



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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We recognise the role of the arts in broadening our perspectives and enriching our lives. At the community level, the arts bring people of diverse backgrounds together, thus building strong social bonds. At the national level, it strengthens our national identity, and contributes to a more confident and resilient Singapore. This is why we are working hard to raise **arts excellence**, **grow audiences**, and ensure that **our arts offerings are accessible to all**.<sup>1</sup>

**Grace Fu**

Minister for Culture, Community and Youth

Dancer from Singapore Chinese Dance Theatre engaging participants in a hands-on session at the Got to Move Islandwide Programme (Photo courtesy of Gerry Aguero.)

**S**ingapore has come a long way in 53 years. Even as our economy developed and physical landscape transformed, our cultural policies kept pace, shaped by the aspirations of our people. While we should be proud of what our arts sector has achieved, our work is far from complete. We will continue the next phase of this journey together with our arts community and all Singaporeans. To serve as a guide, Our SG Arts Plan (2018–2022) maps the National Arts Council’s (NAC) priorities over the next five years to bring Singapore’s arts development to new heights.

The arts have always played an important role in defining our nation’s cultural identity and bringing

diverse communities together. The arts scene has thrived as artists chart professional careers and arts groups grow in strength. Strong foundations were laid by the 1989 Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts (ACCA) which paved the way for the Renaissance City Plans<sup>2</sup> (2000–2011), culminating in the Arts and Culture Strategic Review (ACSR) in 2012. The ACSR led to a substantial injection of \$300 million over the last five years into the culture sector.

The formation of the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) in November 2012 has increased focus on the ACSR vision of “a nation of cultured and gracious people, at home with our heritage, proud of our Singaporean identity”.

Under MCCY, there has been an added emphasis on the arts as a catalyst for building a civic culture of care, cohesion and confidence. We want to celebrate cultural diversity as a strength and support a values-based narrative that resonates with Singaporeans. The arts can play a vital role in deepening our national identity, and in promoting bonds of trust and respect between communities.

In the coming years, NAC will continue to champion the creation and appreciation of the arts as an integral part of people’s lives. This mission is aligned with MCCY’s desired outcomes and will lead us to NAC’s vision for Singapore:

## VISION

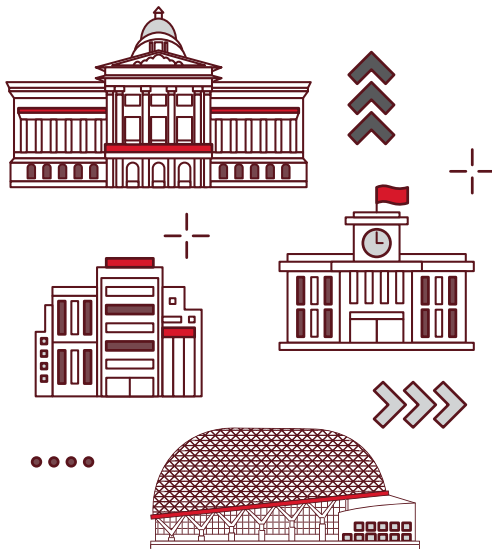
**Home to diverse and distinctive arts that inspire our people, connect our communities and position Singapore globally**

<sup>1</sup> Extracted from speech delivered at The School of the Arts Awards Day, 15 May 2017  
<sup>2</sup> Renaissance City Plan I, II, III (introduced in years 2000, 2005, 2008 respectively)

The following outlines the current state of the arts in Singapore, and what we need to do together to realise NAC's vision for the future of the arts:

### ► Achieving Arts Excellence

Our arts community has achieved significant success with distinctive works that have resonated with audiences both locally and overseas. All Singaporeans can be proud of our artists and arts groups winning international awards and being featured at leading arts venues and festivals around the world. They have helped to articulate our Singapore story, and express who we are as a nation. NAC must continue to support our artists in achieving artistic excellence, so that they can inspire others to express themselves through the arts.

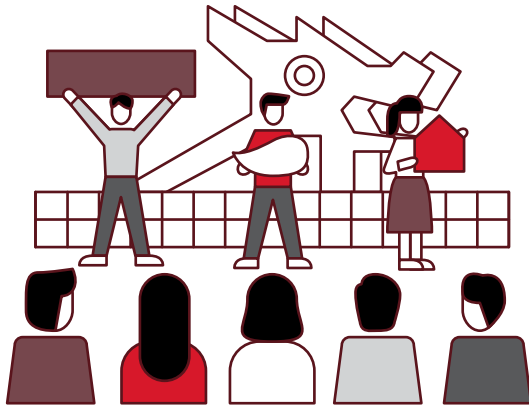


### ◀ Strong State Support and Public Institutions

Singapore's arts landscape has become more vibrant through the sustained commitment of government's support for the arts and culture over the past five decades. Our strong cultural institutions such as National Gallery Singapore and Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay have taken the lead in shaping a distinctive cultural landscape. Partnerships and collaborations with a large number of public agencies have enhanced the lives of our people and the liveability of our city through the arts. NAC will continue to work closely with our cultural institutions and partner agencies to support our artists and to grow audiences.

► **Diversifying Support for the Arts**

While the government will continue to invest in the arts, diversifying revenue sources will provide more funding options for artists and arts groups. It is important that deeper partnerships are forged with the private and people sectors, and for cultural institutions and arts companies to work more closely together.



◀ **Enlarging Social Commons in Diversity**

As society becomes more diverse, the arts can help deepen understanding and bridge differences across communities. Enjoying the arts together is also one way to celebrate and affirm the shared aspects of Singapore life that all citizens and residents cherish.

► **Strengthening National Identity and Shared Heritage**

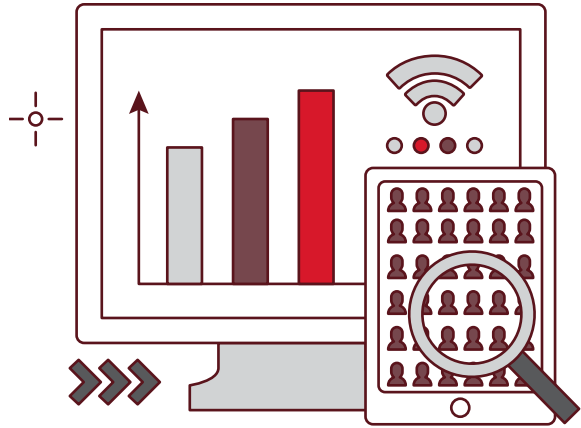
The arts community can more fully realise the potential for intra- and inter-community connections in the context of Singapore’s rich multicultural heritage. This is an opportunity to create unique arts experiences for local as well as global audiences that express who we are as a nation.





### ► Harnessing Technology

The effective use of technology requires the arts community to be equipped with skills and resources to access new tools and interpret important data, such as audience segmentation and consumption patterns. Technology will enable our artists and arts groups to cater to changes in audiences' needs and preferences, as well as enhance art-making.



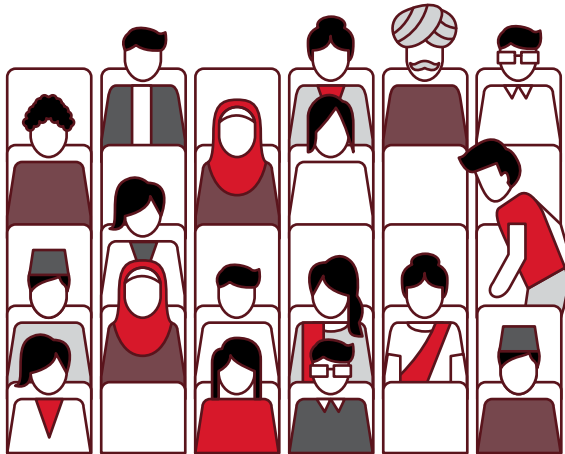
### ◀ Growing Diverse Capabilities

Expertise is needed not only in art-making, but also in areas such as arts management, technical theatre, research and data analytics, community arts, audience development, facilitation of dialogues, and arts education. There is also a need to give freelance arts workers more support to enable them to do their best work and protect their interests, for example, in matters concerning contracts and financial planning.

### ► Providing Access and Opportunity

The arts can play a significant role in culture-building, community life and city planning. However, not all Singaporeans have equal access to the arts because of factors such as location, cost or language barriers. NAC will work with the cultural institutions and arts community to increase access for more Singaporeans to experience and participate in the arts.





### ◀ Growing Audiences

The arts face increasing competition for audience attention. It is important that our arts community be supported not only in growing supply through arts creation, but also in growing demand from existing and new audiences through greater appreciation and participation.

### ▶ Unlocking Arts Spaces

The Gross Floor Area dedicated to NAC's artists and arts companies has grown almost five-fold over the last 30 years, but demand continues to significantly outstrip supply. More needs to be done with the government agencies and corporate sector to sustain spaces, both physical and digital, to extend the reach of the arts. There is also need to ensure greater opportunity for new generations of artistic talents to benefit from available arts spaces.



So what does the future hold for the arts in Singapore?

The arts must energise and excite Singaporeans, bring people together and reflect what Singapore represents to a global community. NAC has identified three strategic thrusts:

### ▼ Inspire Our People

Outcome: Singaporeans are empowered to create, present and appreciate excellent art



Attendees at Singapore Writers Festival at the Festival Bookstore

### ▼ Connect Our Communities

Outcome: Diverse communities come together to enjoy and support the arts



Musicians entertaining audiences at Chong Pang market Amphitheatre as part of *Arts Imprints Around My Neighbourhood* by Quek Ling Kiong in March 2017

### ▼ Position Singapore Globally

Outcome: Arts and culture icons and works are appreciated by audiences and critics at home and abroad



Artist Zai Kuning represents Singapore at the 57<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale with artwork *Dapunta Hyang: Transmission of Knowledge*



Guided by these three strategic thrusts, NAC has defined eight priorities that will guide future arts and culture initiatives.

## 1 Strengthening NAC's role in leading and championing the arts in Singapore

We will work with our cultural institutions and national companies to maximise resources and guide the development of the visual, performing and literary arts ecosystems across forms, languages and traditions. We will also continue to champion the diversity of arts practices and perspectives, including ground-up initiatives. Supporters from the government, people and private sectors must be engaged to increase contributions towards the arts, whether in terms of time, funds, or access to spaces.



▲ Artwork by Psyfool entitled *Traditional Trade of Little India*, as part of ARTWALK Little India in 2016

## 2 Increasing our focus on growing audiences

Strategies for sustained audience development must cater to the needs of varying demographics, including students and youth, families with young children, the elderly and persons with disabilities. Strategies to increase inclusivity and access need to be designed based on robust research and data analytics. This effort must also grow paying audiences to foster the sustainability of the arts sector.



- 1 Young children enjoying craft activities at The Artground  
(Photo courtesy of The Artground.)
- 2 Seniors enjoying a sing-along session at a Silver Arts 2016 concert performed by young musicians from Orkestra Melayu Singapura (OMS) and OMS Belia



### 3 Building diverse capabilities in the arts sector

As we support capability development in art-making, we must strengthen the ecosystem as a whole by improving competencies in arts management, technical theatre, research and data analytics, community arts, audience development, facilitation of dialogues, arts education, working with technology, and place-making. NAC will also continue its efforts to help arts organisations grow their management and governance capabilities, be financially sound, and adopt good hiring practices.



Delegates participating in an inclusive workshop exercise led by Mr Alirio Zavarve (No Strings Attached, Australia) at the Arts & Disability International Conference 2018

### 4 Increasing sector-wide support for freelance arts professionals

Sector-wide support for individual practitioners and freelancers must be strengthened to ensure that they have access to the resources they need to thrive. NAC will establish a resource centre for

freelance arts professionals to enhance access to shared services and information, provide learning and development opportunities, and facilitate collaborations and networking. NAC will also tap on national schemes to strengthen support for freelancers.



Arts professionals sharing their views at one of NAC's engagement sessions on the development of a resource centre for arts freelancers in September 2017

## 5 Utilising digital technology to improve art-making and outreach efforts

NAC will support the arts community to be digitally confident and creative, so that they may use technology to create, distribute and market the arts effectively. This can be in the form

of targeted funding, training opportunities, and networking sessions involving both the arts and technology sectors. NAC will also work with the cultural institutions to explore how technology can enhance audience and visitor experiences, and create new entry points for audiences.

▼ Noise x GIF FEST exploring GIF as an engaging artistic medium



## 6 Strengthening research in the arts sector

There is a need to equip both NAC and the arts community with the capacity to gather and analyse data about audiences' needs and preferences, and consumption habits and patterns. The data will also enable us to be more effective in arts advocacy by helping us demonstrate the multi-dimensional value of the arts to society. We will improve the documentation of and research into the art form practice, helping our artists and arts groups to be more innovative in their creative process.



▲ NAC CEO, Mrs Rosa Daniel, delivering the Welcome Speech at the NAC Arts and Culture Research Symposium in 2017



**7** **Strengthening programme design to maximise the impact of the arts on society**

NAC will work alongside the arts community and our various community and public sector partners to strengthen programme design and prioritise resources to help the sector meet the desired

outcomes of artistic excellence and audience development. We also hope to maximise the impact of the arts on society, to harness the potential of the arts for community building across cultures, generations and socio-economic backgrounds, and to bring the arts to under-reached segments of society.



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- 1 Veteran folk musician Art Fazil enthraling the audience at the Hear65 launch event in 2018
- 2 A volunteer from Youth Corps Singapore and a beneficiary from Montfort Care sharing a light-hearted moment while participating in an activity from the Befrienders Arts Toolkit
- 3 Pre-school students participating in NAC's Traditional Arts Taster Programme



## 8 Taking Singapore's arts beyond our shores

Singapore can play a greater role as a cultural focal point in Southeast Asia through strong partnerships with international festivals, presenters, other arts councils and institutions. NAC will profile the unique appeal of Singapore's rich and diverse art forms to reach regional and international markets.

Artists and arts companies will receive support for works presented at significant international markets and presentation platforms. We will also seek opportunities for our arts community to contribute their expertise on the global stage. International residencies and attachments, based here or overseas, provide another platform for our artists to share with, and learn from others.



▲ A performance by Cake Theatrical Productions at the Australia Performing Arts Market (APAM) 2018

This plan to drive our literary, performing and visual arts sectors serves as a guide for NAC's work over the next five years. It will be continually reviewed as our arts landscape evolves, whether in the domestic or international context. As we work together with the arts community and stakeholders in the public, corporate and people sectors, we are confident that our arts scene will flourish and be a source of pride for all Singaporeans.