



NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL  
SINGAPORE

# EMERGING FROM THE PANDEMIC

A Special Report

With highlights from the 2019  
Population Survey on the Arts





# EMERGING FROM THE PANDEMIC

## FOREWORD

The past year saw the unfolding of what has been aptly labelled the ‘crisis of a generation’. COVID-19 dominated global headlines and disrupted lives, leaving no industry or economy unscathed. The arts sector – with its predominance of freelance workers and reliance on audiences – was particularly hard hit. In Singapore, this came ironically after arts attendance had risen to a high of 69% in 2019. The commemoration of Singapore’s Bicentennial had been an artistic multiplier for local engagement with the arts - providing opportunities to revisit the Singapore Story, share a moving experience and introspection of our national identity.

In a turn of a few months, the entire population was forced to stay home. With little certainty of when or whether life before COVID-19 could resume, production capabilities and artistic practices had to be reinvented for the digital screen; arts companies learnt to stay in touch with supporters and fundraise solely through online platforms, in order to sustain themselves. Hearteningly, Singaporeans avidly searched out arts and culture content online during this time. The National Arts Council (NAC)’s COVID-19 Arts Consumption Study, which examined people’s online

engagement with the arts, revealed that 88% of Singaporeans engaged with the arts online to seek novel experiences for comfort and mental well-being.

Our SG Arts Plan (2018-2022) emphasised leveraging technology to improve art-making and outreach efforts. Digital technology enables content to be produced and shared with wider audience bases, connects artists and audiences no matter where they are, and unlocks monetisation opportunities for the sector. However, as digital platforms become the norm for work and play, the arts sector needs to consider how to move past this inflexion point by renewing business models and artistic visions for the age of blended arts experiences, and boosting our value proposition to local and international audiences.

NAC will continue to support the sector on research and data needs as these new paths are forged, including the development of the next strategic plan for the arts sector. The biennial Population Survey on the Arts will continue to monitor the changing perceptions of the value of arts and culture, levels of engagement with the arts and culture, as well as motivations and barriers to engagement. With

urgency for us to emerge stronger from the pandemic, this first such summary report on the Population Survey brings together thought starters, case studies and deeper context to the survey findings to inform the way forward.

Singaporeans have demonstrated that arts and culture is an integral part of their lives – it has brought joy to isolated people, been a welcome distraction from COVID-19, and more importantly, represented hope for the future. Although the transition to a post-pandemic normal will be challenging to navigate, NAC will work closely with the arts community to envision a future and co-create new approaches together. I believe the significance of the arts and culture will further grow in the hearts of Singaporeans, as our diverse communities come together, and appreciate the wonder of the arts and what it says about our Singaporean identity and common humanity.

**Mrs Rosa Daniel**  
Chief Executive Officer  
National Arts Council

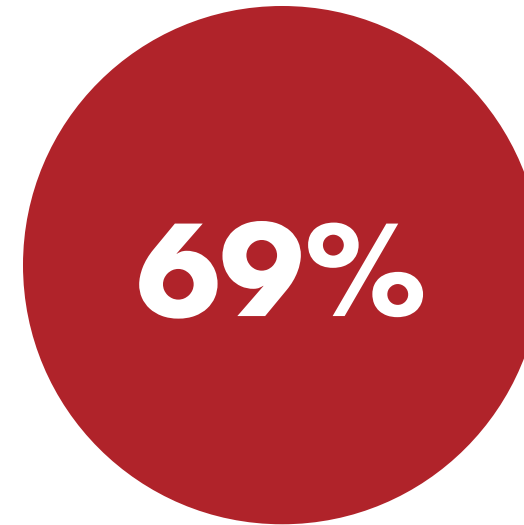
A vibrant night scene of a festival. In the foreground on the left, a white statue of a man in a suit stands on a pedestal. The background is filled with a large crowd of people, some holding up phones to capture the moment. To the right, there are several colorful tents (red, blue, green) with light trails. The sky is dominated by a massive, colorful fireworks display in shades of white, yellow, pink, and purple. In the distance, city buildings are lit up, and a sign for 'ENTRY' and 'EXIT' is visible. The overall atmosphere is festive and celebratory.

**ACT 1**  
**REWIND TO PRE-COVID 2019:**  
**DRAWING LESSONS FROM A**  
**RESURGENT YEAR FOR THE ARTS**

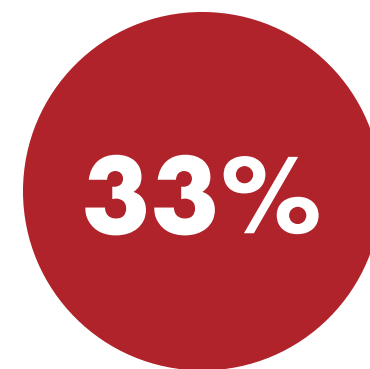
# HEALTHY GROWTH IN ARTS ATTENDANCE PRIOR TO THE EMERGENCE OF COVID-19

The pre-COVID year of 2019 registered a steady heartbeat for local interest in the arts. Across all age groups and art forms, physical arts attendance amongst Singaporeans swung back towards the golden peak of 2015. Alongside the rise in local arts consumption, there was also a surge in arts participation across all age groups, particularly among students, professionals and families.

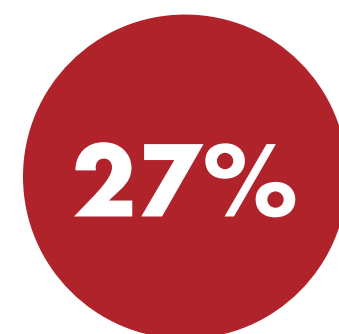
The growth in arts engagement among Singaporeans reflected the tireless efforts of our arts companies to produce quality local arts performances and activities<sup>[1]</sup>. Singaporeans also sought out the arts to draw closer to their loved ones. The top driver for in-person arts attendance in 2019 was to support friends and family who were performing. This sentiment was strongly echoed by 41% of students surveyed.



of Singaporeans  
attended arts and culture  
events in 2019



of Singaporeans  
participated in the arts,  
an 11 percentage point  
increase from 22% in 2017



of physical arts attendees  
in 2019 came to support  
their friends and family  
who were performing



[1] [www.nac.gov.sg/media-resources/press-releases/Population-Survey-on-the-Arts](http://www.nac.gov.sg/media-resources/press-releases/Population-Survey-on-the-Arts)

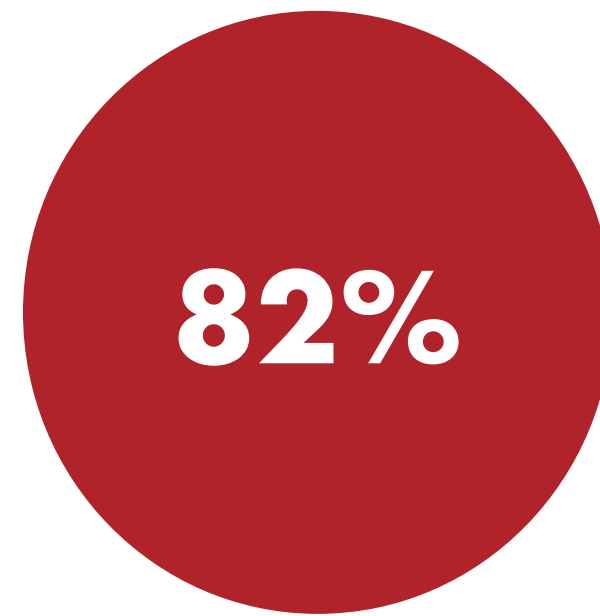
# CAPTIVATING SINGAPOREANS WITH A COMMEMORATION OF SINGAPORE'S HISTORY AND EVOLUTION

The celebration of the Singapore Bicentennial, marking the 200th anniversary of the arrival of Sir Stamford Raffles, was the proverbial rising tide that brought Singaporeans together to share in a historic, collective moment through participating in arts and heritage activities.

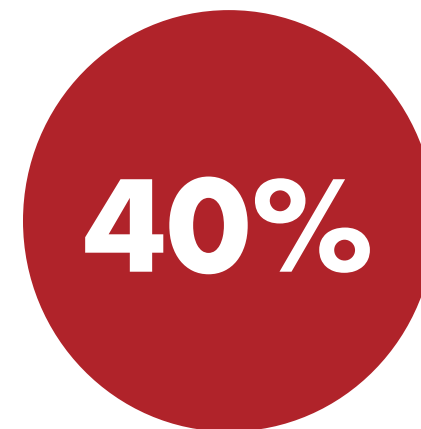
The Bicentennial Experience at Fort Canning wowed local visitors with a compelling retelling of the lesser-known story of the island's transformation over 700 years, including before Raffles landed on our shores. The exhibition

enchanted families with its live-action performances and digital art installations. Visitors embarked on a thrilling excavation of our nation's precolonial history like an Indiana Jones adventure. The immersive experience activated the curiosity of Singaporeans to venture beyond the textbook and to connect in a more personal, emotive way to the Singapore Story.

Buoyed by the 'Bicentennial Effect', a greater majority of Singaporeans praised the local arts scene for playing a vital role in cultivating the Singaporean identity.



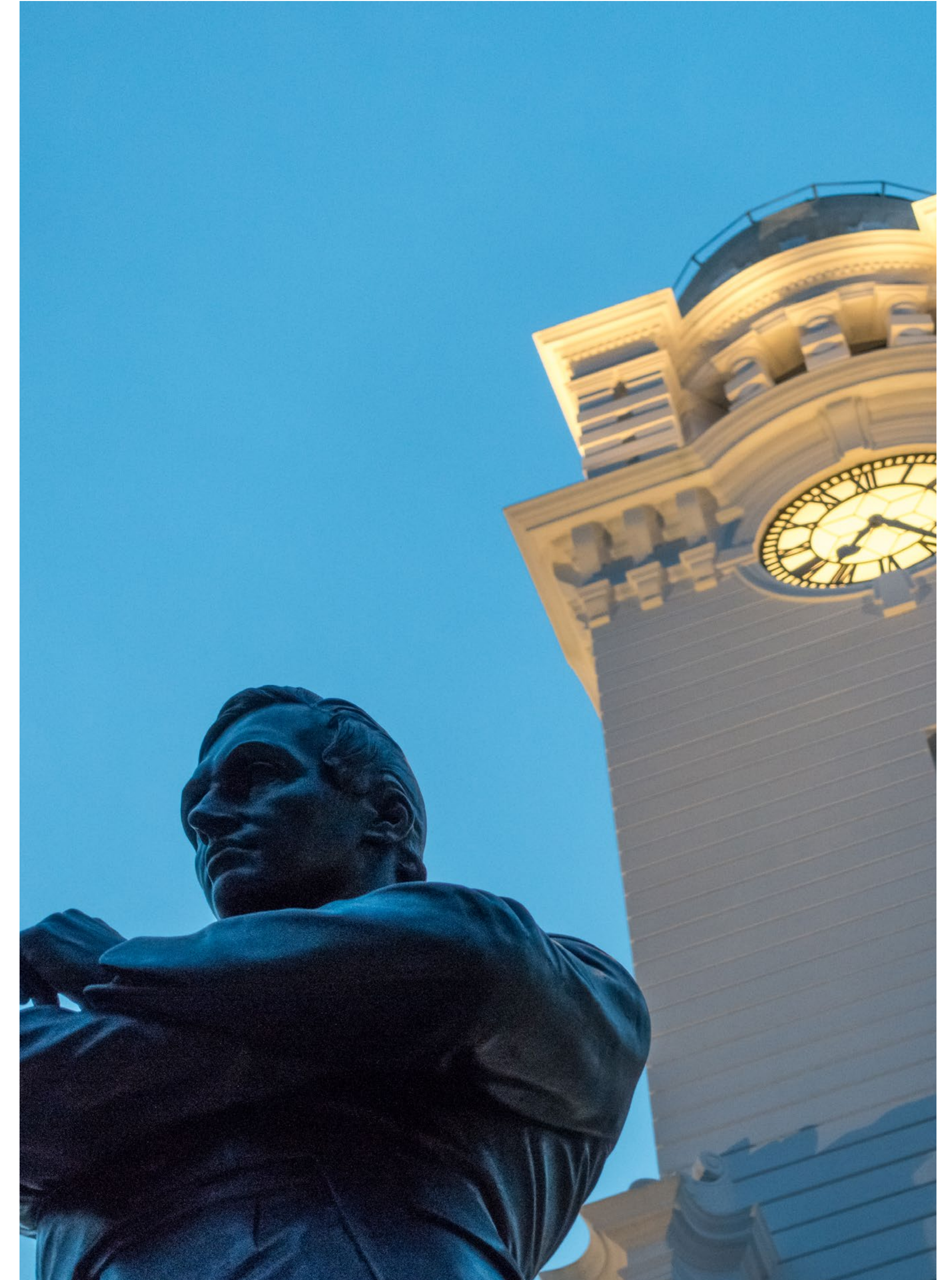
**82%**  
of Singaporeans felt that the arts foster a greater sense of belonging and identity, a 4 percentage point increase from 2017



**40%**  
Physical attendance for Heritage in 2019, an increase from 32% in 2017



**720,000+**  
Singaporeans visited the Bicentennial Experience at Fort Canning



# THOUGHT STARTER #1

As the Bicentennial was a once-in-a-lifetime event, was its ripple effect on arts engagement among Singaporeans a one-hit wonder?

As we are inundated by information in our digital media consumption, many historic moments flash by or are buried underneath tomorrow's headlines. Anniversaries of key events like the founding of an arts institution or the signing of the Kyoto Protocol act as bookmarks in time that allow us to remember how far we have progressed in the chapter of our collective story. Can arts events draw resonance from commemorative occasions and history-defining events that affect us as a collective, like a Singaporean winning an Olympic gold medal or the COVID-19 pandemic?

[1] <https://neverbefore.sg>



## CASE STUDY

# #NEVERBEFORESG

APRIL TO JULY – ILLUSTRATED MOMENTS OF CIRCUIT BREAKER  
Lee Kow Fong a.k.a. Ah Guo 阿果

#NEVERBEFORESG<sup>[1]</sup> was a virtual exhibition curated by Yang Derong and presented by the National Museum of Singapore between 5 October 2020 and 31 January 2021. The exhibition documented the present and future impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through the lens of 87 local creatives from a wide assortment of fields including architecture, photography, fashion and game design. Reflecting on the new normal brought about by the pandemic, the exhibition galvanised viewers to cherish the arts in providing spaces for healing in times of loss and uncertainty.

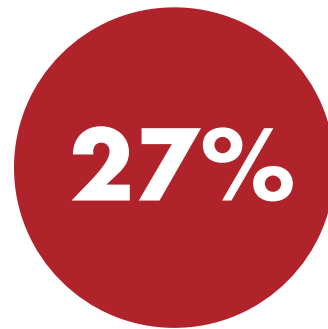
# SURGE IN INTEREST GROUPS FOR DANCE AND CRAFT

Among local dance and craft enthusiasts, there was a significant increase in those who joined clubs or formed their own social groups to practice the art form. Individuals who join these interest groups are not just looking for self-development, but are keen to plug into the local dance and craft community and to contribute to fostering a vibrant scene alongside like-minded peers.

The wave of interest in dance is most likely driven by Singaporean youth who are attracted to the booming dance scene. Urban team dance tournaments like Super 24 have seen higher turnout among local youth forming crews to compete. International dance influencers are regularly invited by local dance studios like Recognize! Studios and EV Dance to choreograph showcases by local dancers,

captivating young Singaporean dancers who follow their dance idols on channels like YouTube. Singapore is also the current host of the renowned dance festival Radikal Forze Jam and a fast-growing hub in the international street dance circuit<sup>[1]</sup>.

While handicraft is seen as an individual activity, more craft hobbyists may be linking up through Facebook groups like Singapore Makers and Handmade Community SG to share images of their finished pieces or connect with like-minded DIY makers. Researchers have also rigorously documented the positive impact of crafting on mental well-being and fostering connections with others, which may explain why more Singaporeans are joining craft clubs<sup>[2][3]</sup>.



**of dance participants joined clubs in 2019 compared to 12% in 2017**



**of craft participants joined clubs in 2019 compared to 7% in 2017**

[1] <http://popspoken.com/culture/2017/05/young-dancers-singapore-practical>

[2] Crafting was amongst the top ten most popular creative past-times in the 2019 BBC Arts Great British Creativity Test, which also found that 76% of the 50,000 respondents surveyed used creative activities to overcome stress and anxiety. ([www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-48188508](http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-48188508))

[3] A Finnish study found that female textile craft-makers experienced greater self-fulfilment through a sense of social connectedness with fellow crafters. (Sinikka Hannele Pöllänen & Marja Katriina Weissmann-Hanski (2020) *Hand-made well-being: Textile crafts as a source of eudaimonic well-being*, Journal of Leisure Research, 51:3, 348-365)



## THOUGHT STARTER #2

**How can arts leaders tap on the growing interest in dance and craft to boost audience engagement? Are there avenues to cross-sell or repackage dance and craft activities for a more interactive and tactile arts experience?**

Arts groups can tune into the local dance and craft trends for inspiration in designing their programming and publicity. For instance, incorporating TikTok dance challenges in a marketing campaign may be an effective strategy to reach out to younger audiences. Fans of craftwork may be attracted to events that have a DIY element or that promote upcycling and sustainability.



### CASE STUDY

## MAKERS & SHAKERS

### INTER-GENERATIONAL MUSIC WORKSHOP

This fun-packed music-making workshop was organised as part of the 2020 Children's Season by the National Museum of Singapore<sup>[1]</sup>. During the activity, parents and kids tried their hands at making their own DIY musical instrument while discovering the museum's William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings. Parent-and-child participants were given the option to attend the workshop on-site or to livestream the session at home with craft material kits pre-delivered by the organisers. This craft activity made environmental history come alive for the kids by channeling their creativity to make and play home-made melodies!

[1] [www.nhb.gov.sg/nationalmuseum/shared-content/exploremuseumtopmenu/get-curious-sub-pages/livestream](http://www.nhb.gov.sg/nationalmuseum/shared-content/exploremuseumtopmenu/get-curious-sub-pages/livestream)



# ATTENDANCE AT PAID ARTS EVENTS ROSE, DRIVEN BY POSITIVE RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSOLIDATION OF TICKETED EVENTS

2019 was a bountiful year for paid arts attendance, with one in two Singaporeans attending at least one paid event – the highest figure tracked in that decade.

Many Singaporeans were influenced to purchase tickets based on word-of-mouth recommendations by friends and family, which are generally more trusted than online reviews.

The satisfaction of getting great value for money may also have attracted bargain-hunting Singaporeans towards ticketed events with a robust line-up of artists or fun activities.

Young Singaporeans in particular were attracted to arts events that supported emerging local artists or that championed social causes.

**2.8** → **3.8**  
2017                      2019

Average number of paid events attended per person increased in 2019

**27%**

of Singaporeans bought tickets for arts events due to favourable reviews from their friends or family



"I attended a music event organised by LASALLE...to show my support and...to go to something I like. I think funds help in pushing someone go further in their passion."

Tertiary student  
(Pre-Uni)

"I went to Garden Beats, a music festival but within the festival itself you could engage with other things such as mural painting, yoga sessions and flea markets... I would [buy the tickets to go back]...because it is an event that goes on for an entire day with a line-up of different bands and artists. It is more value for money compared to going to see one K-pop band's concert."

Tertiary student  
(Pre-Uni)

# INTERMISSION

Fast forward to 2020, the pandemic year took a heavy toll on arts providers and exposed underlying fragilities within the arts sector. During Circuit Breaker, much of the arts calendar ground to a halt, physical arts venues gathered dust and many artists struggled to find opportunities in the 'new normal'.

Despite the gloom, new opportunities emerged for digital arts and we saw examples of resilience as arts groups pivoted to livestream shows, online platforms, and digital media. Arts consumers – existing and new – turned to digital arts for a sense of novelty or to relieve boredom whilst sheltering indoors during the pandemic.

To adapt to the post-COVID normal, arts groups face the challenge of building up their digital production capabilities whilst ensuring that arts consumers convert or return to in-person offerings.

[1] <https://thesmartlocal.com/read/murder-at-mandai-camp>  
[2] <http://roundfestival.net>

## CASE STUDY

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# MURDER AT MANDAI CAMP: THE CASE REOPENS

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*Murder at Mandai Camp: The Case Reopens*<sup>[1]</sup> was Asia's very first virtual horror-mystery escape room with live-action gameplay. Written and directed by award-winning playwright Chong Tze Chien, and performed by local theatre company Sight Lines Entertainment, audiences were invited to take part in a choose-your-own adventure story virtually via Zoom and Telegram. Participants who successfully cracked the hair-raising case about a deceased National Serviceman who was murdered in Mandai Camp even stood the chance to win \$1000 in a mystery draw.

## CASE STUDY

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# ASEAN-KOREA MUSIC FESTIVAL

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The ASEAN-Korea Music Festival<sup>[2]</sup> was organised by South Korea, in partnership with ASEAN, to strengthen fellowship among ASEAN youth through pop music. The Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) was appointed as the official broadcaster for this concert. The festival showcased top pop music talent across ASEAN and South Korea, through a series of music videos that was specifically staged and recorded for the festival. Singapore was represented by singer-songwriter Charlie Lim. The event was live-streamed via KBS WORLD's YouTube channel on 6 Dec 2020.

**ACT 2:  
CATCHING THE  
REBOUND, EMERGING  
STRONGER FROM THE  
PANDEMIC**

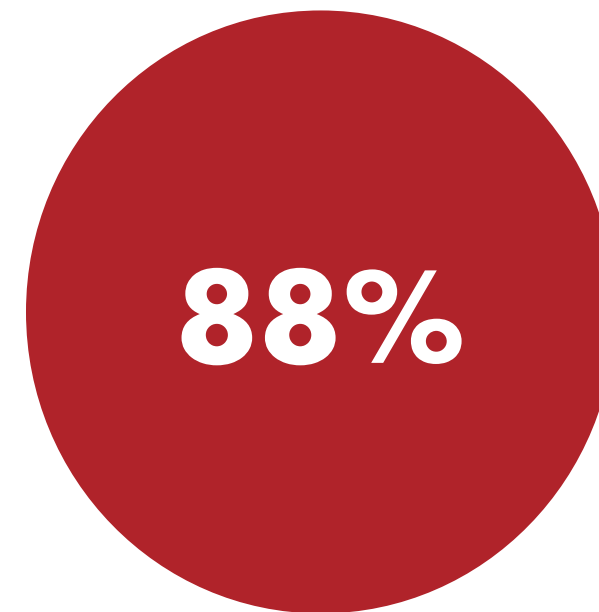


# DURING COVID-19, MORE SINGAPOREANS TURNED TO DIGITAL ARTS AS A RESTORATIVE ACTIVITY AND TO RECAPTURE A SENSE OF PURPOSE

Singaporeans were avid digital arts consumers in the pre-COVID years, but 2020 saw a huge increase in digital consumption of the arts due to the pandemic.

With the uncertainties and anxieties of COVID-19, Singaporeans engaged digitally with the arts to reflect, relax, and stay connected with others. With the lockdown and social distancing measures, participating online with the arts – particularly in dance, craft and visual arts – provided an accessible way to fill time in an enjoyable and/or productive way, and to upskill and upgrade oneself.

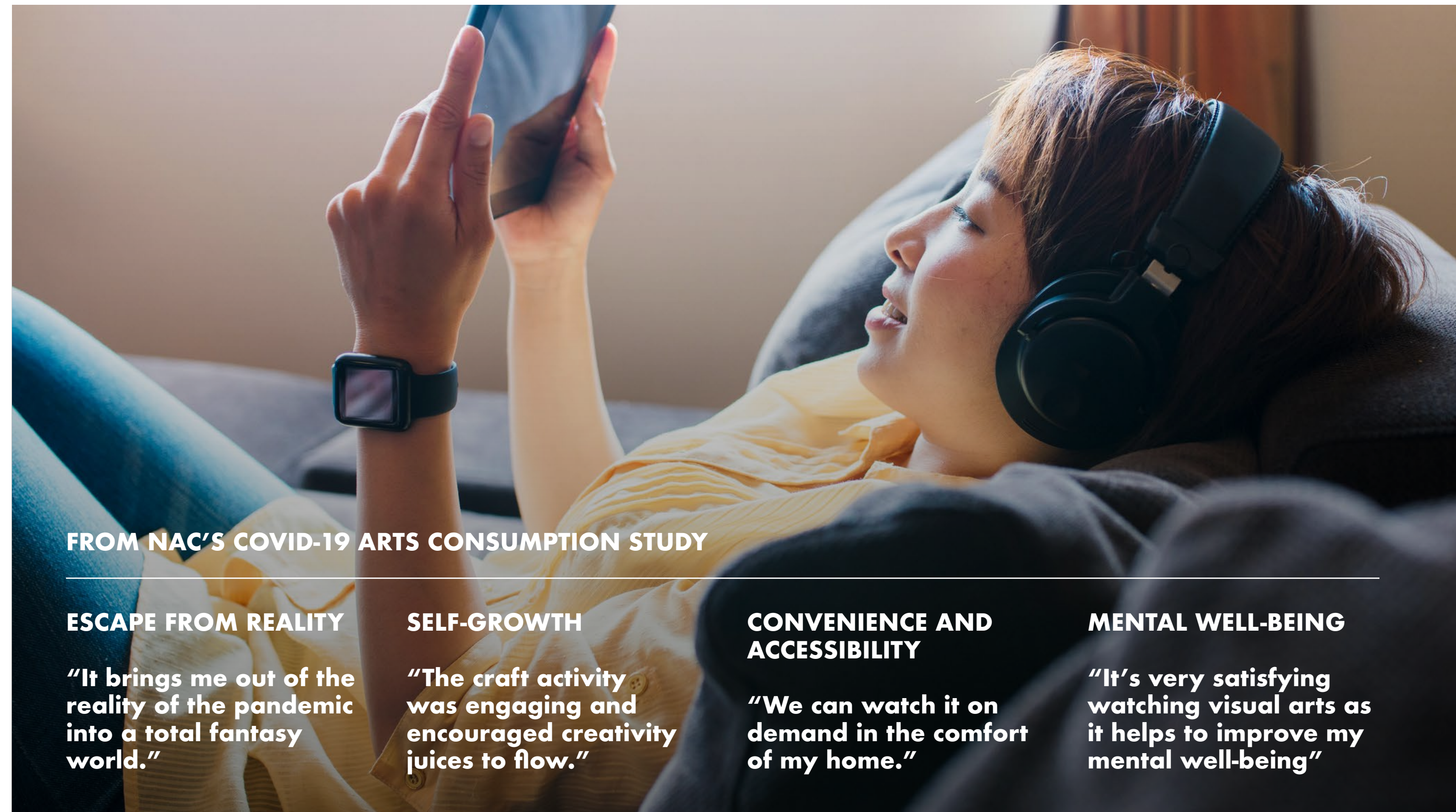
Going forward, digital arts consumption is expected to endure even after the pandemic subsides, as the accessibility of online arts content is attractive to Singaporeans.



**88%**  
of Singaporeans consumed arts digitally in 2020, up from 75% in 2019

## Change in digital arts consumption from 2019-2020

	2019	2020
<b>Dance</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Craft</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Visual Arts</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>29%</b>



### FROM NAC'S COVID-19 ARTS CONSUMPTION STUDY

#### ESCAPE FROM REALITY

"It brings me out of the reality of the pandemic into a total fantasy world."

#### SELF-GROWTH

"The craft activity was engaging and encouraged creativity juices to flow."

#### CONVENIENCE AND ACCESSIBILITY

"We can watch it on demand in the comfort of my home."

#### MENTAL WELL-BEING

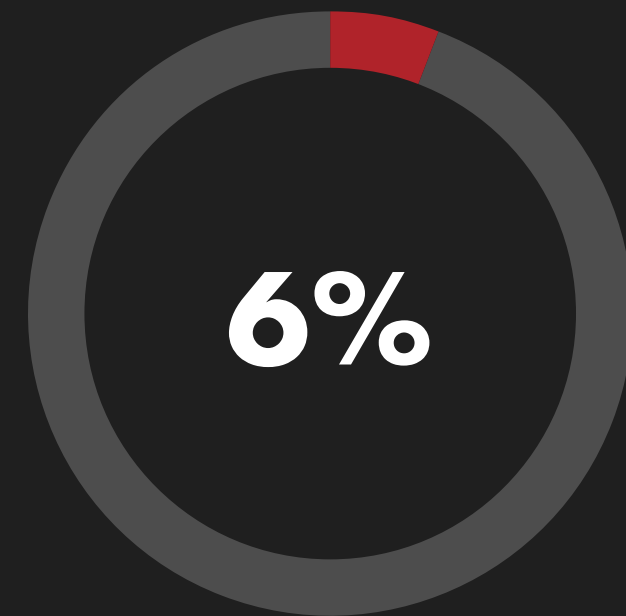
"It's very satisfying watching visual arts as it helps to improve my mental well-being"

## THOUGHT STARTER #3

**With the rise of blended experiences, how can arts groups reach out to their less tech-savvy senior audience members and include them in arts activities that require digital devices?**

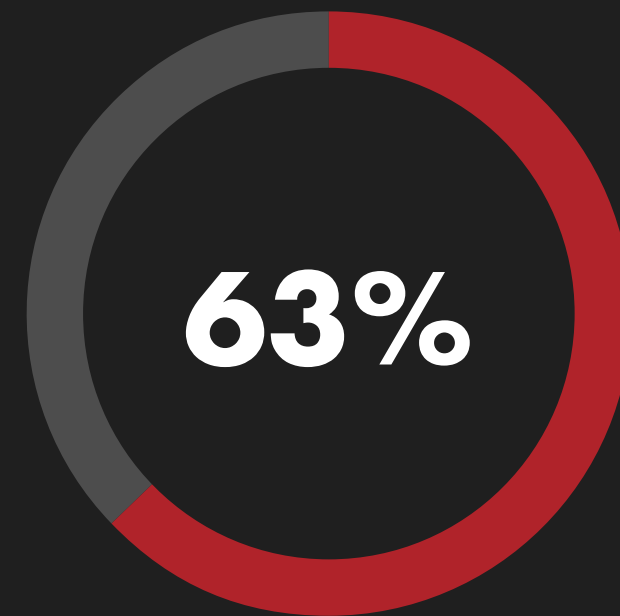
While arts groups are lining up to expand their digital offerings and outreach to Singaporeans, senior arts-goers are vulnerable to being left behind. More than 40% of Singaporeans above 60 years old do not use the Internet, and many seniors do not know how to use a computer or smartphone<sup>[1]</sup>. Most elderly arts consumers also rely on traditional media like newspapers and TV to learn about arts events<sup>[2]</sup>.

**In 2019, only**



**of seniors found out about local arts events through Google searches**

**In 2020,**



**of seniors aged 50-69 years old did not have any digital arts experience at all**

[1] According to the 2019 Infocomm Usage in Households and Individuals Survey by IMDA, 58% of seniors over 60 years old were Internet users which is significantly lower than the national rate of 89%. 76% of seniors over 60 years old used a smartphone, as compared to the national rate of 94%

[2] In the 2019 NAC Population Survey, TV and newspapers were the top 2 information channels used to learn about arts events for 64% and 48% of seniors respectively



# PENT-UP DEMAND FOR IN-PERSON ARTS EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES, DESPITE ACCEPTANCE OF DIGITAL ARTS OFFERINGS

Towards the end of 2020, the arts audience began to return to physical events as performing arts venues gradually reopened. Euphoric theatre and dance lovers gushed on social media about returning to in-person performances and classes. Performing arts-goers had missed the immersive feel of a live performance, while dance and painting aficionados were eager to go for studio classes with their friends and to get hands-on instruction.

However, having consumed digital arts for nearly a year, most Singaporeans reported enjoying digital arts experiences equally, if not more than in-person activities in 2020. In some cases, the online experience offered unique benefits that would not be feasible in physical format – such as entering the homes of favourite musicians as they livestreamed performances and collaborated with artists across geographical boundaries.

## FROM NAC'S COVID-19 ARTS CONSUMPTION STUDY

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### THEATRE-GOERS ARE HAPPY TO RETURN TO LIVE SHOWS

**"It has been far too long. Just far too long.."**

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### DANCERS WANT TO RETURN TO NORMAL PRE-COVID CLASS ROUTINE

**"This is the first open class I've gone for since the end of lockdown and it was crazy fun, missed this energy so much can't wait till classes are normal sized and to see the arts thriving around the world again."**

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### MANY ARE HAPPY WITH ONLINE CONCERTS EITHER AS A STAND-IN FOR PHYSICAL OR AS A REPLACEMENT

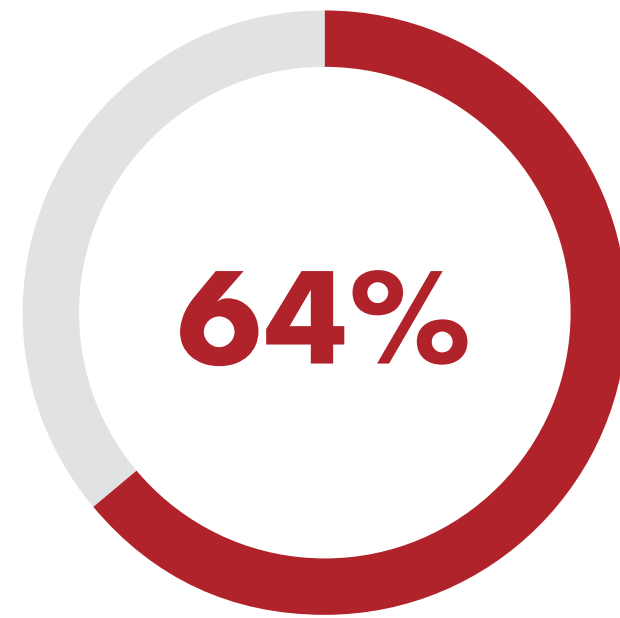
**"You guys brought back the live performance spirit in this livestream. This is awesome!!"**



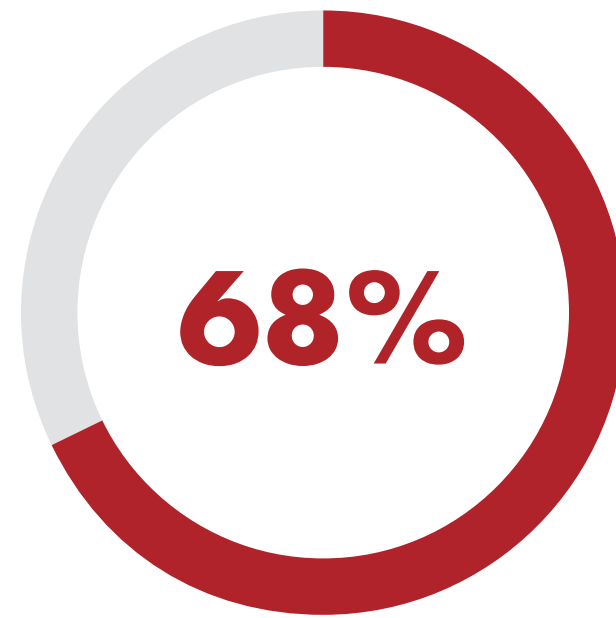
# MANY SINGAPOREANS HAVE NO QUALMS WITH PHYSICALLY VISITING ARTS VENUES, AS LONG AS HYGIENE MEASURES ARE SUFFICIENT

As Singaporeans ease into the post-COVID normal, staying safe from the pandemic virus is the foremost priority for arts-goers in deciding whether to go for an in-person arts performance. Physical arts attendees want reassurance from arts institutions that the event venue is not overly crowded and stringent hygiene measures are in place.

Nonetheless at the end of 2020, an increasing number of Singaporeans felt that it was safe to visit arts spaces in-person<sup>[1]</sup>. Physical arts activities are also expected to be enthusiastically embraced by Singaporeans seeking relief from digital fatigue prolonged by the pandemic.



**of digital arts consumers who previously attended physical performances preferred to attend in-person arts activities over livestream**



**of Singaporeans considered safety and hygiene measures to be the top consideration for attending an in-person arts event**

[1] According to the NAC'S COVID-19 Arts Consumption Study, 63% of Singaporeans would be moderately comfortable with visiting a museum or gallery and 48% of Singaporeans do not mind going for indoor arts events with a venue capacity of 50 people



# HELPING OUR ARTISTS AND ARTS GROUPS THRIVE IN THE POST- COVID ERA

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the urgency for arts practitioners to reskill, and for arts groups to build up their digital production capabilities.

Freelance artists and arts workers, who constitute 47% of the arts sector, are in dire need of a safety net<sup>[1]</sup>. To that end, NAC established two robust initiatives funded by the \$55 million Arts and Culture Resilience Package<sup>[2]</sup>. The Capability Development Scheme for the Arts (CDSA) encouraged upskilling among local arts practitioners, while the Digital Presentation Grant (DPG) supported local artists to present their work in a digital format. By December

2020, the CDSA supported about 900 training opportunities and 300 freelancers. The DPG supported more than 550 projects and provided around 7,000 work opportunities.

Though these two grants have been phased out, NAC's primary grant schemes have been enhanced to sustain digitisation and capability development needs for local artists and arts groups. NAC is also working with the National Institute of Education (NIE) to support Arts Education Providers (AEPs) to design and implement training to improve the digital capabilities of local arts groups.

[1] 2016 Arts and Culture Employment Study

[2] [www.nac.gov.sg/whatwedo/support/sustaining-the-arts-during-covid-19/Sustaining-the-arts-during-COVID-19.html](http://www.nac.gov.sg/whatwedo/support/sustaining-the-arts-during-covid-19/Sustaining-the-arts-during-COVID-19.html)

[3] <https://dawnjoyleong.com>



## CASE STUDY

# DISABLED ARTISTS' COLLECTIVE

Dr. Dawn-joy Leong is a researcher, multidisciplinary artist, and founder of the Disabled Artists' Collective that champions access and inclusion in the arts<sup>[3]</sup>. Her artistic oeuvre centres on her lived experience as an autistic person and her multi-sensory installations have been presented in Hong Kong, UK and Australia. Supported by the CDSA in 2020, Dr Leong took up graphic design, music and video production courses to develop her artistic practice. In October 2020, the artist premiered *Scheherazade's Sea: stories and songs from a hidden world*, a fully digitised remake of her 2010 exhibition which explores the journey of an autistic girl to embrace her unique self through courage and hope.



## THOUGHT STARTER #4

Can we envision more cross-sector collaboration to build sustainable arts business models?

In order to meet the challenges of the digital future, the local arts community can come together to share best practices, such as:

- Establish industry benchmarks for the monetisation of digital works
- Leverage new digital capabilities to create blended arts experiences
- Strengthen intellectual property protection over online arts content
- Automate backend business functions or grow audience share with data analytics

[1] [www.artsresourcehub.gov.sg/events/event-details/the-arts-byte-back-cross-boundary-perspectives-on-audience-engagement-through-digital-means-live-streaming-in-pandemic-times](http://www.artsresourcehub.gov.sg/events/event-details/the-arts-byte-back-cross-boundary-perspectives-on-audience-engagement-through-digital-means-live-streaming-in-pandemic-times)

[2] [www.artsresourcehub.gov.sg/events/event-details/the-arts-byte-back-cross-boundary-perspectives-on-audience-engagement-through-digital-means-arts-in-an-alternative-digital-space](http://www.artsresourcehub.gov.sg/events/event-details/the-arts-byte-back-cross-boundary-perspectives-on-audience-engagement-through-digital-means-arts-in-an-alternative-digital-space)

[3] [www.artsresourcehub.gov.sg/events/event-details/the-arts-byte-back-cross-boundary-perspectives-on-audience-engagement-through-digital-means-overcoming-limitations-of-online-audience-engagement](http://www.artsresourcehub.gov.sg/events/event-details/the-arts-byte-back-cross-boundary-perspectives-on-audience-engagement-through-digital-means-overcoming-limitations-of-online-audience-engagement)



### CASE STUDY

## ARTS BYTE BACK

The Arts Byte Back is a three-part series of conversations presented by the Arts Resource Hub, co-organised by NAC and the High Commission of Canada.

1. The Arts Byte Back: Cross-Boundary Perspectives on Audience Engagement through Digital Means - LIVE-Streaming in PANDEMIC Times, 29 Oct 2020<sup>[1]</sup>
2. The Arts Byte Back: Cross-Boundary Perspectives on Audience Engagement through Digital Means - Arts in an Alternative Digital Space, 26 Nov 2020<sup>[2]</sup>
3. The Arts Byte Back: Cross-Boundary Perspectives on Audience Engagement through Digital Means - Overcoming Limitations of Online Audience Engagement, 29 Dec 2020<sup>[3]</sup>

# SPARKING CONVERSATIONS ON FUTURE-READINESS AND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

In the post-COVID milieu, the local arts sector is not the only one pivoting to stay relevant. Singaporeans too are anxious about their relevance and ability to tide through future crises in a digital age, supercharged by COVID-19. As the country braces itself for the uncertain journey ahead, arts groups can play a valuable role in providing spaces and prompts for reflection and healing, where Singaporeans can have meaningful conversations about adjusting to the new normal.

A challenge and opportunity for the local arts scene will be to address the topic of digital isolation and inequality: whether the opportunities of the digital age can be inclusively accessed by Singaporeans from all walks of life.

**9 in 10**

**Singaporean workers felt the need to reskill or upskill to remain relevant in the post-pandemic world, according to the UOB Asean Consumer Sentiment Study conducted in July 2020<sup>[1]</sup>**

**3 in 4**

**Singaporeans / PRs were anxious about the state of the economy during the pandemic, in a study conducted by Wunderman Thompson in 2020<sup>[2]</sup>**



[1] [www.straitstimes.com/business/economy/singapore-workers-see-urgent-need-to-reskill-upskill-in-uncertain-job-market-survey](http://www.straitstimes.com/business/economy/singapore-workers-see-urgent-need-to-reskill-upskill-in-uncertain-job-market-survey)

[2] [www.straitstimes.com/singapore/health/74-of-singaporeans-and-prs-feel-anxious-over-pandemic-impact-study](http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/health/74-of-singaporeans-and-prs-feel-anxious-over-pandemic-impact-study)

## THOUGHT STARTER #5

As Singapore positions itself as a Smart Nation, how can the local arts scene help Singaporeans imagine, prepare for and find their place in the City of Tomorrow?

An essential role of the arts in the age of the 5th Industrial Revolution will be to sustain and strengthen irreplaceable human values like creativity, empathy, communication and compassion. In a time where human judgement is increasingly outsourced to algorithmic management, the arts can help our society cultivate an ethical compass, so we can hold ourselves accountable to provide responsible stewardship for future generations.



### CASE STUDY

## AN EXERCISE OF MEANING IN A GLITCH SEASON

National Gallery Singapore's *An Exercise of Meaning in a Glitch Season* invited visitors to collectively reflect and imagine new ways of thinking and doing towards a more humane future through immersive mixed media installations, sound and movement performances, and site-specific artistic interventions. This exhibition saw guest curator Syaheedah Iskandar collaborating with ten artists, including Kin Chui, Priyageetha Dia, Aki Hassan, Ila and Norah Lea<sup>[1]</sup>.

[1] [www.novelwaysofbeing.sg/media/Media%20Release\\_20200827\\_Proposals\\_for\\_Novel\\_Ways\\_of\\_Being.pdf](http://www.novelwaysofbeing.sg/media/Media%20Release_20200827_Proposals_for_Novel_Ways_of_Being.pdf)

# HOW CAN THE ARTS FLOURISH AND GROW IN VOLATILE TIMES, TACTICALLY TURNING DIFFICULTIES INTO DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION?

Throughout the boom and gloom of 2019 and 2020, one constant has been the durability of digital arts consumption. With the growing appetite for digital arts content, this is the opportune time for arts groups to expand their digital offerings, experiment with different mediums and technologies, and ultimately elevate the digital arts experience.

'Antifragility' is a term coined by Nassim Taleb, author of *The Black Swan*, to refer to things that not only endure, but benefit from disorder<sup>[1]</sup>. When exposed to different stressors, antifragile organisms evolve into something better. Hence, antifragility is at the spear-tip of innovation in all spheres of life, from the common bacterium to complex socioeconomic systems. Together, local arts groups can strive towards becoming antifragile and rebound stronger into the post-COVID future.

[1] Taleb, N.N. (2012). *Antifragile: Things That Gain From Disorder*. New York: Random House



## FROM NAC'S COVID-19 ARTS CONSUMPTION STUDY

**78%**  
of digital arts consumers intended to continue with online arts activities after the pandemic

**83%**  
of digital arts consumers felt that technology has eased the discovery of appealing arts content

**73%**  
of digital arts consumers felt that the arts improve quality of life