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Chapter 23

The Arts as a Value-Creating Ecology in Singapore

Hoe Su Fern

Introduction

Across the globe, cities like Singapore, Auckland, and Wellington have been racing to brand themselves as creative cities, pursuing policies that aspire to harness the arts as a strategic urban (re)development asset and place-branding tool (Scott, 2006; Evans, 2009; Pratt, 2010; Grodach, 2017). Although there has been a significant body of research analysing this global race amongst cities, there is a relative scarcity of literature providing a holistic understanding of how such global state aspirations impact and interact with the local arts ecology, especially in cities from the Asia-Pacific region.

This chapter aims to provide a deeper understanding of the evolving state of politics and practices of the arts ecology in Singapore from 2012 to 2023. This period was selected primarily because Singapore's most recent cultural policy — the Arts and Culture Strategic Review — was officially released in 2012, and has since introduced changes and shifts that have yet to be adequately documented and analysed. However, this chapter is not intended to be comprehensive in nature.

This chapter has two key objectives. First, it will critically interrogate the nature, extent, and implications of the Singapore government's efforts in utilising the arts as a pragmatic and expedient resource to become a globally-competitive creative city. While the Singapore government has long relied on developing hard infrastructure such as museums and performing arts centres as a means to become a globally-competitive city-state, this chapter will demonstrate how there has been a marked shift from a more vertical, developmental, and regulatory approach to a more localised, inclusive, horizontal, and stimulating *modus operandi* since 2012. Secondly, this chapter will consider some of the key points of tensions and discontinuities arising from Singapore's pursuit to become a global creative city in order to highlight how formal governance structures are linked to and complemented by non-government actors, informal sites, and everyday practices. Together, they contribute to the cultural dynamism and sustainability of the arts sector. Importantly, this approach provides a more nuanced, holistic, and extensive understanding of the linkages and interdependencies amongst the various actors, elements, and subsystems that comprise the arts in Singapore.

Methodologically, this chapter uses locality-based ethnography to provide a situated and 'thick' analysis that is sensitive to the context-specificity of the arts sector in Singapore, as well as attends to the nuances of the layered micropatterns, the localised relations, and the interdependent networks of diverse actors that comprise the arts. In particular, this chapter will analyse the arts through the framework of ecology. This framework is inspired by systems thinking, which approaches the phenomenon under study as a complex web consisting of multiple components and subsystems that interrelate and are interdependent.

This chapter is organised as follows. The first section will provide a background context of how the strong governance system has shaped the development of the arts ecology in Singapore. The second section will show how the current government's focus on local audience development has led to a quantitatively-hyperactive arts sector and the subsequent tensions. The third section will

discuss the government's shift towards a more horizontal approach to developing the arts and elucidate the interdependencies between the various actors, sites, and practices in sustaining the arts in Singapore. This chapter will conclude by arguing for the significance of understanding the arts as a 'value-creating ecology' that is relationally interdependent.

Understanding the Operating Environment: The Strong Role of State Governance and Cultural Policy in Singapore

When considering the operating environment of the arts in Singapore, the dominant role of the state in Singapore and its strong system of governance cannot be denied. The arts have always been recognised as an important expedient resource to the pragmatic Singapore government. This is evident in how the Ministry of Culture was one of the first ministries established by the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) when self-governance was attained in 1959. Like other post-colonial countries, the arts were identified as a means to create and promote a new sense of national identity (Mulcahy, 2017). Lofty ambitions aside, it is worth noting that the Ministry of Culture was only accorded a budget of S\$2 million for its first year of operations, compared to S\$21.9 million for the Ministry of Education and S\$27.4 million for the Ministry of National Development (Chong, 2018, p. xxi). This vast disparity in budget allocation highlights how the position accorded to the arts by the Singapore government is at once central and at the same time peripheral.

This positionality is further demonstrated in how it was only in the mid-1980s that the Singapore government started to invest heavily in the arts. The most seminal catalyst for this was the release of Vision 1999 in January 1985, which was a national policy aspiring to transform Singapore into a city of excellence by 1999. Vision 1999 was a government response to the economic growth and the ensuing increase in the standard of living in Singapore. With this change in socio-economic status, quality-of-life issues

were prioritised, including the need to rejuvenate Singapore into a vibrant cityscape with a 'cultivated society'. Vision 1999 claimed that the existence of arts activities and facilities would enable this transformation of Singapore into a culturally-vibrant society.

Since Vision 1999, the state has played a robust role in developing the arts in Singapore. This strong role of the state was formalised and asserted through three strategies: (i) the release of publicly-available cultural policy documents since 1989, (ii) the formation of government agencies such as the National Arts Council (NAC) in 1991, (iii) and the establishment of government-owned and -managed infrastructure for the arts like the creation of a museum cluster in the central area of Singapore, which included a new contemporary art museum — the Singapore Art Museum — that opened in 1996 (Hoe and Chong, 2018).

This robust role of the government has enabled a steady increase in government funding over the years, as shown in Figure 1.

This significant financial investment has led to government expectations that the arts address and deliver an expansive range of outcomes from urban regeneration to economic revival and

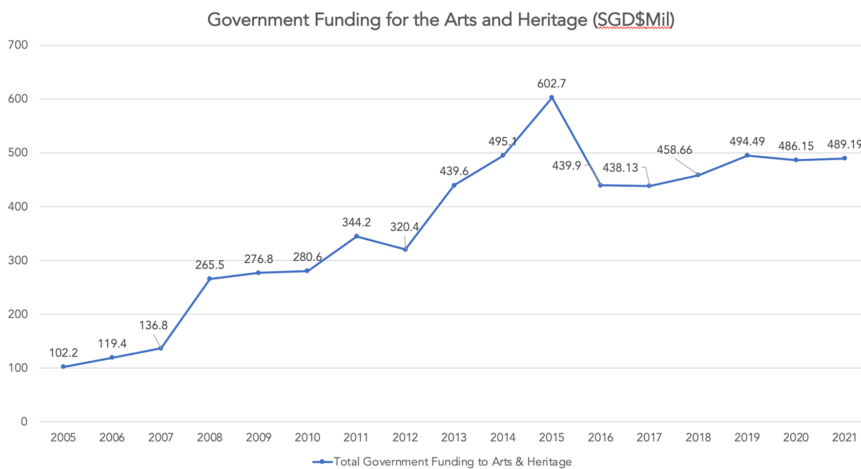


Figure 1. Graph depicting the total amount of government funding for the arts and heritage sectors.

Source: Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (2023).

social inclusion, oftentimes at the expense of art-making and artist interests. This instrumentalist treatment of the arts has led Terence Chong to argue that to understand the arts in Singapore is to understand the "bureaucratic imagination of the arts," a term he uses to describe the "selective and rudimentary application of art and its imagined qualities" by the politicians and bureaucrats as "a creative solution to perceived socio-political or economic challenges" (2014, p. 20).

In 2010, the Arts and Culture Strategic Review (ACSR) was initiated to chart the next phase of arts and cultural development in Singapore, particularly in terms of reassessing how the arts could play a stronger role in strengthening the 'software' aspects of 'our people and society'. The final report was released on 31 January 2012 to guide Singapore's arts and cultural development from 2012 to 2025. The overall ACSR vision was to transform Singapore into "a nation of cultured and gracious people, at home with our heritage, proud of our Singaporean identity" (Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts, 2012, p. 15). To achieve this vision, the ACSR aimed to meet two quantitative targets. The first was to double the percentage of Singaporeans who attend at least one arts and culture event every year, from 40% to 80%, and the second was to increase the percentage of Singaporeans actively participating in arts and culture activities, from 20% to 50%. Here, increasing access and participation in the arts are seen to have transformative effects on society, including "enriching the lives of Singaporeans," "strengthening Singaporean ties," and "promoting social cohesion across population segments" (Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts, 2012, pp. 8–11).

This highlights the ACSR shifting the focus towards harnessing the social benefits of the arts for the local population (Hoe, 2018b). With this prioritisation of the local population, the ACSR has led to a substantial shift in focus towards audience development and engagement.¹ This is evident in the ACSR's tagline: "arts for

¹Briefly, audience development refers to broadening the reach of and diversifying the demographics of the audiences to the experience, while audience engagement refers to the deepening of the impact of the arts experience for the audience.

everyone, everyday, everywhere." This focus on audiences has persisted in the two strategic roadmaps released by the NAC to guide the implementation of the ACSR: *Our Sg Arts Plan (2018–2022)* and *Our Sg Arts Plan (2023–2027)*. Both Plans recognise the central importance of audiences and "growing the appreciation, participation and consumption of the arts at every life stage (National Arts Council, 2023, p. 20).

The next section will elaborate on this shift in focus and demonstrate how this has resulted in a hyper-active arts sector. It must be noted that despite this shift in focus, there remains an identified need for continued investment in state infrastructure for the arts, especially in terms of refurbishments and upgrades to existing cultural institutions. According to the ACSR, funding for "infrastructural support for major national cultural institutions" would be required so that they can become globally-recognisable cultural icons and sources of national pride for Singaporeans (Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts, 2012, pp. 62–63). Institutions that benefited include the then-21-year-old Singapore Art Museum (SAM), which began a revamp in 2017 at a budget of S\$90 million, the addition of a mid-size theatre to the Esplanade at a cost of S\$30 million, and the transformation of the Singapore Philatelic Museum into a Children's Museum that reopened in December 2022.²

Growing Audiences through a Quantitatively-Hyperactive Arts Sector

In order to meet the ACSR goals, there has been significant state investment to develop audience-centric programmes. A key strategy was to increase the number of arts programmes, especially non-ticketed, free arts programmes, to lower the barriers to entry for audiences. This includes offering free entry to all national museums and heritage institutions from 18 May 2013 and develop-

²As of 1 January 2024, the Singapore Art Museum at Bras Basah Road has yet to be reopened, although the revamp was originally slated for completion in 2021 with an announced postponement to 2023. On 11 August 2021, it was announced that the Singapore Art Museum would occupy a two-storey space at Tanjong Pagar Distripark from 2022.

ing large-scale arts festivals. A related strategy is to embed these arts programmes throughout the island, especially in neighbourhoods and non-traditional arts venues.

This has resulted in a quantitative growth in the arts sector in Singapore, particularly in the number of arts activities produced (Figure 2) and the amount of arts attendance (Figure 3). Although COVID-19 led to a momentarily decrease in 2020, the arts sector quickly resumed activity. In fact, arts journalist Ong Sor Fern has used the term "revenge arts programming" to describe the intense increase in arts programming since the relaxation of social distancing measures (Ong, 2022).

At first glance, this hyperactive arts sector might appear to be a positive development. With a lack of robust public discussion on the value of art, there is a temptation to equate value with audience numbers or to consider that the art is worth funding only if there are eyeballs and/or footfall. Yet, on a look closer, there are some worrying indicators. As indicated by Figure 4, the rise in arts attendance has been powered by non-ticketed events, particularly

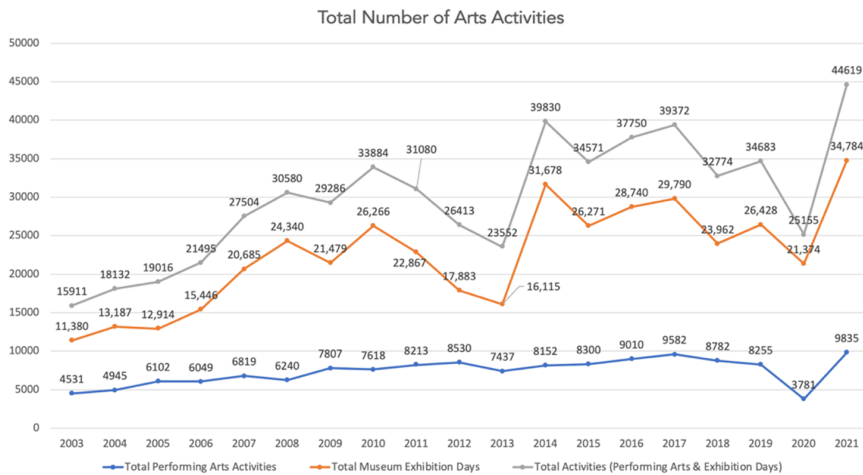


Figure 2. Graph depicting the total number of arts activities, with a breakdown between the total number of performing arts activities and the total number of museum exhibition days.

Source: Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (2023).

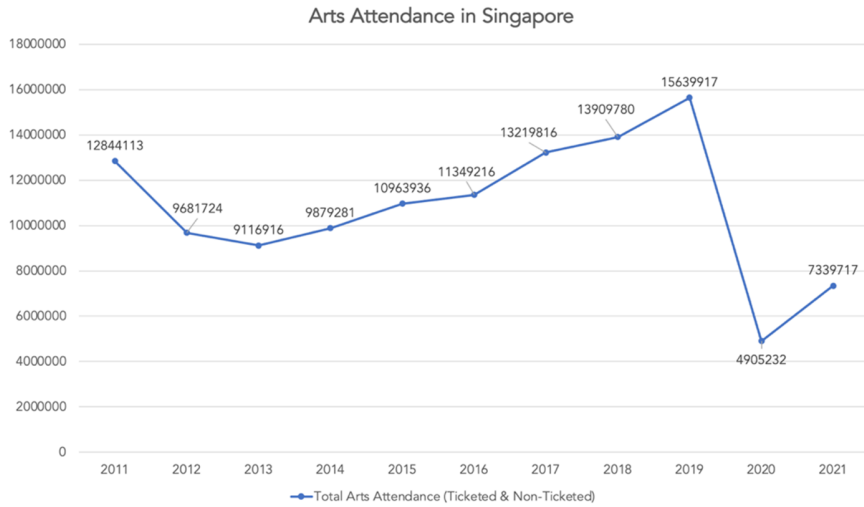


Figure 3. Graph depicting arts attendance in Singapore.

Source: Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (2023).

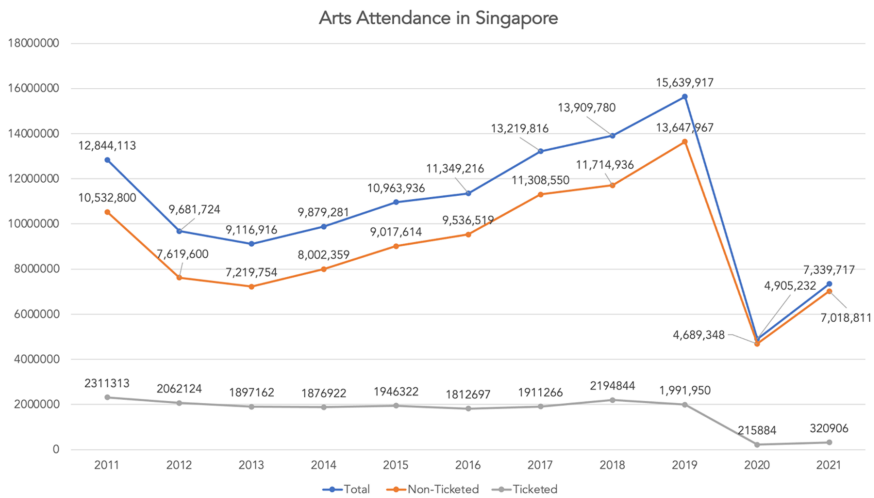


Figure 4. Graph depicting the breakdown of arts attendance in Singapore.

Source: Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (2023).

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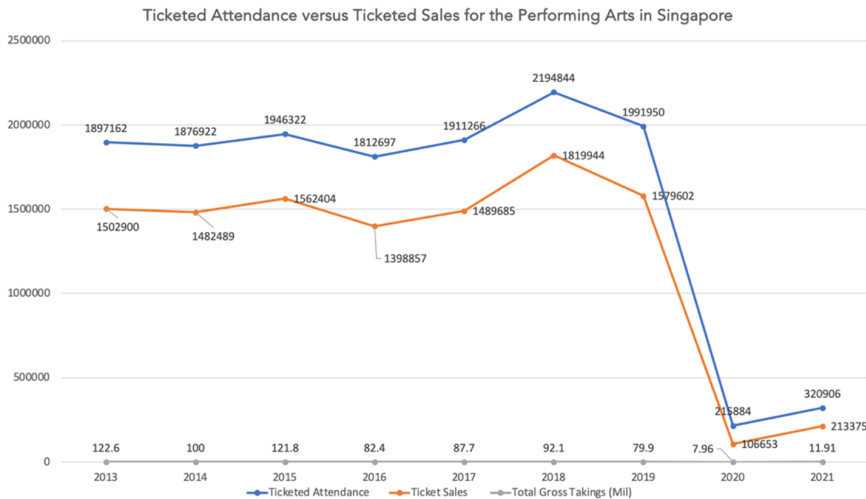


Figure 5. Graph depicting the disparity between ticketed attendance, ticket sales, and gross earnings.

Source: Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (2023).

large-scale government-initiated events like the Singapore Night Festival.

Apart from this disparity between non-ticketed and ticketed attendance, another disquieting area of concern is the ability to earn income from ticket sales as demonstrated in Figure 5. There are more non-ticketed performing arts activities produced, which results in a corresponding higher number of audiences for non-ticketed versus ticketed activities. For instance, in 2019, the total attendance for performing arts activities was more than 5.7 million, but ticketed attendance in 2019 only reached nearly 2 million audiences. Although this number is the second highest since 2013, ticket sales amounted to only about 1.58 million audiences and total gross takings fell to S\$79.9 million from S\$92.1 million in 2018. This highlights the difficulty of earning income through ticket sales in Singapore.

Apart from the inability to earn income from ticket sales, arts workers and groups are also not able to depend solely or even largely on government funding as a sustainable source of income. Again, the quantitative numbers must not be taken at surface value and there should be a closer scrutiny of the distribution of government funds. For example, in 2013, out of the total amount of S\$320.4 million dollars, S\$32.6 million was awarded to 1,150 arts practitioners and organisations through competitive grants.³ Moreover, while arts funding has increased, the arts sector has expanded tremendously. This means that artists and arts groups may be receiving less or unchanged amounts of government funding, limiting their ability to grow. Yet, there is unrelenting pressure to keep creating and producing programmes to attract audiences, especially to obtain government funding.

Overall, these issues indicate the limitations of arts development that is government-centric. While government funding for the arts in Singapore has remained relatively stable, the development in the arts ecosystem does not necessarily equate to improved and more equitable working conditions or lessen the precarity inherent in work in the arts. Nevertheless, it must be noted there has been increased government acknowledgement of the need to address the precarious work in the arts, particularly with the establishment of the NAC's Arts Resource Hub initiative in 2019 that aims to support arts freelancers. The next section will explore the government's shift towards a more horizontal approach to stimulating the arts in Singapore, and the ensuing conjunctions and disjunctions between various actors, sites, and practices in sustaining the arts in Singapore.

Beyond Numbers, Scale, and Spectacle: Sustaining Survival through Interdependencies

Apart from a shift towards a more localised approach as seen in the prioritisation of developing the population into arts audiences, there

³As a comparison, the National Gallery Singapore received almost S\$14 million in government grants.

has been a move towards acknowledging that the arts constitute a process that occurs and thrives through an interdependent system of activities, thereby leading to a much more inclusive, horizontal, and stimulating *modus operandi*.

A case example would be Singapore Art Week (SAW), a pinnacle event driven by the NAC in partnership with the EDB and the STB. Its origins stem from a desire to leverage the buzz of Art Stage Singapore, an art fair that was launched in 2011 with the backing of the EDB, STB, NAC, and NHB.⁴ According to the EDB, the aim was to create a globally-renowned art fair that would "strengthen Singapore's standing as a platform for international art businesses and expand into Asia and beyond" (*Business Times*, 2011). Helmed by Lorenzo Rudolf who had experience with Art Basel, the first edition of Art Stage attracted 121 galleries and 32,000 visitors (Huang, 2016a). It was widely reported that the momentum of the art fair managed to cause positive spillover effects, particularly in terms of an increase in tourism numbers and spending on hospitality and food.

By 2013, there was a bumper increase in art exhibitions and arts programmes being organised in January. With more than 50 arts programmes, the STB was prompted to publish "a comprehensive 56-page Art Week Guide to help art lovers navigate their way around town" (Shetty, 2013). This marked the beginning of SAW. With Art Stage being promoted as the glitzy anchor event, the third edition of SAW had a surge in arts programming, featuring almost

⁴ However, it must be noted that SAW's true origins can actually be further traced back to the "National Day Art Exhibitions" that started in 1969 and ran till 1985. The aim of this annual exhibition was to provide a platform to showcase artworks by local artists and increase local support for these artists. From 1986 to 1993, this was replaced by the "Singapore Art Fair." In 1995, NAC developed the "Singapore Art Fair" into "Singapore Art," which became a biennial national art show showcasing local art and artists. In 1999, this was renamed to "Nokia Singapore Art" due to Nokia Corporation becoming the key sponsor. Nokia's involvement expanded the art show into a two-month long visual arts festival that involved multiple venues as well as fringe and affiliate programmes. However, after two editions, "Nokia Singapore Art" was discontinued. In 2005, NAC launched the "Singapore Art Show," which was meant to be a biennial month-long, non-ticketed event showcasing "pieces by Singaporeans for Singaporeans" (Chow, 2005). There were no further editions after 2009.

100 programmes including activities such as neighbourhood walking tours, a family-friendly carnival, and music parties. The development of SAW as a festival with a variety of programmes reveals how the Singapore government has recognised that the arts require both cultural actors and economic actors, and the flows of resources and knowledge between them.

It must be noted that SAW was briefly disrupted in 2019. Rudolf made the decision to cancel Art Stage 9 days before it was scheduled to take place due to "the very difficult market situation in Singapore as well to an unequal competition situation on site" (ArtReview, 2019). Rudolf was referring to how SAW had changed its anchor event to S.E.A. Focus, a boutique art fair, showcasing galleries and artists from Southeast Asia that was supported by the NAC. However, Art Stage had been facing declining footfall and sales since 2016.

This abrupt cancellation meant that the 45 participating galleries were left stranded, alongside their artists and artworks. However, different players from the arts nimbly stepped forward, providing access to resources and services to the galleries left at their wit's end. One key resource platform that was quickly established was 'ARTery' a pop-up event organised by Art Outreach Singapore, a non-profit organisation that promotes visual literacy in Singapore, with support from Marina Bay Sands. Around 14 of the 45 galleries who signed up for Art Stage participated in 'ARTery', while other galleries found support from other local spaces and services.

Today, SAW remains a hallmark event. The 12th edition in 2024 featured two art fairs — S.E.A. Focus and ART SG — alongside more than 150 arts programmes across two weekends in January. This quantity was possible because of SAW's open invite for programme listings. This openness means that many of the arts programmes listed as part of SAW are initiated from the ground by arts spaces and workers who recognise the valuable benefits and opportunities of being part of a large-scale festival, including building connections and developing audiences. This horizontal inclusiveness enables a breadth of diverse arts programmes to be

included, from collaborations with corporate partners like 'Creative Intersections' — an 'art-meets-retail' activation that invites artists to collaborate with brand partners located at Funan Mall — to community art exhibitions in the heartlands and experimental platforms like the 'Islands Time-Based Art Festival' (ITBA) that presented live performance pieces by emerging artists alongside established ones.

Therefore, although SAW may be a state-initiated, output-driven event that thrives on spectacle, it also illuminates how artists and organisations do not exist in isolation but are embedded within a framework of relations in a social world. In particular, the 2019 edition affirmed how the interrelations amongst diverse actors enable regenerative conditions of possibility for creative work, especially in terms of providing forms of support as well as encouraging collaboration and cooperation.

A key dimension of nurturing conditions for the arts is the spatial context. In recent years, the Singapore government has recognised the need to stimulate creativity through the development of conducive spatial conditions for artistic production. As noted by Mommas, cities pursuing a creative economy have recognised the need for a "conscious creation/stimulation/nourishment of sources of creativity and innovation" (2004, p. 521).

Gillman Barracks was established in 2012 at a cost of S\$10 million, as a joint effort by the NAC, EDB, and industrial landlord Jurong Town Corporation (JTC) to create "a vibrant centre in Asia for the creation, exhibition and discussion of contemporary art, and will strengthen Singapore's position as a contemporary art destination" (Economic Development Board, 2012). According to Eugene Tan who oversaw the development,⁵ Gillman Barracks was a necessary intervention by the government "to step in to address the failures of the open market" to develop a successful arts cluster

⁵In 2013, Tan left EDB to become the director of the National Gallery Singapore (NGS). In 2019, he also became the director of the Singapore Art Museum (SAM). On 13 March 2024, apart from these directorships, he was further appointed Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of NGS, CEO of SAM and head of the Visual Arts Cluster (comprising the two museums and STPI).

that would become an "international destination and marketplace for contemporary art in Singapore" (Tan, in Chia, 2012).

Gillman Barracks officially opened on 15 September 2012, with 13 art galleries. From October 2013, the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art (NTU CCA) — an arts research centre — became the anchor tenant occupying four buildings in the cluster. However, negative media coverage surfaced within a year of its opening. The constant issues covered include the departure of galleries and the lack of footfall (Huang, 2013, 2016b; Shetty, 2015). The NAC and EDB remedied some of the issues, introducing improved wayfinding and increased food options and programming to cultivate audiences. In 2014, 'Art After Dark' was launched — a series of free, late-night events with pop-up activations including music, performances, food, and drink. In 2016, the NAC and EDB jointly set up the Gillman Barracks Programme Office to strengthen programming and better integrate the cluster with the arts ecosystem in Singapore.

In 2020, it was announced that the NTU CCA would cease operations at Gillman Barracks after March 2021. In 2022, the Singapore Land Authority assumed management of the space (instead of the NAC and EDB), with aspirations to rejuvenate the area into a "vibrant creative lifestyle enclave" that would offer a wider range of programmes such as farmers' markets. This was justified based on the need to "optimise land resources" and "unlock greater value from state properties" to benefit the wider community (Singapore Land Authority, 2022). Concurrently, Tanjong Pagar Distripark started to be promoted as an arts cluster, especially with the area being a key location for Singapore Art Week with the SAM having opened an extension there (Toh, 2021; Sim, 2022).

The negative media coverage of Gillman Barracks and the land management changes highlight an inherent lack of understanding of the operations of an arts cluster comprising private art galleries and the importance of justifying land optimisation through quantitative metrics such as footfall. What has been lesser publicised is the number of art galleries that have persisted in staying

on in Gillman Barracks. Many of the remaining galleries have been there since 2012.

The NAC's expeditious shift towards promoting another area as an arts cluster raises questions about short-term horizons, the long-term sustainability of space for the arts, and opportunities for arts spaces to cultivate deep roots with the communities and neighbourhoods they are sited within. Evidently, despite the overall growth of the arts sector, arts workers in Singapore continue to face challenges, especially the precarity of space and a top-down obsession with land optimisation. In an island city-state where most of the land and existing arts infrastructure is state-owned, the finiteness of space for the arts — literally and figuratively — remains a key challenge. Although there is an expansive variety of arts infrastructure in Singapore today, most of these spaces tend to be consumption- and audience-oriented. The use of state-run infrastructure also comes at a cost — there are great expectations for the users and tenants to deliver multiple instrumentalised outcomes, such as place vibrancy (Hoe, 2020). Additionally, there has been a long history of the closure of arts spaces, from government-run spaces like the Telok Ayer Performing Arts Centre and The Substation at 45 Armenian Street to artist-initiated spaces like soft/WALL/studs and independent music venues such as Home Club, Decline, and White Label Records (Hoe, 2021).

Nonetheless, there continue to be ground-up initiatives to hold and make space for the arts, especially for artistic experimentation, process, and friendship. These initiatives are important because top-down or institutionalised planning and policies for the arts are in and of themselves not sufficient to comprehensively support the development of the arts and their complex dynamics.

One such initiative is The Projector, which opened in 2014 as an independent cinema space at Golden Mile Tower. The Projector took over the former top floor of Golden Theatre, which was once the largest cinema in Singapore when it opened in 1973 with its 1,500-seating capacity. To help finance the renovations as well as the purchase of two digital projectors, The Projector launched an online crowdfunding appeal. Today, The Projector has become a

valuable platform supporting indie, arthouse, and local films. In particular, its programmes extended runs for Singapore-made films, so as to grow audiences and box-office sales. Also, as a means to overcome the lack of a permanent lease for the space, The Projector has activated several disused spaces into pop-up cinema spaces.

A cherished part of The Projector is the provision of a social space and inclusive cultural programming, which has garnered a reputation for hosting a diverse range of programmes from poetry slams to 'bad-movie' bingo nights, live music gigs, and pub theatre experiences.

An instance of The Projector's inclusiveness of alternative programming is 'The Glory Hoes Present', a series of queer film experiences that was started in 2017 by The Glory Hoes, an artist collective. Hosted at The Projector, these experiences include 'no-judgement, no-holds-barred film screenings' of cult queer films that include elements such as makeovers, sing-alongs, drinking games, and post-screening dance parties. Fundamental to The Glory Hoes ethos is the screening of films that have a queer resonance and/or sensibility. Another significant aspect is the encouragement of audiences to be open to differences and to challenge social norms.

Besides being vital complements to the state-initiated programmes, The Projector highlights the importance of having open spaces where differences can be encountered and negotiated, and where artistic process and experimentation can take place. According to Ginette Chittick, a DJ who plays frequently at the Intermission Bar, The Projector is a "non-judgemental" space where artists feel "comfortable and safe" to show work (Vincent, 2019). The Projector has also been committed to ensuring continued access to these spaces.

Other noteworthy ground-up spaces that have made room for experimentation and process-driven projects include 136 Goethe Lab by The Goethe Institute, Starch which is self-funded and run by artist-curator Moses Tan, and dbspce, an incubator space in Peninsula Shopping Centre offering a residency and mentorship programme. There are also occasional pop-up interventions. An example is 'An Eminent Takeover' in 2014, where artists were

given freedom by the owners of Eminent Plaza to use the rooms and walls of the mall as they liked for a month before the building was demolished. A more recent pop-up is 'Open GR.iD'. GR.iD mall sponsored 16,000 square feet of space to be transformed into a pop-up co-sharing and co-making platform for multidisciplinary artists and collectives to make art, exchange ideas, and 'just be' for two months in 2024. The intent is to socialise risks and motivate experimentation so as to encourage diverse and complementary sets of cultural practices while building solidarity amongst arts workers.

Apart from spaces, there have also been more alliances and mutual aid initiatives to build solidarities. One example is the #WaterlooStKakis, a neighbourly alliance amongst four arts organisations four arts organisations located on Waterloo Street, together with the Arts and Culture Management Programme from Singapore Management University. The alliance was formed due to a shared desire to lessen the precarity of the arts spaces by working together to increase visibility and value as a creative cluster vital to the Waterloo Street neighbourhood.

Despite their improvisational and precariously-impermanent states, these platforms are important for artistic experimentation as well as strengthening care and solidarity. These are what Ava Kromberg calls possibility spaces, which she describes as accessible and inclusive spaces that promote an environment of "generosity, conviviality, and the messiness of coexisting differences, as well as an openness that allows new ideas and forms to take shape in favour of habitual responses or patterns" (2010, pp. 214–215). As local architect William Lim reminded us, we must recognise the city as being in a vital "state of incompleteness, with spaces that are indeterminate and open to continuous unforeseen changes and unplanned growth" (2012).

Conclusion

Today, the arts in Singapore are a unique constellation composed of both private and public entities, comprising a range of artistic

strategies from performance to installation, craft, and music raves that are navigating processes of state expectations, multiple modernities, cross-cultural fertilisation, and co-opetition. Together, they constitute a networked field of interdependent relations, or what Hearn, Roodhouse, and Blakey call a "value-creating ecology" (2007). They use this term to describe how value creation in the arts is not a simple one-way linear process but involves continuous networks of relationships, reiteration, feedback, co-creation, and co-opetition.

Importantly, although the arts and creative sectors are never stagnant and do not stay still, understanding the arts as a 'value-creating ecology' productively redirects our attention to the complex shifting nuances and relations of the art-making process, and the need to recognise the incommensurable interdependencies and relations at play. These interdependencies, especially amongst diverse actors, are critical for the long-term sustainability of the arts. There is a need to consider the sustainability of the arts, as the arts today are facing unprecedented challenges, precipitated by the global COVID-19 pandemic crisis and exacerbated by urgent challenges including long overdue calls for social justice, ever-burgeoning structural inequities in health, wealth, and social trust, increasing levels of political polarisation, and the catastrophic consequences of climate change. Ultimately, I hope this chapter offers a useful reference for a growing and multifaceted conversation about the complex conditions of artistic production in Asia-Pacific cities like Singapore.

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