the Patron of the Arts Awards.

1984

- ▶ Establishment of LASALLE College of the Arts (LASALLE).
- ▶ Launch of the Art Elective Programme.
- ▶ Closure of the National Theatre.

1985

- ▶ Dissolution of the Ministry of Culture, with arts and culture promotion under the Ministry of Community Development (MCD).
- ▶ Establishment of the Arts Housing Scheme (AHS).
- ▶ Opening of the Telok Ayer Performing Arts Centre, the first property under the AHS.

1986

- ▶ Release of the first Conservation Master Plan by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA).
- ▶ Launch of the Singapore Writers Festival.

1987

- ▶ Launch of the Semi-Residential Status in Theatre Scheme (SRSITS).

1988

- ▶ Formation of the Singapore Totalisator Board (Tote Board).
- ▶ Release of the Master Plan of the Civic and Cultural District (draft) by URA.

1989

- ▶ Release of the "Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts".

1990

- ▶ Formation of the Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA).
- ▶ Establishment of the Creative Services Strategic Business Unit within the Economic Development Board (EDB).
- ▶ Opening of The Substation.

1991

- ▶ Release of Concept Plan 1991, "Living the Next Lap: Towards a Tropical City of Excellence", supported by the Culture Master Plan.
- ▶ Formation of the National Arts Council (NAC).

1980

1990



1992

- ▶ Incorporation of the Singapore Arts Centre Company, later renamed The Esplanade Co. Ltd in 1997.

1993

- ▶ Formation of the National Heritage Board (NHB).
- ▶ Launch of the Festival of Asian Performing Arts.

1994

- ▶ Launch of the Shell-NAC Arts Scholarship for overseas tertiary studies in the arts.

1995

- ▶ Formation of the National Library Board (NLB).
- ▶ Establishment of the Tote Board Arts Grant.

1996

- ▶ Launch of the NAC-Esso Concert in the Park series offering free outdoor performances for the public.
- ▶ Opening of the Singapore Art Museum (SAM).

1997

- ▶ Release of the Development Guide Plan (DGP) for the Museum Planning Area.
- ▶ Establishment of the Art in Transit Programme by the Land Transport Authority.
- ▶ Opening of the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) at Armenian Street.

1998

- ▶ Launch of the Singapore Film Commission.
- ▶ Completion of Chinatown Arts Belt.
- ▶ Release of the "Creative Singapore: A Renaissance Nation in the Knowledge Age" report.

1999

- ▶ Launch of the Civic District Trail, Singapore's first permanent heritage trail.
- ▶ Launch of the NAC-Shell Community Arts Series, bringing arts to the heartlands.
- ▶ Completion of Waterloo Street Arts Belt.
- ▶ Formation of the Singapore Arts Festival, through a merger of the Singapore Festival of Arts and the Festival of Asian Performing Arts.

2000

- ▶ Release of Renaissance City Plan I ("Renaissance City Report").
- ▶ Release of "Library 2000: Investing in a Learning Nation" report.
- ▶ Co-location of arts housing facilities within community centres.
- ▶ Opening of the Heritage Conservation Centre under the NHB.

2001

- ▶ Completion of Little India Arts Belt.
- ▶ Expansion of MITA to become the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA).

1990

2000

2002

- ▶ Opening of the Esplanade, Theatres on the Bay.
- ▶ Opening of the Singapore Tyler Print Institute.
- ▶ Release of the “Creative Industries Development Strategy: Propelling Singapore’s Creative Economy” report.
- ▶ Incorporation of The Old Parliament House Limited, later renamed Arts House Limited in 2014.
- ▶ Release of the Public Sculptures Masterplan.

2003

- ▶ Inaugural class of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music.
- ▶ Relocation of the ACM to Empress Place.
- ▶ Opening of The Arts House at the Old Parliament.

2004

- ▶ Closure of the National Library building at Stamford Road.
- ▶ Launch of the Singapore Heritage Festival.
- ▶ Release of the “Report of the Committee on Specialised Arts School”.

2005

- ▶ Release of Renaissance City Plan II.
- ▶ Inauguration of Singapore Season, showcasing Singapore’s artistic achievements in key global cities.
- ▶ Opening of the National Library at Victoria Street, and the Drama Centre within the National Library.
- ▶ Launch of Noise Singapore.
- ▶ Launch of the Art Incentive Scheme.

2006

- ▶ Inauguration of the Patron of Heritage Awards.
- ▶ Launch of the Singapore Biennale.

2007

- ▶ Opening of the former Old School at Mount Sophia.

2008

- ▶ Release of Renaissance City Plan III.
- ▶ Launch of the Singapore Night Festival.
- ▶ Opening of SAM at 8Q, and the Peranakan Museum.
- ▶ Release of the inaugural Singapore Cultural Statistics.
- ▶ Establishment of the School of the Arts (SOTA).

2010

- ▶ Establishment of the NHB Academy, which later evolved into the Culture Academy in 2015.
- ▶ Establishment of the new Framework for Arts Spaces, following a review of the AHS.

2000

2010

2011

- ▶ Launch of the Traditional Arts Plan by NAC.

2012

- ▶ Release of "The Report of the Arts and Culture Strategic Review".
- ▶ Opening of Gillman Barracks.
- ▶ Restructuring of MICA into the new Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY).
- ▶ Development of an island-wide network of Arts and Culture Nodes.

2013

- ▶ Announcement of free entry to all national museums and heritage institutions for Singaporeans and Permanent Residents.

2014

- ▶ Launch of the Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA), after a review of the Singapore Arts Festival.
- ▶ Establishment of the Cultural Matching Fund.
- ▶ Launch of the Public Art Trust.
- ▶ Release of URA Master Plan 2014, incorporating plans to enhance the "Civic and Cultural District by the Bay".

2015

- ▶ Singapore designated UNESCO Creative City of Design.
- ▶ Opening of National Gallery Singapore.

2016

- ▶ Implementation of nation-wide surveys on tangible and intangible heritage.

2017

- ▶ Opening of the Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre.
- ▶ Announcement of a national Heritage Plan, for release in 2018.

2010



ENDNOTES

- ¹ Ang, H. S. (Ed.). (1991). *Dialogues with S. Rajaratnam: Former Senior Minister in the Prime Minister's Office*. Singapore: Shin Min Daily News, p. 148.
- ² There were various other cultural venues built during colonial days, such as Garrick Theatre and Jubilee Theatre, once popular with film-going audiences until their eventual closure for redevelopment.
- ³ Culture: Starting on a new note? (1979, December 22). *The Straits Times*, p. 6.
- ⁴ Preserving the Culture of Singapore. (1937, July 4). *Sunday Tribune*, Singapore, p. 13.
- ⁵ The use of the term 'Malayan Culture' to build a common progressive culture was a pragmatic move. While acknowledging the nation's colonial past, it helped emphasise a cross-cultural identity rather than race, and its links with Peninsular Malaya with whom Singapore was pushing for a merger. Kennie Ting underscores this relationship between heritage and national identity eloquently in his book, Ting, K. (2015). *Heritage. Singapore Chronicles Series*. Singapore: Straits Times Press.
- ⁶ Ministry of Culture. (1959). *State of Singapore Annual Report 1959*, pp. 189-206. Government Printing Office, Singapore.
- ⁷ Liew, C. C. (2015). The Evolving Role of Cultural Administrators in Singapore. In R. Lee (Ed.), *Arts Hats in Renaissance City: Reflections & Aspirations of Four Generations of Art Personalities* (pp. 19-27). Singapore: World Scientific Publishing.
- ⁸ National Library Board, Singapore. (2014). Campaign against Yellow Culture is launched: 8th June 1959. In *HistorySG*. Retrieved from <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/history/events/47129576-377a-44fe-a05f-feddaf0cb765>
- ⁹ Jek, Yuen Thong (1970, August 14). *Speech by the Minister for Culture for the opening of the National Day Art Exhibition at the Victoria Memorial Hall*. National Archives of Singapore.
- ¹⁰ Ng, I. (2010). *The Singapore Lion: a Biography of S. Rajaratnam*, p. 322. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- ¹¹ Lee: We'll breed new strain of culture. (1959, August 3). *The Straits Times*, p. 4.
- ¹² The People's Concert makes its rural debut. (1959, October 5). *The Straits Times*, p. 4.
- ¹³ Lim Tin Seng charts the glory days and subsequent decline of these three amusements parks on Biblioasia: Lim, T. S. (2016). Old-World Amusement Parks. *BiblioAsia*, 12(1). Retrieved from <http://www.nlb.gov.sg/biblioasia/2016/04/02/old-world-amusement-parks/>
- ¹⁴ Frost and Balasingamchow describe the performances and drama, the appeals and allure vividly in their book, "Singapore: A Biography", in which the then-Singapore Free Press had described the Worlds as a place where "laughter and happiness, and the comedies and tragedies of life" can be found. Frost, M. R., & Balasingamchow, Y. (2012). *Singapore: A Biography*, pp. 213-215. Singapore: Editions Didier Millet; National Museum of Singapore.
- ¹⁵ White, T. R. (1997). When Singapore was Southeast Asia's Hollywood. *The Arts*, 5, pp. 21-24.
- ¹⁶ Loyalty Week: National Theatre Fund launched. (1959, November 21). *The Straits Times*, p. 16.
- ¹⁷ National Theatre: The first step. (1961, March 21). *The Straits Times*, p. 4; Theatre 'Brick Sale' is On. (1961, February 21). *The Straits Times*, p. 4. To encourage public contributions to the development of the National Theatre, around 200,000 coloured sketches of the Theatre were printed in the frame of a brick, and sold to the masses.
- ¹⁸ Years later, the retrofitting of air-conditioning and additional rooms also relied on community donations.
- ¹⁹ Recollection by local blogger Victor Koo, who blogged about his experiences and memories here: <http://victorkoo.blogspot.sg/2005/09/vanishing-scenes-of-singapore-part-1.html>
- ²⁰ Theatre to be demolished. (1984, January 21). *The Straits Times*, p. 1. The four-man committee which undertook the safety study on the theatre's cantilever roofs comprised Dr S. Banerjee, senior executive engineer of the PWD structural design and investigation branch; Prof Lee Seng Lip, Head of the National University of Singapore's Department of Civil Engineering; Mr Y. C. Wong and Mr Goh Joon Yap, both engineers.
- ²¹ We should not pull down the National Theatre. (1984, January 14). *The Straits Times*, p. 23; A 'cultural gateway' on the water edge. (1984, January 22). *The Straits Times*, p. 19.
- ²² The Kallang Theatre opened in 1970 as one of the largest cinemas in Singapore, before it was converted into a live performance venue to provide another option for a medium-sized theatre following the National Theatre's demolition.
- ²³ The Ministry of Culture was dissolved in 1985, and arts and culture promotion came under the portfolio of the Ministry of Community Development (MCD). Specifically, the MCD's Cultural Affairs division oversaw this task, alongside other divisions overseeing sports and recreation, and community services. It was telling that the arts were still not high on national priorities.
- ²⁴ Lim, Juliana. (2015, May). *On the Inside and Outside: Theatre from the Viewpoint of an Arts Manager and Audience Member*. Interview for the Esplanade's Studio 50. Retrieved from <http://julianalim.wordpress.com/2015/06/27/on-the-inside-and-outside-theatre-from-the-viewpoint-of-an-arts-manager-and-audience-member/>
- ²⁵ Lim, J. (2010, September 26). Arts Housing Scheme: \$10 a classroom a month. [blog post] Retrieved from <https://julianalim.wordpress.com/2009/05/24/arts-housing-scheme-10-a-classroom-a-month/>
- ²⁶ Today, the rental charge for arts housing is charged by the Singapore Land Authority (SLA).
- ²⁷ Life-centre for nine arts groups. (1989, May 16). *The Straits Times*, p. 5.
- ²⁸ The Telok Ayer Performing Arts Centre (TAPAC) was closed in 2013, when the site was awarded for commercial land use.
- ²⁹ Beyond the AHS, other artists sought their own spaces. The Artists Village (TAV), founded by Tang Da Wu in 1988, was often cited as Singapore's first contemporary artist cluster experimenting with art, particularly along streets and public spaces. They set up a studio at a more rural, rustic side of Singapore, Ulu Sembawang (provided by Tang's relative), but it had to close shortly after in 1990 for urban redevelopment, and TAV relocated briefly to other locations, before continuing as an artist group without a fixed home. For a comprehensive look into TAV's history, do read "The Artists Village: 20 Years On" (2009). Singapore: Singapore Art Museum and The Artists Village.
- ³⁰ Wong, Kan Seng. (1990, September 16). *Speech by Mr Wong Kan Seng, Minister for Community Development and Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the Official Opening of "The Substation: A Home for the Arts" at 45 Armenian Street* [Singapore Government Press Release]. National Archives of Singapore.
- ³¹ The Substation, Singapore. (1994). *The Substation: A home for the arts*.
- ³² Debate over future of Substation. (2016, March 1). *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/arts/debate-over-future-of-substation>
- ³³ Hoe, S. F., Liu, J., & Tan, T. H. (2016, January 7). Getting to the heart of great public spaces. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/getting-to-the-heart-of-great-public-spaces>
- ³⁴ It was later renamed the Theatre Residency Scheme in 1989.
- ³⁵ MCD also had a Project Grant scheme which catered for ad hoc cultural events, whose recipients were often amateur and student groups. The Annual Grant scheme, on the other hand, served to encourage groups with more sustained levels of activity, such as having at least two major events a year.
- ³⁶ The scheme assisted productions such as TheatreWorks' "Army Daze", a popular local play staged for two seasons in 1987. The play, a humorous commentary on life in the Singapore Army, would be restaged in later years, as well as adapted into a book and a full-length feature film.
- ³⁷ *Cultural Affairs Division: Topics for the Press Dialogue on 21 Nov 1986*. (1986). National Archives of Singapore. The dialogue sessions were an avenue for artists' feedback, allowing the Ministry to examine possible solutions for implementation such as the SRSIT. These were also sessions for the Ministry to discuss whether the organisations would be open to taking up existing activities under the Ministry's charge, e.g., ideas on engaging overseas professionals to train local talents, forming the Singapore Artists' Association, and more.
- ³⁸ Gwee, J., & Wong, G. (2009). *A Chronology of Singapore's Creative Industries*. Singapore: Civil Service College. The Baharuddin Vocational Institute, established in the 1960s, was eventually absorbed into the Temasek Polytechnic in 1990, under its School of Design, offering diploma courses in design and architecture.
- ³⁹ The AEP and MEP are rolled out to a select few schools at the secondary and pre-university levels, where interested students have to qualify for admission tests proving a predisposition for the arts.
- ⁴⁰ Goh, Keng Swee. (1973, February 16). *Speech by Dr Goh Keng Swee, Minister of Defence, at the Opening of the SEIWAEN (Japanese Garden)* [Singapore Government Press Statement]. National Archives of Singapore.

- ⁴¹ Tan, B. (2012). Goh Keng Swee's Cultural Contributions and the Making of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. In E. Chew, & C. G. Kwa, (Eds.), *Goh Keng Swee: A Legacy in Public Service* (pp. 279-298). Singapore: World Scientific Publishing. Here, Prof Bernard Tan shares a more detailed personal account of Dr Goh's interest and efforts towards Singapore's cultural development, through the setting up of the SSO.
- ⁴² Tan, S. S. (2007). *Goh Keng Swee: A Portrait*, pp. 178-182. Singapore: Editions Didier Millet.
- ⁴³ Tan, B. (2015). Music in Singapore since the 1960s: A Personal Account. In R. Lee (Ed.), *Arts Hats in Renaissance City: Reflections & Aspirations of Four Generations of Art Personalities* (pp. 212-225). Singapore: World Scientific Publishing.
- ⁴⁴ Ong, Teng Cheong. (1978, December 11). *Speech by Mr Ong Teng Cheong, Acting Minister for Culture at the Opening of the Second Festival of Arts at the Victoria Theatre*. [Singapore Government Press Release]. Publicity Division, Ministry of Culture. National Archives of Singapore.
- ⁴⁵ Ng, T., & Tan, L. (2005). *Ong Teng Cheong: Planner, Politician, President*. Singapore: Editions Didier Millet. Ong's contributions towards the arts and culture community, and the spirit of his work in this endeavor, are wonderfully captured in this book under the chapter "Patron of the Arts", pp. 81-97.
- ⁴⁶ Ong, Teng Cheong. (1979, February 3). *Speech by the Acting Minister for Culture Mr Ong Teng Cheong, at the inauguration of the Singapore Cultural Foundation Funds Appeal Committee at the Mandarin Hotel* [Singapore Government Press Release]. Publicity Division, Ministry of Culture. National Archives of Singapore.
- ⁴⁷ A Foundation for a bigger cultural role. (1987, December 9). *The Straits Times*, p. 23.
- ⁴⁸ Letter to Mr Ong Teng Cheong, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts. In *Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts*. (1989, April 14).
- ⁴⁹ Chok Tong's new goals. (1985, February 27). *The Straits Times*, p. 1.
- ⁵⁰ The strategy for a nation of excellence. (1986, December 2). *The Straits Times*, p. 26.
- ⁵¹ Ministry of Trade and Industry. (1986). *Report of the Economic Committee - The Singapore Economy: New Directions*.
- ⁵² Economic Committee, Singapore. (1985). *Report of the Sub-Committee on the Service Sector*.
- ⁵³ Promotion of the cultural and entertainment service industry would focus on the following areas: commercial and non-commercial performing arts; museums and art galleries; entertainment centres; and theme parks.
- ⁵⁴ *Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts*. (1989, April 14), p. 19. State funding for the Cultural Affairs Division, National Theatre Trust and the Singapore Cultural Foundation in 1987 amounted to about 38% of the combined budget; for the national Singapore Festival of Arts in particular, about 10% of costs were borne by the government. The remaining expenses were funded through donations, sponsorships and other sources.
- ⁵⁵ Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts. (1989, April 14). *Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts*.
- ⁵⁶ Lee, Tzu Yang. (2015, November 3). *CLC Interview with Lee Tzu Yang* (unpublished transcript). Centre for Liveable Cities, Ministry of National Development, Singapore.
- ⁵⁷ The Statutes of the Republic of Singapore. (2014, December 31). National Arts Council Act (Chapter 193A). (1991 revised ed.).
- ⁵⁸ The National Archives and its Oral History Department would eventually be transferred under the care of the NLB.
- ⁵⁹ The Statutes of the Republic of Singapore. (2014, December 31). National Heritage Board Act (Chapter 196A). (1993 revised ed.).
- ⁶⁰ The Statutes of the Republic of Singapore. (2012, November 1). National Library Board Act (Chapter 197). (1996 revised ed.).
- ⁶¹ Tan, C. N. (2015). Preparing for the Creative Economy: the Fusion of Arts, Business and Technology. In R. Lee (Ed.), *Arts Hats in Renaissance City: Reflections & Aspirations of Four Generations of Art Personalities* (pp. 2-7). Singapore: World Scientific Publishing.
- ⁶² Kong, L. (2000). Cultural Policy in Singapore: Negotiating Economic and Socio-cultural Agendas. *Geoforum*, 31(4), 409-424.
- ⁶³ Khor, C. (2002). Blazing New Trails. In C. B. Chan (Ed.), *Heart Work* (pp. 268-274). Singapore: Economic Development Board.
- ⁶⁴ The phrase "Art for Arts' Sake" (translated from the original French phrase 'l'art pour l'art' by poet Théophile Gautier) was used in the 19th century as a slogan to appreciate the value and aesthetics of the art itself, without agenda - moral, religious or other.
- ⁶⁵ The STPB was renamed the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) in 1997.
- ⁶⁶ Predating URA's conservation efforts was the setting up of the Preservation of Monuments Board (PMB) in 1971, as a statutory board under the Ministry of National Development, as the national authority identifying and advising on nationally significant sites and monuments worthy of preservation. It was later transferred to MITA in 1997, and then merged as a division under NHB in 2009.
- ⁶⁷ Centre for Liveable Cities, Singapore. (2016). *Urban Systems Studies - Urban Redevelopment: From Urban Squalor to Global City*, pp. 73-74.
- ⁶⁸ Urban Redevelopment Authority, Singapore. (1988, January). *Master Plan of the Civic and Cultural District* (Draft).
- ⁶⁹ URA draws up plans to add life to the Civic and Cultural District. (1988, March 12). *The Business Times*, p. 1.
- ⁷⁰ Civic Centre plan unveiled. (1988, March 12). *The Straits Times*, p. 1.
- ⁷¹ 160 to give views on Master Plan. (1988, May 23). *The Straits Times*, p. 12.
- ⁷² Following the 1991 Concept Plan, URA produced a total of 55 DGPs for each of the subdivided planning areas in Singapore, to help translate vision to reality. The DGPs examined the background, strengths and weaknesses of the areas, before establishing the planning objectives for the area, e.g., in land-use zoning, development intensity and building height. These were made known to developers and the general public, and the compilation of all 55 DGPs shaped the Master Plan 1998.
- ⁷³ Urban Redevelopment Authority, Singapore. (1997). *Museum Planning Area: Planning Report 1997*.
- ⁷⁴ Urban Redevelopment Authority, Singapore. (1991, January). *Living the Next Lap: Towards a Tropical City of Excellence*.
- ⁷⁵ The "heartlands" in Singapore often refer to areas on the outskirts of the city centre, where the majority of the population live in subsidised public housing estates.
- ⁷⁶ Sculpture Square was founded as Singapore's only arts space dedicated to sculpture and three-dimensional art, to provide an exhibition venue for sculptures in the Civic District.
- ⁷⁷ National Arts Council, Singapore. (1997). Adding New Arts Facilities. In *National Art Council Annual Report FY1996/1997*.
- ⁷⁸ The Asian Civilisation Museum (ACM) later moved to the historic Empress Place Building in 2003. Located along the Singapore River, the building had housed British government offices since 1867, and later Singapore government offices. The building was conserved and, in 1997, renovation works began to convert the building with state-of-the-art facilities to house the ACM's growing collection.
- ⁷⁹ These were the Raffles Museum along Stamford Road, now known as the National Museum of Singapore; and the smaller University of Malaya Art Museum, now known as the National University of Singapore (NUS) Museum, which was established in 1955 within the university campus.
- ⁸⁰ The Ng Eng Teng Art Gallery was lauded as the single largest repository of works by one artist, Ng Eng Teng, Singapore's foremost sculptor and a prolific painter and potter. The gallery today has over 1,000 of Ng's works, ranging from sketches and paintings to sculptures, figurines and pottery, donated by Ng himself.
- ⁸¹ Kwok, Kenson. (2006, May 10). *Oral History Interview with Dr Kenson Kwok*. Accession number 002988/14. Disc number 7. Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.
- ⁸² Kwok, K. (2015, April). *National Gallery Singapore: The Latest Addition to City's Cultural Landscape*. Paper presented at FORM's Public Symposium 2015, Perth, Australia. Retrieved from https://wn.com/dr_kenson_kwok_public_symposium_2015
- ⁸³ Kwok, Kenson. (2006, May 10). *Oral History Interview with Dr Kenson Kwok*. Accession number 002988/14. Disc number 7. Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.
- ⁸⁴ Nasir, H. M. (2016, September 10). Old Hill Street Police Station. In *Singapore Infopedia*. Retrieved from National Library Board, Singapore website: http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_727_2005-01-13.html
- ⁸⁵ Yeo, George. (2016, November 2). *CLC Interview with George Yeo* (unpublished transcript). Centre for Liveable Cities, Ministry of National Development, Singapore.
- ⁸⁶ The Esplanade Co. Ltd, Singapore. (2013). *Esplanade, Theatres on the Bay*.
- ⁸⁷ Koh, Tommy. (2016, October 5). *CLC Interview with Prof Tommy Koh* (unpublished transcript). Centre for Liveable Cities, Ministry of National Development, Singapore.
- ⁸⁸ These include the Gothenburg Concert Hall (Sweden); Oslo Concert Hall (Norway); Morton Myerson Symphony Center, Dallas (USA); Calgary Performing Arts Centre (Canada); and more.
- ⁸⁹ Today, it is known as The Esplanade Co. Ltd.

- ⁹⁰ Michael Wilford and Partners later left the project in 1995.
- ⁹¹ Interview with B. G. George Yeo, Minister of Trade and Industry, by Lily Tan and Tisa Ng (2004, June), as part of interviews for the book "Ong Teng Cheong: Planner, Politician, President". Ong Teng Cheong Collection by Lily Tan and Tisa Ng, Accession Number E000003, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.
- ⁹² For a comprehensive look into the journey of the Esplanade development, do read "Esplanade, Theatres on the Bay", published in 2013 by The Esplanade Company Limited. Divided into five chapters, the book provides a behind-the-scenes look into the spirit, design and construction of the Esplanade, sharing the trials and tribulations involved.
- ⁹³ Liu, Thai Ker. (2017, January 5). *CLC Interview with Dr Liu Thai Ker* (unpublished transcript). Centre for Liveable Cities, Ministry of National Development, Singapore.
- ⁹⁴ What performing groups need besides money. (1989, November 10). *The Straits Times*, p. 2.
- ⁹⁵ The Esplanade Co. Ltd, Singapore. (2013). *Esplanade, Theatres on the Bay*, p. 42.
- ⁹⁶ Koh, T. (2015). The Development of the Cultural Ecosystem in Singapore, 1991-2011: A Personal Journey. In R. Lee (Ed.), *Arts Hats in Renaissance City: Reflections & Aspirations of Four Generations of Art Personalities* (pp. 9-17). Singapore: World Scientific Publishing.
- ⁹⁷ Too many eggs in one basket? (2014, 27 March). *The Straits Times*, p. 28.
- ⁹⁸ Six mid-sized theatres venues and their demand. (2017, April 19). *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/arts/six-mid-sized-venues-and-their-demand>
- ⁹⁹ The NAC recognised and funded the following art forms: music, dance, theatre, literary arts and visual arts.
- ¹⁰⁰ Today, a corporate or individual member who donates a minimum of \$50,000 in any one year qualifies for the Patron of the Arts award. Individual members who donate between \$10,000 and \$49,999 qualify for the Friend of the Arts award.
- ¹⁰¹ The Civic District Trail was launched on 29 August 1999, comprising two walking trails totalling 6 km, covering Singapore's history through a series of the city-state's oldest significant landmarks, monuments and buildings. It was a multi-agency project, with NHB working with government stakeholders such as NParks, URA, STB and Land Transport Authority (LTA) in the planning of land use and park usage, trail marketing and travel experiences at the District.
- ¹⁰² National Arts Council, Singapore. (1995). Chairman's Message. In *National Arts Council Annual Report FY1994/1995*, p. 6.
- ¹⁰³ Singapore Totalisator Board. (2016). *About Tote Board: Corporate Governance*. Retrieved from <http://www.toteboard.gov.sg>
- ¹⁰⁴ The Statutes of the Republic of Singapore. (2012, July 31). Singapore Totalisator Board Act (Chapter 305A). (1987 revised ed.).
- ¹⁰⁵ The NAC-AEP is a programme which was established in 1993, which aims to provide access to quality arts courses for students. It provides a curated database of activities across all art forms, e.g., workshops, assembly performances, visits to arts venues and artists' studios, and more, which schools can purchase at subsidised cost. While art and music have been incorporated into the formal school curriculum through the AEP and MEP, this programme sought to provide more options for students' school enrichment activities, and to expand beyond the traditional curriculum. Since its introduction, it has endorsed more than 800 programmes and more than 1,500 arts groups, and participation has grown. As of 2016, almost all participating schools (98%) affirmed the NAC-AEP's goal, and the student majority (more than 70%) expressed greater interest towards the arts. Retrieved from <http://aep.nac.gov.sg>
- ¹⁰⁶ Choo, Thiam Siew. (2008, September 12). *Oral History Interview with Choo Thiam Siew*. Accession number 003354. Disc number 2. Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.
- ¹⁰⁷ The Festival of Asian Performing Arts merged the Singapore Dance Festival, Music Festival, Drama Festival and the Traditional Theatre Festival.
- ¹⁰⁸ The Museum Roundtable comprises a collective of over 50 public and private museums, seeking to promote greater awareness and appreciation of art and heritage, and develop a stronger museum-going culture in Singapore. The Roundtable members collaborate on signature events, such as the city's first MuseumFest in May 1999 in celebration of International Museum Day.
- ¹⁰⁹ Arts Central was positioned as an alternative channel to showcase arts and cultural programming, and promote the local arts scene. It later merged with a kids' programming channel and was rebranded as OKTO in 2008, broadcasting children's, cultural and sports programming. PASSION99.5FM was a dedicated arts radio station in Singapore, profiling local and international music and the arts. It was closed in September 2003 as a result of NAC's decision to redefine its business strategies and resources.
- ¹¹⁰ Ministry of Trade and Industry, Singapore. (2002, September). Creative Industries Development Strategy: Propelling Singapore's Creative Economy. *Report of the ERC Services Subcommittee Workgroup on Creative Industries*.
- ¹¹¹ Kong, L. (2000). Cultural Policy in Singapore: Negotiating Economic and Socio-Cultural Agendas. *Geoforum*, 31(4), 409-424.
- ¹¹² Gwee, J. & Wong, G. (2009). *A Chronology of Singapore's Creative Industries*, p. 13. Singapore: Civil Service College.
- ¹¹³ Brady, D. (1995, December 1). Romancing the Arts: Singapore sets stage for cultural tourism, Wall Street Journal. Cited in L. Kong, C. Ching, & T. L. Chou (Eds.), *Arts, Culture and the Making of Global Cities: Creating New Urban Landscapes in Asia*. UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- ¹¹⁴ The Foreign Artistic Talent Scheme was set up to help retain and boost artistic talent in Singapore, and successful applications have amounted to less than 20 per year within the decade since it was established. Today, the scheme considers specific criteria for candidates to "possess professional experience, achievements and commitment" towards advancing the arts and culture landscape in Singapore, and considers that successful candidates should have a good track record of engaging the arts community and public through the arts. Retrieved from <http://nac.gov.sg/whatwedo/support/capabilityDevelopment/careerNArtisticDevelopment/foreign-Artistic-Talent-Scheme.html>
- ¹¹⁵ Based on Prof T.C. Chang's interviews with Wetterling-Teo Gallery (a joint partnership between Stockholm's Wetterling Gallery and local arts enthusiast/property developer Daniel Teo), and the Asia Pacific arm of Cirque du Soleil, the largest theatrical producer and entertainment troupe based in Montreal, Canada. Chang, T. C. (2001). The Business of Pleasure: Singapore as a Tourism Business Centre. In E. S. Tan, B. S. A. Yeoh, & J. Wang (Eds.), *Tourism Management and Policy: Perspectives from Singapore* (pp. 183-206). Singapore: World Scientific Publishing.
- ¹¹⁶ Debate on President's Address. (1997, June 2). Session no. 1, Vol. 67, Sitting no. 3. *Hansard Singapore*.
- ¹¹⁷ LASALLE was renamed as LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts in 1993, due to Singapore Airline's (SIA) \$15 million contribution towards the arts college's development at the Goodman Road Campus. SIA, who had been actively promoting the arts as part of its corporate sponsorship initiatives, had allocated this \$15 million sum to support the arts, and approached EDB for ideas on how it could best utilise this sum. The initial intent was to use the sum for the establishment of an institute of creativity training, but the idea for this institute was re-formulated into the Ngee Ann Polytechnic's School of Image and Sound Engineering, funded separately. EDB thus proposed for the \$15 million to be provided to LASALLE for its new campus. It rebranded to LASALLE College of the Arts after its move to a city campus at McNally Street in 2007.
- ¹¹⁸ Ministry of Information and the Arts. (2000, March 9). Budget. Session no. 2, Vol. 71, Sitting no. 14. *Hansard Singapore*.
- ¹¹⁹ Ministry of Information and the Arts. (1997, July 25). Budget. Estimates of Expenditure for the Financial Year 1st April, 1997 to 31st March, 1998 (Paper Cmd. 2 of 1997). Session no. 1, Vol. 67, Sitting no. 11. *Hansard Singapore*.
- ¹²⁰ Yeo, G. (2015). Culture and Business. In A. Latif, & H. L. Lee, (Eds.), *George Yeo on Bonsai, Banyan and the Tao* (pp. 245-246). Singapore: World Scientific Publishing.
- ¹²¹ President's Address: Debate on the Address. (1997, 5 June). Session no. 1, Vol. 67, Sitting no. 5. *Hansard Singapore*.
- ¹²² Choy, L. W., Sasitharan, T., & Mahiznan, A. (1998, July). *Singapore as a Renaissance City: Search for a Vision*. Singapore: Institute of Policy Studies.
- ¹²³ Ibid, pp. 16-19. With coherent cultural policies and partnerships for Singapore's growth as a Renaissance City, two possible trajectories could develop: a strong multiculturalism in which there is bridging of social and cultural capital across different communities; and a syncretic 'end-state' where a unique Singaporean culture emerges and anchors people's identity and belonging.
- ¹²⁴ Striving towards Renaissance. (2007, 9 August). *TODAY*, Singapore, p. 42.
- ¹²⁵ Ministry of Information and the Arts, Singapore. (2000). *Renaissance City Report*.
- ¹²⁶ Ibid. While the Renaissance City report iterated previous strategies to provide good infrastructure and facilities, develop the arts sector as an economic driver and go international, there were now distinctive strategic focuses in developing a strong arts and cultural base through research and education, grooming local talent and growing major local arts companies.
- ¹²⁷ Ministry of Trade and Industry, Singapore. (2003). *Economic Contributions of Singapore's Creative Industries*. Retrieved from <http://www.ico-d.org/database/files/library/singapore.pdf>

- ¹²⁸ Cultural Agenda Taskforce, Singapore. (2002, March). *Investing in Singapore's Cultural Capital: A New Agenda for a Creative and Connected Nation*, pp. iii. Cultural Capital was defined here as "the accumulated sum of the nation's creative capacity and our emotional and social bonds to the country and communities, and our deep knowledge of economy, society and world affairs... [and is] the driving force and the measure of a society's ingenuity and creativity".
- ¹²⁹ Ministry of Trade and Industry, Singapore. (2002, September). *Creative Industries Development Strategy: Propelling Singapore's Creative Economy. Report of the ERC Services Subcommittee Workgroup on Creative Industries*.
- ¹³⁰ Ministry of Trade and Industry, Singapore. (2002, November). *Realising our Human Potential: Empowering the Individual, Enhancing the System, Enriching the Environment*. Economic Review Committee: Sub-Committee on Enhancing Human Capital.
- ¹³¹ Lee, Boon Yang. (2005, November 15). *Speech by Mr Lee Boon Yang, Ministry for Information, Communications and the Arts at Beyond 2005: The Global Summit for Creative Industries*. National Archives of Singapore.
- ¹³² Building Singapore's creative industry. (2016, May 26). *TODAY*, Singapore. Retrieved from <http://m.todayonline.com/Singapore/building-singapores-creative-industry>
- ¹³³ Ernst and Young. (2015, December). *Cultural Times: The first global map of cultural and creative industries*. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002357/235710E.pdf>. The study was commissioned by the International Confederation of Authors and Composers Societies (CISAC), with the support of UNESCO.
- ¹³⁴ Singapore designated UNESCO Creative City of Design. (2015, December 11). Retrieved from Channel News Asia, Singapore website: <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/singapore-designated-unesco-creative-city-of-design-8241492>
- ¹³⁵ Parliamentary Debates. (2006, March 2). Budget, Head N - Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Session no. 2, Vol. 81, Sitting no. 5. *Hansard Singapore*.
- ¹³⁶ Tay, A. (2008). Bras Basah Bugis Comes Out Tops. *Skyline*. Urban Redevelopment Authority, Singapore. Retrieved from <http://www.ura.gov.sg/skyline/skyline08/skyline08-04/text/01.htm#>
- ¹³⁷ Urban Redevelopment Authority, Singapore. (2013, November 20). *Circular to Professional Institutes: Urban Design Guidelines for Developments within Bras Basah Bugis Planning Area (part Rochor / part Museum Planning Area)*.
- ¹³⁸ Urban Redevelopment Authority, Singapore. (2004, October 23). *URA unveils wall murals at Bras Basah Bugis - Enlivening the Area with a Distinct Art Identity*. Retrieved from <http://www.ura.gov.sg/uol/media-room/news/2004/oct/pr04-28>
- ¹³⁹ Urban Redevelopment Authority, Singapore. (2008, July 11). *URA's masterplanning efforts for Bras Basah Bugis district wins prestigious Urban Land Institute Award for Excellence 2008: Asia Pacific*. Retrieved from <http://ura.gov.sg/uol/media-room/news/2008/jul/pr08-73#>
- ¹⁴⁰ The NHB underwent a restructuring within the agency, with the BBB precinct management unit created since 2012 specifically to oversee the place-making of BBB. Its function has since been re-organised as part of the Festivals and Precinct Development division at NHB.
- ¹⁴¹ Hoe, S. F., & Liu, J. (2016, March). *IPS-SAM Spotlight on Cultural Policy Series Two: Full Report on Roundtable on Place Management and Placemaking in Singapore*. Singapore: Institute of Policy Studies.
- ¹⁴² *Ibid*, p. 10. Temporary Occupation Licenses (TOLs) are issued by the state for the rental of sites on a fixed short-term basis, or on a renewable basis.
- ¹⁴³ Written Answers to Questions for Oral Answers not answered by 2.00 pm: Preservation of Old Parliament Building. (2002, August 27). Session no. 1, Vol. 75, Sitting no. 6. *Hansard, Singapore*.
- ¹⁴⁴ A new house for the arts. (2004, February 20). *TODAY*, Singapore, p. 42. At its opening phase, The Arts House had an attractive policy to absorb rental costs for performance nights, as well as one-fifth of the events' box-office receipts, in order to facilitate the development of budding local artists.
- ¹⁴⁵ Budget Head Q - Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts. (2008, February 29). Session no. 1, Vol. 84, Sitting no. 8. *Hansard, Singapore*.
- ¹⁴⁶ Queen Street makeover: wider walkways, public art and a play space. (2014, 20 August). *TODAY*, Singapore. Retrieved from <http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/queen-street-makeover-wider-walkways-public-art-and-play-space>
- ¹⁴⁷ For example, under the "Assistance in Infrastructure for Museums Scheme" (AIMS), successful applicants could rent the property from the state for an initial period of three years, with the option to renew for a further two terms (of three years each) subject to mutual agreement on terms.
- ¹⁴⁸ Singapore Land Authority. (2008, October 15). *NHB-SLA press release on request-for-interest for integrated museum and art facilities at Queen Street and Loewen Road*. Retrieved from <http://www.sla.gov.sg/News/articleid/217/parentId/97/year/2008?category=Press%20Releases>
- ¹⁴⁹ Tan, S. B. (2014). *Renting out State Properties: Short Term Uses, Long Term Consequences*. Retrieved from Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore website: <http://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/20140218-State-Properties-Rental-Scheme.pdf>
- ¹⁵⁰ For a detailed explanation of Old School's success as an artistic and creative cluster, in comparison to state-initiated ones like Telok Kurau studios, see Kong, L. (2015). From education to enterprise in Singapore: converting old schools to new artistic and aesthetic use. In L. Kong, C. Ching, & T. Chou, (Eds.), *Arts, Culture and the Making of Global Cities: Creating New Urban Landscapes in Asia* (pp. 191-210). UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- ¹⁵¹ The Necessary Wind was co-located within Marine Parade Community Centre since 6 May 2000, and the Singapore Wind Symphony moved into the Ulu Pandan Community building on 1 November 2000.
- ¹⁵² Tarmugi, Abdullah. (1996, November 16). *Speech by Mr Abdullah Tarmugi, Minister for Community Development at the official opening of Selegie Arts Centre* [Press Release]. National Archives of Singapore.
- ¹⁵³ June Gwee and Neo Boon Siong cover a detailed trajectory of the Singapore library system's development, since the NLB's establishment, in their case study with the Civil Service College, Singapore: Gwee, J., & Neo, B. S. (2013, March). *A Library for the People: A Case Study of the National Library Board*. Retrieved from Civil Service College, Singapore website: <http://www.ccollege.gov.sg/Knowledge/Pages/A-Library-for-the-People-A-Case-Study-of-the-National-Library-Board.aspx>
- ¹⁵⁴ Tan, G. & Foo, S. (2006). Realising its Future through Collaboration with Government, Industry and Community: The Experience of Singapore's National Library Board. *Journal of Library and Information Science*, 31(1), 34-42.
- ¹⁵⁵ Tan, Chin Nam. (2016, October 18). *CLC Interview with Dr Tan Chin Nam* (unpublished transcript). Centre for Liveable Cities, Ministry of National Development, Singapore.
- ¹⁵⁶ National Arts Council, Singapore. (2016, December 5). *New Drama Centre ready in 2005* [Press Release]. Retrieved from <http://www.nac.gov.sg/media-resources/press-releases/New-Drama-Centre-2005.html>
- ¹⁵⁷ National Arts Council, Singapore. (2017). *Building Blocks for a Culture of Creation: A Plan for the Performing Arts*, pp. 20-21. According to the report, a utilisation rate of higher than 80% is considered high, taking into account the maintenance and equipment handling period required for performances, and the wide variation in utilisation rates for venues which are purely for hire, as opposed to venues which are purposefully programmed and consistently managed.
- ¹⁵⁸ Lim, C. (2002). Infusing the City with Public Art. *Skyline*. Urban Redevelopment Authority, Singapore. Retrieved from <http://www.ura.gov.sg/skyline/skyline02/skyline02-05/text/citywithpublicart1.html>
- ¹⁵⁹ National Heritage Board, Singapore. (2013, November 30). *Public Art Tax Incentive Scheme*. Retrieved from http://www.nhb.gov.sg/-/media/nhb/files/support%20us/patis_more_info.pdf?la=en
- ¹⁶⁰ Urban Redevelopment Authority, Singapore. (2005, September 2). *Arts in the City: New URA Incentive to encourage public art in the city centre*.
- ¹⁶¹ MICA, together with the Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports (MCYS) would be restructured in November 2012, into the Ministry of Communications and Information (MCI), the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY), with MCCY taking over the arts and culture portfolios of MICA.
- ¹⁶² URA allows graffiti on historic shop houses on a case by case basis. (2012, November 16). Retrieved from Channel News Asia, Singapore website: <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/ura-allows-graffiti-on-historic-shop-houses-on-case-by-case-basi-8375546>
- ¹⁶³ Back on the streets: Singapore's Sticker Lady reveals what she's been up to lately. (2017, January 11). Retrieved from Channel News Asia, Singapore website: <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/back-on-the-streets-singapore-s-sticker-lady-reveals-what-she-s-7554806>
- ¹⁶⁴ Urban Redevelopment Authority, Singapore. (2004, October 23). *URA unveils wall murals at Bras Basah Bugis - Enlivening the Area with a Distinct Arts Identity*.
- ¹⁶⁵ Sew, H. (2014). Street Art Comes Alive at the Rail Corridor. *Skyline*. Urban Redevelopment Authority, Singapore. Retrieved from http://www.ura.gov.sg/skyline/skyline14/skyline14-01/files/Skyline_Jan-Jun2014_28streetart.pdf. The Rail Corridor is a 24 km "green corridor" which was a former railway line, stretching from Tanjong Pagar Railway Station, south of Singapore, to Woodlands Checkpoint in the north, providing relief from the stresses of dense urban living. The URA-NAC partnership for a dedicated street art space along the Corridor is part of URA's "PubliCity" initiative, under its Master Plan 2014, to involve the community in designing and programming interesting public spaces. The space has since closed for infrastructural works.
- ¹⁶⁶ Australian High Commission, Singapore. (2015, May 20). *'50 Bridges' - Australia's fun contribution to Singapore's 50th*. Retrieved from http://singapore.embassy.gov.au/sing/ahcsg_150520_50bridgeslaunch.html

- ¹⁶⁷ Jek, Yuen Thong. (1977, August 21). *Speech at the official opening of the exhibition 'Art 77' held in commemoration of the 1st anniversary of the official opening of the National Museum Art Gallery*. National Archives of Singapore.
- ¹⁶⁸ Following the Creative Singapore report, LASALLE and NAFA had more financing support to operate, expand and upgrade their courses – LASALLE developing as a centre for Visual and Performing Arts with an emphasis on Western and Southeast Asian cultures, and NAFA concentrating on Fine Arts and Design, focusing particularly on Oriental cultures. Parliamentary Debates. (1997, June 3). President's Address, Debate on President's Address. Session no. 1, Vol. 67, Sitting no. 3. *Hansard Singapore*.
- ¹⁶⁹ National Arts Council, Singapore. (2002). Funding the Arts. In *National Art Council Annual Report FY2001/2002*, p. 27.
- ¹⁷⁰ Singapore Youth Festival: Celebrating 50 years. (2016, July 4). *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/youthforia-marks-half-a-century-of-youth-euphoria>
- ¹⁷¹ Prof Bernard Tan recounts his personal journey through the developments for classical music in Singapore, including the setting up of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, in his essay: Tan, B. (2015). Music in Singapore since the 1960s: A Personal Account. In R. Tan (Ed.), *Art Hats in Renaissance City: Reflections and Aspirations of Four Generations of Art Personalities* (pp. 212-225). Singapore: World Scientific Publishing.
- ¹⁷² National Arts Council, Singapore. (2004). Chairman's message. In *National Art Council Annual Report FY2003/2004*, p. 3.
- ¹⁷³ The Remaking Singapore Committee was formed in February 2002 to understand the changing aspirations of Singaporeans, re-examine future ideals and values for Singapore's society, and make recommendations on the social and cultural changes needed to achieve these ideals. It complemented the work of the Economic Review Committee, tasked to re-examine the nation's economic strategies.
- ¹⁷⁴ Committee on Specialised Arts School (2004, March) *Report of the Committee on Specialised Arts School*. Retrieved from <https://www.scribd.com/document/231694758/Report-of-the-Committee-on-Specialised-Arts-School-March-2004>
- ¹⁷⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁷⁶ Chew, Rebecca. (2014, April 2). *Oral History Interview with Ms Rebecca Chew*. Accession number 003856. Disc number 7. Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.
- ¹⁷⁷ School of the Arts offers new qualification for aspiring student-artists. (2014, May 21). *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/school-of-the-arts-offers-new-qualification-for-aspiring-student-artists>
- ¹⁷⁸ National Arts Council, Singapore. (2003). Chairman's Message. In *National Arts Council Annual Report FY2002/2003*, p. 8.
- ¹⁷⁹ *The Report of the Arts and Culture Strategic Review*. (2012, January 31). Retrieved from <http://www.nac.gov.sg/aboutus/arts-culture-strategic-review.html>
- ¹⁸⁰ Lee, Tzu Yang. (2015, November 3). *CLC Interview with Lee Tzu Yang* (unpublished transcript). Centre for Liveable Cities, Ministry of National Development, Singapore.
- ¹⁸¹ Beyond arts education, was the move to encourage an arts-based pedagogy in teaching non-arts subjects, for example, teaching mathematics through art and drama, so as to spread the value of the arts in education. This was exemplified in the Teaching through the Arts Programme (TTAP) which was launched in 2012 to support those schools interested in experimenting with this approach, working with arts practitioners to co-design lessons which integrated the arts into other subject areas.
- ¹⁸² Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, Singapore. (2013, March 15). Celebrating our Heritage: Updates on Implementation of ACSR Masterplans: Bringing Arts and Heritage to our Communities. *MCCY COS 2013, Building a Shared Culture and Engaged Community*.
- ¹⁸³ At the 2016 Committee of Supply (MCCY) debate, the importance of intermediaries was highlighted to support the growth of community. Here, professional companies could receive additional resources to develop capabilities in engaging with resident audiences through quality experiences (e.g. reflecting on and discussing pervasive social issues through art), and not just meet outreach numbers alone.
- ¹⁸⁴ National Arts Council, Singapore. (2010, December). *Review of National Arts Council's Arts Housing Scheme*. Retrieved from <http://www.nac.gov.sg/dam/jcr:fa540138-43a9-46be-8e81-55a386a4831a>. The four main schemes are: (1) Incubation scheme; (2) Scheme for Developing Artists and Arts Groups; (3) Arts Centre scheme; and (4) Co-location with Community and Commercial Spaces. Another scheme, Partnership for Storage Solutions, offers seed support and facilitation for the private sector to develop lower-cost storage options for the arts and culture sector.
- ¹⁸⁵ Parliamentary Debates. (2013, February 4). Framework for Arts Spaces. Written Answers to Questions. Session no. 1, Vol. 90, Sitting no. 2. *Hansard Singapore*.
- ¹⁸⁶ One such scheme is the Community/Sports Facilities Scheme (CSFS), launched in 2013 by the URA to integrate community facilities for arts, sports and social services into commercial developments. To qualify, the organisation has to be registered as a non-profit organisation, with a strong charitable/community outreach use for the space (at least 60% of the total GFA under the CSFS must be used for such a purpose, with ancillary uses such as offices making up the other 40%). Beneficiaries included the Very Special Arts Singapore, and the Singapore Dance Theatre. Retrieved from <http://www.nac.gov.sg/whatwedo/support/arts-spaces/framework-for-arts-spaces/community-sports-facilities-scheme.html>
- ¹⁸⁷ Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, Singapore. (2013, March 15). Bringing Quality Arts to All: New Grants Framework. *MCCY COS 2013, Building a Shared Culture and Engaged Community*.
- ¹⁸⁸ Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, Singapore. (2013, November 1). *MCCY launches \$200 million Cultural Matching Fund*. Retrieved from [http://www.mccy.gov.sg/news/press-releases/2013/Nov/MCCY_launches_\\$200_million_Cultural_Matching_Fund.aspx](http://www.mccy.gov.sg/news/press-releases/2013/Nov/MCCY_launches_$200_million_Cultural_Matching_Fund.aspx)
- ¹⁸⁹ Place Working Committee, Arts and Culture Strategic Review, Singapore. (2012). *Arts and Culture Strategic Review, 2010 – 2011, Final Report of 'Place' Working Committee* (unpublished).
- ¹⁹⁰ NAC oversees the arts programming and marketing of the district, while NParks manages community programming and logistical arrangements for the area.
- ¹⁹¹ Singaporeans, PRs to get free entry to national museums & heritage institutions. (2013, March 15). Retrieved from Channel News Asia, Singapore website: <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/s-poreans-prs-to-get-free-entry-to-national-museums-amp-heritage-8342212>. At the time of its announcement, only one out of five Singaporeans had visited these cultural and heritage institutions. With the introduction of the free admissions policy, the ministry hoped to further encourage visits, and generate greater awareness and interest in culture and the arts.
- ¹⁹² Koh, Tommy. (2016, October 5). *CLC Interview with Prof Tommy Koh* (unpublished transcript). Centre for Liveable Cities, Ministry of National Development, Singapore.
- ¹⁹³ Lee, Hsien Loong. (2015, November 23). *Speech by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the Opening Celebrations of the National Gallery Singapore*. Prime Minister's Office, Singapore. Retrieved from <http://www.pmo.gov.sg/newsroom/pm-lee-hsien-loong-opening-celebrations-national-gallery-singapore>
- ¹⁹⁴ Hoe, S. F., & Liu, J. (2016, March). *IPS-SAM Spotlight on Cultural Policy Series Two: Full Report on Roundtable on Place Management and Placemaking in Singapore*. Singapore: Institute of Policy Studies.
- ¹⁹⁵ This took a leaf from how New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) is conveniently located in a mixed-use area, and how the Ayala Museum in Manila is housed within a shopping belt, next to retail, restaurants and open spaces. Former CEO/NHB Michael Koh reflected on the planning and programming initiatives under his term to make culture and heritage accessible to people, in the essay: Koh, M. (2015). In Making Museums and Heritage Accessible! In R. Lee (Ed.), *Art Hats in Renaissance City: Reflections and Aspirations of Four Generations of Art Personalities* (pp. 42-57). Singapore: World Scientific Publishing.
- ¹⁹⁶ Kennie Ting and Tan Tarn How debate the value of large festivals in enlivening public spaces, in their respective "Viewpoint" and "Counterpoint" articles published in Issue 11 of CLC's biannual magazine *Urban Solutions*. Ting, K. (2017). Festivals Bond People to Places Meaningfully. *Urban Solutions*, Issue 11, pp. 38-41. Singapore: Centre for Liveable Cities; Tan, T. H. (2017). The Festival Effect is Transient and Superficial. *Urban Solutions*, Issue 11, pp. 42-45. Singapore: Centre for Liveable Cities, Singapore.
- ¹⁹⁷ Economic Strategies Committee, Singapore. (2010, February). *Report of the Economic Strategies Committee*.
- ¹⁹⁸ Ibid, pp. 70-71. At the time, Hong Kong had initiated plans to develop the US\$2.4 billion, 40 ha West Kowloon Cultural District Project into the world's largest cultural quarters blending art, education and public spaces, equipped with performing arts spaces and a museum for visual culture. Seoul also released its "Vision 2015, Cultural City Seoul" master plan in 2006, committing over US\$8 billion for the culture industry over the next decade. Seoul's plan has since been superseded by "Seoul Culture Vision 2030", investing in new arts and cultural centres, cultural production and participation.
- ¹⁹⁹ Setback for art cluster? (2015, April 12). *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.asiaone.com/singapore/setback-art-cluster>
- ²⁰⁰ Has Gillman Barracks turned the corner? (2016, June 24). *The Business Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.businesstimes.com.sg/lifestyle/arts-entertainment/has-gillman-barracks-turned-the-corner>
- ²⁰¹ Gillman Barracks now a hotbed of local contemporary art. (2017, March 20). *TODAY*, Singapore. Retrieved from <http://www.todayonline.com/entertainment/arts/gillman-barracks-now-hotbed-local-contemporary-art>

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- ²⁰³Art after Dark is a late night open house event at the Gillman Barracks, featuring an outdoor party and a series of art offerings by curators, studios and galleries at the enclave. It is a highlight of the annual Singapore Art Week, which celebrates the visual arts islandwide.
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- ²⁰⁷National Heritage Board, Singapore. (2015, May 6). *NHB embarks on nation-wide survey on tangible heritage*. [Media Release]. Retrieved from <http://www.nhb.gov.sg/-/media/nhb/files/media/releases/new%20releases/2015-9.pdf>
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- ²⁰⁹The Internal Security Act (ISA) is a statute granting executive power for authorities to swiftly act against any party deemed a threat to the national security or public order of Singapore. It provides for preventative detention, the prevention of subversion, the suppression of organised violence against a person or property, and any matters incidental to such.
- ²¹⁰During an event organised by The Artists Village and 5th Passage, artist Josef Ng carried out the controversial pubic-hair-snipping performance in protest of media coverage of a 1992 anti-gay operation. Deemed an obscene act, it triggered the state to withdraw funding support for improvisational art forms. It was concerned that such types of art "which have no script and encourage spontaneous audience participation pose dangers to public order, security and decency, and much greater difficulty to licensing authorities. Performances may be exploited to agitate the audience on volatile social issues, or propagate beliefs and messages of deviant social or religious groups, or as a means of subversion." (Straits Times, 1994, January 22). Today, forum theatre and such interactive art forms are more accepted, and at times employed by the public sector to involve the community in discussing important social issues.
- ²¹¹Lee, Hsien Loong. (2017, May 19). *Speech by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the Official Opening of the Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre*. Prime Minister's Office, Singapore. Retrieved from <http://www.pmo.gov.sg/newsroom/pm-lee-hsien-loong-official-opening-singapore-chinese-cultural-centre>
- ²¹²Yeo, George. (2016, November 2). *CLC Interview with George Yeo* (unpublished transcript). Centre for Liveable Cities, Ministry of National Development, Singapore.
- ²¹³Examples include a last-minute funding withdrawal for Sonny Liew's graphic novel "The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye" and prohibiting the screening of Singaporean director Tan Pin Pin's film "To Singapore, With Love". Liew's work, which won the acclaimed Eisner Award in 2017, sparked public debate on the role of state funding for the arts in Singapore today.

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APPENDIX A

Governance Tools for the Planning and Development of Culture and the Arts

(I) Legal Instruments

Legislation	Description
Planning Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides for the physical planning and improvement of Singapore, including the designation of conservation areas and attendant conservation guidelines.
Preservation of Monuments Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes the Preservation of Monuments Board to preserve monuments of historic, traditional, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest, for the nation's benefit. Various buildings housing arts and cultural venues are gazetted as national monuments.
Singapore Totalisator Board Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assigns responsibility to the Tote Board to distribute money from its funds that are not required in the exercise of its functions, for (i) public, social or charitable purposes, and (ii) the promotion of culture, art and sport in Singapore.

(II) Executive Policies

Tool	Description
Arts Housing Scheme (1985)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented to provide affordable spaces for artists and arts groups to practice and develop their craft.
Conservation Master Plan (1986)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First conservation blueprint for Singapore's built heritage.
Master Plan of the Civic and Cultural District (draft) (1988)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charted planning and design strategies to revitalise Singapore's civic and cultural hub, and maximise the historical and cultural assets of the city.
Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts (ACCA report) (1989)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watershed report in Singapore's arts and cultural development, which examined the state of the arts and cultural scene, and made recommendations to realise the vision of a culturally vibrant society by 1999.
Concept Plan (1991)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charted an integrated land use planning approach to transform Singapore into a "Tropical City of Excellence". It proposed a decentralisation strategy to develop regional and fringe commercial centres beyond the city central, thus bringing jobs and facilities closer to residents.
Development Guide Plans (DGPs) (1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translated broad intentions of the 1991 Concept Plan into detailed local plans which communicated future planning intentions to the public in a systematic and transparent way. This included a DGP for the Museum Planning Area, home to various cultural institutions and activities.

Tool	Description
Creative Singapore: A Renaissance Nation in the Knowledge Age (1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examined the upgrade of arts education institutes LASALLE and NAFA, and helped legitimise arts manpower development at the tertiary level.
Renaissance City Report (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulated the vision and strategies to transform Singapore into a global arts city in the 21st century, and strengthen Singaporeans' sense of national identity through arts and culture.
Creative Industries Development Strategy: Propelling Singapore's Creative Economy (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examined the economic performance of the arts and culture industries, and discussed strategies to foster creative capabilities, stimulate demand, and develop the creative industries for growth.
Report of the Committee on Specialised Arts School (2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studied the demand and feasibility of a specialised arts school. This led to the establishment of the School of the Arts as Singapore's first pre-tertiary institute integrating arts and academic education.
Renaissance City Plan III (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlined the vision, strategic directions and initiatives that MICA and its statutory boards shall undertake from 2008 to 2015. Supporting this plan were detailed strategies under the Arts Development Plan by the NAC and the Heritage Development Plan by The NHB.
Framework for Arts Spaces (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulated after a review of the AHS, to better support the changing needs of a growing and increasingly diverse arts sector.
The Report of the Arts and Culture Strategic Review (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sector-led review to chart the strategic directions for Singapore's cultural development until 2025. In response to the recommendations, the government committed more than \$270 million worth of programmes under three Masterplans from 2012 to 2016 (Community Engagement; Arts and Culture Education; Capability Development) to bring arts and culture to everyone, every day, everywhere.
Master Plan (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlighted strategies to enhance the identity and attractiveness of the Civic and Cultural District. This was complemented by planning and urban design guidelines for areas rich in arts, culture and heritage.

(III) Institutions

Institution	Description
Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key ministry overseeing the arts and heritage sectors, alongside sports, community and youth sectors, to build a cohesive society and deepen national identity.
Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA); Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established in 1990 based on the 1989 ACCA report recommendations. It later evolved into the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) in the 2000s, before being restructured to MCCY.
Ministry of Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established in 1959 to shape a "Malayan culture" and promote a national sense of belonging. It was later re-organised into the Ministry of Community Development (MCD). In 1990 the newly-formed MITA took on the responsibilities for Singapore's arts and cultural development.
National Arts Council (NAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established in 1991 based on the 1989 ACCA report recommendations. It is the national agency to promote cultural development through the arts, and make the arts an integral part of everyday lives.
National Heritage Board (NHB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established in 1993 based on the 1989 ACCA report recommendations. It is the national agency to promote Singapore's shared heritage for education, nation building and cultural understanding.
National Library Board (NLB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established in 1995 to promote reading, learning and information literacy, and is the custodian of the nation's archives and knowledge repositories.
Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National land use planning and conservation authority, working with public, private and people sectors on the physical development of the city.
Economic Development Board (EDB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead government agency for the planning and implementation of economic development strategies. This included grooming the creative services industry for growth.
Singapore Tourism Board (STB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead government agency championing Singapore's tourism sector development, including its arts, cultural, lifestyle and entertainment offerings, to strengthen Singapore's appeal as a vibrant global city.
Singapore Totalisator Board (Tote Board)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government agency overseeing betting and gaming operations. Surplus generated from activities is channelled to funds and grants, including for culture and the arts, in line with the Board's mission to build resilient communities and enhance quality of life.
People's Association (PA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government agency established in 1960 to foster racial harmony and social cohesion for nation building through various initiatives, including "PAssionArts" programmes to make arts and culture more accessible to people.

APPENDIX B

A Non-Exhaustive List of Arts and Cultural Venues in Singapore

Venue	Description
Galleries	
Gillman Barracks	Contemporary arts cluster envisioned as Asia's destination for international and Southeast Asian art.
National Gallery Singapore	Visual arts institution in the heart of the Civic District, overseeing the largest public collection of modern art in Singapore and Southeast Asia.
Ng Eng Teng Gallery	Houses the most comprehensive collection of works by a single artist, sculptor Ng Eng Teng, in Singapore.
Singapore Tyler Print Institute	Creative workshop and contemporary art gallery to promote artistic experimentation in the mediums of print and paper.
Telok Kurau Studios	Vacant school building converted as the first centre for visual artists under the Arts Housing Scheme.
Heritage and Cultural Centres	
Heritage Conservation Centre	Singapore's repository and conservation facility for the management and preservation of museum collections by the National Heritage Board.
Indian Heritage Centre	Located at the historic Little India district, showcasing the art, heritage and culture of Indian and South Asian communities in Singapore and the region.
Malay Heritage Centre	Located at the historic Kampong Glam district, showcasing the art, heritage and culture of the Malay community in Singapore.
Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre	Aims to nurture and promote Singapore Chinese culture, and foster an appreciation of the city's multicultural heritage.
Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall	Explores the impact and influences of the 1911 Chinese Revolution on Singapore, and Singapore's contributions to the Revolution.

Multidisciplinary Arts Centres and Performance Venues	
Aliwal Arts Centre	Housed in a 1938 Art Deco style conservation building, offering a home for traditional and contemporary artists.
Centre 42	Theatre development space, committed to the creation, documentation and promotion of texts and writing for Singapore theatre.
Drama Centre	Located in the National Library Building, offering venues for the performing arts, talks and exhibitions.
Esplanade, Theatres on the Bay	Singapore's national performing arts centre, a distinctive architectural icon of the city skyline and one of the busiest arts centres in the world.
Goodman Arts Centre	Serves as a creative enclave for diverse artists, arts groups and creative businesses.
Kallang Theatre	Formerly Singapore's largest cinema, converted for use as a live performance theatre.
OBJECTIFS	Independent, non-profit gallery and educational space to advance the practice and appreciation of film and photography.
ONE-TWO-SIX Cairnhill Arts Centre	Pre-war school building converted into an arts centre for theatre and dance groups.
Stamford Arts Centre	Envisioned as a vibrant space for the performing arts, particularly in traditional arts.
The Arts House	Promotes and presents multidisciplinary programmes and festivals, with a focus on the literary arts from Singapore and beyond.
The Substation	Singapore's first independent contemporary arts centre, known for its pioneering and experimental arts programming.
Victoria Theatre and Victoria Concert Hall	One of Singapore's oldest performing arts venues in a distinctive heritage building, supporting the growth of Singapore's arts industry.

Museums	
Asian Civilisations Museum	Presents Singapore's ancestral cultures - including China, Southeast Asia, India and the Islamic world - to promote an appreciation of intercultural connections and the heritage of Singapore's multi-ethnic society.
National Museum of Singapore	Singapore's oldest museum, and a cultural landmark hosting festivals and events all year round, including the annual Singapore Night Festival.
Our Museum@Taman Jurong	First community museum in Singapore, focusing on Taman Jurong's heritage with artworks and collections by residents and local artists.
Peranakan Museum	Showcases the eclectic cultural heritage of the Peranakan community.
Reflections at Bukit Chandu	World War II interpretive centre contemplating Singapore's war experience.
Singapore Art Museum	First art museum in Singapore focusing on Singapore and Southeast Asian contemporary artworks, with its annexe "SAM@8Q" featuring changing exhibitions.
Singapore Philatelic Museum	Custodian and curator of the philatelic history of Singapore and the world.
Schools	
LASALLE College of the Arts	Offers diploma and degree courses in contemporary arts and design education and practice with international partners.
Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts	Offers diploma and degree courses in partnership with local and foreign universities across three schools: Art and Design; Arts Management, Dance and Theatre; and Music.
School of the Arts	Singapore's national pre-tertiary arts school, with a six-year integrated arts and academic curriculum leading to the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma or Career-related Programme.
Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music	Singapore's first conservatory primarily offering full-time undergraduate degree programmes in eighteen specific music majors.



A CITY OF CULTURE: PLANNING FOR THE ARTS

Culture is intricately linked to political, economic, and social life. A city's culture is revealed from the way it is planned, built, and developed. Choices made by the city and its people indicate their values and what they care for, and contribute to the people's sense of identity and resilience over time. For a liveable city, planners and policymakers need to carefully consider the role and development of culture, and embed these considerations upfront in the urban planning process.

This Urban Systems Study documents Singapore's journey in shaping the urban development of culture and the arts. Throughout the years of Singapore's independence, the arts has provided an avenue to promote national unity, diversify a fragile economy, and nurture creative talents to foster a more vibrant and gracious city. It has also faced its share of contestation, balancing global city ambitions with the needs of communities whom the city is for. This study charts the development of strategies in urban planning and programmes for the arts and culture sector, and illustrates how long-term planning and collaboration across stakeholders remain critical to the making of a city of culture.

"If you visit the great cities in the world – New York, Paris, Shanghai, London, Mumbai – you will find that arts and culture are an integral part of the cities...These cities are not just business or transportation hubs or dense conurbations of people. They are cities with a sense of history and identity – bridging the old and the new. You see this in their cultural institutions – places that are rich with art and history that hold a significant place in the life of the city and the hearts of residents. Where residents and tourists can visit, learn and appreciate the culture and the heritage of the place, the spirit and genius of the people. Because arts and culture are a window to who they are as a people, where they have been and where they are in."

Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore,
at the opening celebrations of the National Gallery Singapore

