

# Pause, Reset, Fast Forward?

## Thinking about the Arts in Singapore

---

**Paul Tan**

PhD candidate at Nanyang Technological University  
Former Deputy Chief Executive at the National Arts Council

---

*With the world's arts and cultural sector emerging from the worst of the pandemic, and now adapting to the idea of living with COVID-19, arts communities everywhere have been stretched by both new challenges and lessons learned. Looking back on the past two years, Paul Tan reflects on the aspects of the arts that endure even as artists, audiences, and the communities that support art-making confront the future.*

---

Never did I imagine in my years as an arts administrator that we would be discussing the trajectory of aerosolised particles created by vocalists and wind instruments. But indeed, that was the nature of some of the new work during the thick of the COVID-19 situation. We were in earnest discussions with our colleagues in the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) on how we could keep the performing arts going in some form despite the trying circumstances. Eventually, we ended up working with A\*Star, Singapore's Agency for Science, Technology and Research, and the Esplanade-Theatres on The Bay, Singapore's premium performing arts centre, to get data on how droplets spread in outdoor and indoor settings, and this allowed us to make a more informed decision about creating safe distances between audiences and performers.

This was just one instance of the different approaches to work that everyone in the arts sector had to adopt during the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether you were an actor, art gallery staff, stage manager or administrator in the National Arts Council, you had to reorientate yourself, including figuring out how to make the best of WFH ("work from

home") and developing hacks to ensure you did not burn out from the long hours and reduced in-person interactions.

In many ways, the pandemic made clearer the trends which had already started, in particular, the push toward digitalisation. Much has already been written about the explosion in digital consumption of the arts during the strictest of the Circuit Breaker, as well as how the arts community was compelled to quickly figure out how to use the online medium, and how the government stepped up funding to enable the arts community to digitalise their programmes for greater outreach, in anticipation of the brewing health crisis.

Another trend that accelerated was the ability of artists to talk and transact directly with their patrons and potential fans. Whether it was live streaming services for musicians, subscription sites like Patreon, or the use of blockchain technology and Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) for visual arts, there was certainly a growth of awareness and adoption of new tech-enabled distribution platforms.

But the pandemic also exposed some weaknesses such as the precarity of jobs in the sector. In pre-COVID times, the gig nature of the arts economy meant flexibility, freedom and working for one's passion, but the pandemic proved a sobering reminder about practical realities: maintaining a buffer in one's personal finances, the need for health insurance, the importance of being adaptable and willing to try new things. While governments around the world rolled out many support schemes for affected arts sectors, the international arts community also rallied like-minded partners in the sector to self-organise initiatives and

take care of one another. Indeed, the last two years were a trial by fire for arts communities everywhere. We are fortunate that in Singapore, our community showed a steely resilience and forward-looking optimism.

---

## New Trends Amid Enduring Perspectives

---

But we also should resist the temptation of privileging everything that is new. While we reflect on some of the latest trends, we realise there is much that endures with regard to the sector. For instance, one can easily contend that these new aspects listed here are actually modalities of presentation or the evolution of the ecosystem, and that nothing at the core of arts creation or its appreciation has fundamentally changed.

To elaborate, there is truth in the argument that, for millennia, humanity has had a propensity for creative expression across different cultures. Think about the Lascaux cave paintings or stylised terracotta figures from ancient Asian civilisations. Whether modern global citizens think the music they listen to on their daily commute to work or the digital imagery on their computer games qualifies as art or not, these are creative expressions naturally woven into our daily existence. The value of the arts, and the recognition that they need to be nourished and funded, I believe, has not changed.

I believe all humans have some innate capacity to value beauty. I would add that increased exposure to the arts will build that capacity and, of course, it is helpful to have some domain knowledge to help one better understand the context of an artistic creation and the formal standards with which a work is assessed. But domain knowledge should not be a prerequisite. In fact, the notion that one must have specialist knowledge to unlock the value of art has created an unhelpful, elitist perception of the arts.

The potential of the arts to be a space safe within which one may explore tougher topics like end-of-life or societal inequalities has not changed either. Whether during pre-COVID times or today, this potential must be tapped, though it needs to be done responsibly and in a balanced way. Throughout history, the arts, encompassing the literary, visual, decorative, and performing arts across a multitude of genres and functions, have been an important vehicle for critical thought and social change.

We see this in many important masterpieces of artistic endeavour; consider writers like Lu Xun and Pramoedya Ananta Toer whose works challenged the traditional belief systems or the failings of colonial administrations. Or look at how performance art revolutionised art-making from the 1960s as it challenged the notion of art as being object-based and revelled in the ephemeral nature of the performative event. Art which pushes boundaries may be ahead of its time. At the point of creation and public reception, it can

stimulate discussion and controversy, and even discomfit some audiences.

As a provocation for critical thinking or a vehicle for advocacy, art helps us to imagine different worlds beyond the status quo and, conversely, also jolts us into appreciating what might otherwise be taken for granted. As Singaporeans, we should celebrate the diversity of practices in our arts community, and support our artists in their endeavours to express differing views, as a way of holding up a mirror to society. Surely, given how creative energy and out-of-the-box-thinking can fuel Singapore's future economic success, surely the arts will be a valuable crucible for game-changers and broader innovations that will benefit society?

Given the complex make-up of Singaporean society with its diverse communities, the Government's desire to protect this multicultural fabric as part of a larger social compact is understandable and, indeed, important. Artists need to consider the local contexts of their art-making to help audiences appreciate the role that the arts can play in advancing creativity and openness to a diversity of views which in turn undergird the building of mutual understanding and harmony in society. In this vein, arts education is critical.

---

## Some Tentative Crystal-Ball Gazing

---

So, what does the future hold? The push to digitalisation raises interesting questions that will take time to answer. How do we assess the value of a digital work, given the relative newness of the form, especially when an evolving work interacts with users who help generate part of the content? What are the formal aesthetic qualities experts should use as a yardstick? And what are the potential intellectual property issues that may arise, when there is no sole, identifiable artistic creator?

The second set of questions in this crystal-ball gazing exercise: will the trend of circumventing the middleman lead to the death of the gallerist, the publisher or the agent? I would not place my bets on this. I suspect there will continue to be a role for the intermediary to help us wade through the plethora of art experiences in the physical or virtual world. For example, consider how we appreciate relevant and useful recommendations from bookstore and library staff, whether it is for ourselves or our children. Similarly, gallerists can help us understand the history behind particular artworks or different artistic practices as one contemplates purchasing a new work.

In the best-case scenario, more intermediaries will develop symbiotic relationships with artists, offering an independent eye or practical assistance; responsible publishers will continue to provide editorial rigour and publicity support to writers, just as galleries will discuss curatorial options and work closely with artists for upcoming exhibitions. The direct-to-consumer modality will continue to thrive, providing artists with an alternate digital means of reaching audiences. This will also spur the middlemen in the sector to improve and raise professional standards.

Even as new challenges arise, we can be confident that, in the near term, the arts in Singapore will remain well-resourced, and that the adaptable and resilient arts community will continue to harness its creative energies well. My hope is that our diverse arts practices find sustainable support among different audiences, and that new artworks will continue to be added to the cultural “substrate” which shapes Singaporeans’ shared identity. When we attain a broader appreciation and understanding of the nature of the arts and the roles that they can play in our lives, the arts and their impact on our 57-year-old nation-state will undoubtedly endure. □

---

### About the Author



Paul Tan is currently a PhD candidate in Creative Writing at the Nanyang Technological University.

Paul joined the National Arts Council in 2011 as the Festival Director of the Singapore Writers Festival and Director, Literary Arts, and helmed four editions of the popular literary festival before serving as the Deputy Chief Executive Officer at the Planning and Corporate Development Group until August 2021. During his tenure, he also served on the boards on numerous arts companies including the Singapore Chinese Orchestra, the Singapore Symphony Group and the Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre.

Paul has also published five volumes of poetry and writes the occasional opinion piece for *The Straits Times*.

# In Case of Existential Threat, Redefine Your Existence:

## Checkpoint Theatre's Lessons from the Pandemic

---

**Huzir Sulaiman**

Co-founder and Joint Artistic Director, Checkpoint Theatre

---

*The performing arts sector was particularly hard-hit during the pandemic as live performances ground to a halt. Local company Checkpoint Theatre, however, endured with a nimble turn to diversification as well as care for their staff, in addition to government subsidies, and thus provides a case study in adaptive capacity and resilience. In this essay, Huzir Sulaiman shares some lessons he learned from the past few years.*

---

It was March of 2020, and I was on the phone with a worried National Arts Council (NAC) officer. Performing arts groups in Singapore were reeling from the impact of the rapid spread of COVID-19. Our account manager at NAC was concerned that Checkpoint Theatre would be plunged into despair at the closure of venues and the freeze on our industry.

“Well,” I said, with what must have seemed an inappropriate amount of chirpiness, “it’s just like the Japanese Occupation!”

“Er... how is that a good thing?” she replied.

“It’s not a *good* thing, but there’s no point in moaning and wailing about it. You do what it takes to survive. You learn Japanese. You trade rice on the black market. Don’t moan about the British surrender. Pick yourself up, adapt, and carry on. That’s what Checkpoint Theatre will do.”

Historians may find fault with my analogy, but it was psychologically useful. When everyone was talking about “unprecedented times”—

how we all came to hate that phrase!—it was comforting to realise there was an arguable historical precedent. The tribulations of 1942-1945 brought hardship and pain, and you had to be brave, flexible, determined—and lucky—in order to come out on the other side.

So this is what we did during the “Occupation” of 2020-2022, and what we learned from it.

When the pandemic began, Checkpoint Theatre was 18 years old, and was pursuing its mission of developing, producing, and promoting original Singapore theatre with ever greater vigour. It was a point of post-colonial pride for us to never stage a Western play—everything was a home-grown Singaporean work, and created in-house. We rigorously developed our plays with the creators, sometimes over two years, going from an idea and a blank page into a full staging, and often a publication or international tour. We received NAC Major Company Scheme funding, and had been commissioned five times by the Singapore International Festival of Arts and its predecessor, the Singapore Arts Festival. With five live productions planned, 2020 was slated to be one of our biggest seasons ever, in venues ranging from the Drama Centre Theatre to the Esplanade Theatre Studio to an intimate museum setting.

All the shows had to be cancelled, of course. Our cash losses for our March and April 2020 productions were close to SGD300,000, as we decided to pay every one of our freelancers their full wage, and the projected lost revenue for the rest of the year was about SGD700,000. There was no prospect of further ticket income, and no

idea how long the pandemic would go on. The closure of theatres meant that our remaining solely a theatre company would have posed an existential threat, a threat to our very existence. Rather than allow ourselves to be made powerless by the uncertainty of the situation and sit paralysed until theatres were allowed to reopen, Claire Wong and I—co-founders and Joint Artistic Directors of the company, and partners in life and art—resolved to come up with a creative and constructive response to this pandemic: a new way forward.

---

## Beyond Boundaries, Into the Unknown

---

Over the years, we had increasingly diversified the nature of our work to reflect the multidisciplinary interests and skills of the artists with whom we collaborate. Beginning with the Singapore Writers Festival 2015, we had started to proclaim the cross-platform nature of our company when I curated *What I Love about You is Your Attitude Problem*, which featured 24 different events or performances we commissioned across a range of art forms, from works by singer-songwriters to monologues to installation art to drag cabaret to short films.

As we had been on this path organically, looking across different platforms and disciplines for some years, the pandemic provided a strangely welcome push for us to lean into that multidisciplinary, freed from the rigid season planning and mission

statements of a pure theatre company. Because we worked with living creators and always started with a blank page, their work could go into any format for which we could marshal the resources and expertise. Our colleagues—the full-time arts administrators as well as the Associate Artists of the company—embraced our new vision.

Within a month of the declaration of the pandemic, Checkpoint Theatre re-positioned itself as original Singapore storytellers across different media, disciplines and platforms. We leaned into a multidisciplinary approach to allow us to reach audiences in different ways. This decision allowed us to still create, practise our craft, and bring meaning to the lives of our collaborators and our audiences.

Our excitement grew through 2020 and 2021 as we moved forward on projects ranging from graphic novels to music to online films and podcasts. Amid the loss and grief that the sector was experiencing, we were grateful to have found a way through the darkness to reconnect with our impulse to create.

From the beginning of the pandemic to the time of writing this essay, Checkpoint Theatre had produced three audio experiences, four new online films, seven comic books in both print and e-book formats, four online conversations, a successful online fundraiser, playwriting masterclasses for eight writers, and dozens of digital school shows. Since December 2021, we have also staged four plays and held two live talks, but our commitment to our diverse artistic products continues, notwithstanding the reopening of theatres.



---

# What we have learned and the way forward

---

## **Monetising digital content is difficult to begin with, and impossible when piracy is rampant.**

As a company accustomed to sold-out shows, pre-pandemic, with ticket-buying audiences sometimes as large as 3,500 for a play, we were curious to see how our ticket sales would translate to the digital space. Our *free* online content garnered thousands of views, but our paid content saw a significant drop from what we had expected, to the hundreds. Studying this phenomenon over the last two years and seeking input from colleagues, we realised that, simply put, audiences in Singapore are reluctant to pay for online content, and seem quite happy to commit intellectual property theft.

NAC research shows that 63% of people expect online content to be free (National Arts Council n.d.). And when you couple that with the fact that 40% of Singaporeans admit to piracy, as reported in *The Straits Times* in 2017 (a figure I consider suspiciously low), the net outcome seems to be that if something costs money, it will not be bought, and it—or more importantly, something else—will be stolen.

To be clear, it is not my belief that digital products by Checkpoint Theatre or other Singapore artists are themselves being pirated; that would be somewhat flattering, albeit infuriating. But what happens is this: when the consumer is faced with a choice between a Singapore product made with limited resources and available quite cheaply (our online films were priced at SGD7.99), and

a big-budget American or Korean show that can be illegally streamed or downloaded, the Free Foreign will always beat the Affordable Local.

The remedy for this is two-fold.

First, Singapore artists need to “up their game” to ensure that their products provide some sort of edge that even the most skinflint, larcenous viewer is willing to pay for. We’re all certainly working on this part.

But in tandem with that, the Singaporean government should, through rigorous enforcement of its own intellectual property laws and high-profile prosecutions of offenders, discourage the consumption of pirated digital content, thereby creating a genuinely level playing field where Singapore creators can compete solely on quality. This will expend political capital, as anecdotal evidence suggests that many families in Singapore have a child with a hard drive full of illegally downloaded anime, and the electorate might not like to see them systematically hauled up before the courts and punished for intellectual property theft.

I’m sure the reader is now chuckling nervously and thinking about the contents of their own devices, or their nephew’s. But my point is very serious: unless and until piracy is comprehensively discouraged through robust prosecution, it will be impossible for Singapore creators to monetise their online work. Any much-heralded pivot into digital content creation will never be financially sustainable.

The K-pop group Blackpink has 48 million Instagram followers and 76 million Youtube subscribers. Yet when they released a long-awaited concert video at the height of the

pandemic, they only garnered 280,000 paid ticket buyers, largely assumed to be a consequence of widespread piracy. If Blackpink, arguably the biggest music act in the world at the moment, can't make money online, what hope is there for the rest of us?

And yet, there is a gentler alternative to relentless prosecution of piracy: generous and continuous subsidy for the arts, for which I will argue shortly.

**Transformation needs time, an honest assessment of who we are, and state support.**

In seeking to transform Checkpoint Theatre and broaden our practice, moving into many new product lines, I realised that many of the largest companies now in the media and entertainment sector took a very long time to get there, and sometimes started in unlikely places. We must remember that Disney only moved into live-action film after 27 years of concentrating on animation; it took them another 21 years to venture into theme parks. And for the first nine years of Samsung's existence, it sold noodles and dried fish. Even much less dramatic shifts require time to understand a new market, make mistakes, and correct course. In the arts sector in Singapore, we therefore need to allow ourselves time to transform, well beyond the grant-reporting cycles tied to a single fiscal year.

Part of the problem is a certain fuzziness of self-image. The major players in the sector are rightly classified as charities, recognised for contributing something to the public good, and eligible for donor tax incentive schemes and matching funding. These schemes are enormously helpful to us and gratefully utilised.

But arts groups are one of the few types of charities that can directly *sell* their services to their beneficiaries. We look like—and have come to be subconsciously judged as—entertainment *businesses*, even by ourselves. Animal welfare charities cannot expect stray animals to directly pay for their rescuing or feeding; those groups are dependent on indirect support. But arts charities are constantly confronted with a rhetoric that they need to be financially sustainable, part of that being an implicit pressure to directly monetise their product.

In the Singaporean government's superb pandemic response, the support schemes that were rolled out and adjusted in successive budgets, including raising the Job Support Scheme wage subsidy from 25% to 50%, and several substantial one-off grants, had a hugely positive impact on Checkpoint Theatre's viability. By reducing the daily anxiety of collapse, it allowed us to concentrate on telling Singapore stories in new ways, and making great art. We have done some of our best and boldest work precisely because we knew that we were cushioned somewhat from failure by a supportive funding structure that snapped into place in this time of crisis.

This does not mean that our transformation efforts were a failure. With our podcasts, films, music, and comics, we are slowly building a market, and they may very well be profitable one day—perhaps even massively so. That is certainly my hope. But it may take years, and we will continue to need state support.

I would therefore urge the arts sector to engage with the government in good faith, to rethink the now-widespread philosophy of sustainability, and to relook at how the arts should be funded as we continue to transform and embrace new

challenges. The pandemic has taught us that we can survive and transform when we have more State support and subsidy, not less.

### **Ultimately, people come first.**

At one of the early online industry town halls in 2020, a senior government official said—not unkindly, but gently and factually—“We don’t expect all of you to survive,” no doubt reflecting the gloomy analyses of those days. That galvanised our desire to make sure that not just Checkpoint Theatre survived, but that all of our people would too. We needed to take care of them.

We have been told that Checkpoint Theatre set an industry standard right from the start of the pandemic. We paid our freelancers—actors, designers, technical crew—full fees for cancelled shows, partly because it was the decent thing to do, but also because if these brilliant, self-employed persons had to exit the profession due to economic hardship, the sector as a whole would suffer an irretrievable loss. I am glad many other groups followed our lead. Even as our war chest was depleted, our donors rewarded us by renewing, and sometimes increasing their support.

None of our full-time arts administrators were let go or had their salaries cut. We knew we had to hold on to them and take care of them, rewarding them for their hard work and belief in our ability to survive. Promised raises were honoured. Bonuses were paid, though Claire and I forewent ours in 2020.

We began a practice of morning online check-ins, which continues to this day, where we spend a lot of time on personal things: how are you sleeping; what have you cooked or eaten; what music are you listening to; how is your auntie doing, the one who had the fall? These “watercooler conversations”, such as you would have in a physical office, help cement our identity as people who care about each other first, long before the first work discussion of the day.

Mental health was and is a constant consideration. We make frequent, discreet accommodations for staff who are going through a difficult time with the pandemic. Early on, we resolved never to police online productivity. A midday nap is perfectly fine. Time out to deal with kids or ailing parents is perfectly normal.

Ultimately, the biggest lesson of the pandemic for Checkpoint Theatre was that if we put our people first, whether full-timers or freelancers, they would see us through each stage of survival and transformation.

It is 2022, and we are now in our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season. Our multidisciplinary transformation is fully embedded, even as we have returned triumphantly to the stage with the critically-acclaimed *The Fourth Trimester*, filling the huge Drama Centre Theatre with the laughter and tears of our audiences who have stayed with us all through this dark pandemic period. We are grateful for our audience’s support, for the loyalty and hard work of our team members, and for the constant care and support of government agencies. We look forward to an exciting 20 more years and beyond. □

---

## About the Author



Huzir Sulaiman is the co-founder and Joint Artistic Director of Checkpoint Theatre. He oversees the company's development of new work, including plays, audio experiences, video, and comics. A critically-acclaimed and award-winning playwright, his *Collected Plays 1998-2012* was published in 2013. His work has been commissioned five times by the Singapore International Festival of Arts and its predecessor, the Singapore Arts Festival.

Recent directing credits include *The Weight of Silk on Skin* as part of Chamber Readings: Plays by Huzir Sulaiman (2022), *Session Zero* (2021), *Vulnerable* (2021), *Two Songs and a Story* (with Joel Lim, 2020), *Thick Beats for Good Girls* (2018), and *FRAGO* (2017).

Huzir has taught playwriting at the National University of Singapore's University Scholars Programme; at the NUS English Department; the School of the Arts; and other institutions. Huzir was educated at Princeton University, where he won the Bain-Swiggett Poetry Prize, and is a Yale World Fellow.

## Bibliography

National Arts Council. n.d. "Digital Engagement of Arts and Culture: Arts Engagement Among Singapore Online Population". Accessed Sep 26, 2022. <https://www.nac.gov.sg/resources/research/digital-engagement/digital-engagement-of-arts-and-culture>

# Five Skills for the Future of Arts and Culture

---

**Scott Smith**

Managing Partner, Changeist, The Hague

---

*Rapid change is happening worldwide within the field of the arts and culture in an era of evolving infrastructure, technology, attitudes, and audience demographics and engagement. Referring to this evolving landscape, Scott Smith, the co-author of an international study on the Future of Culture, talks about five skills that the global arts and cultural sector must learn in order to thrive in the new economy.*

---

One does not have to be a dedicated art critic to know that art and culture are changing rapidly around us. Many of us no longer have to take a day out, purchase tickets, dress up and stroll to a museum, gallery or theatre to engage with art. Increasingly, art meets us where we live: in public parks, shopping malls, in the wilderness, scrolling through social media, and on game consoles. Art, by its very nature, has always taken new and innovative forms, from ochre on sandstone in pre-modern days to images encoded in DNA and “art” rendered by neural networks. As the product of human creativity, art reflects or projects stories of triumph, tragedy, sublimity, and mundanity. It both responds to the moment and reflects eternity. Art does a lot of work—it always has done. But the work of imagining, making, delivering and supporting art is as complex as its many forms.

Here, on the edge of a paradigm shift in how we experience the world—through technology and what we experience in the unfolding, uncontained Anthropocene—the skills needed to do the work of making and bringing art to a dizzying array of publics are reconfiguring. With new tools constantly arriving, ways of working evolving, modes of experience changing, and audiences rapidly diversifying, an inventory of

necessary adaptations in the arts could fill this publication on its own.

Fortunately, two research efforts my colleagues at Changeist and I carried out during the global COVID-19 pandemic in the past two years have given us some focused insights into five particular areas of need, touching disparate but closely connected capabilities that will be increasingly necessary as we move into the next decade of opportunity and challenges. These research projects—a deep dive into the ecosystems of creative R&D we developed for a working group of arts organisations in the UK in late 2020 (still to be published), and a global survey into the Future of Arts and Culture carried out with support of Arup and Therme Group in 2021—pointed in similar directions regarding necessary skills for the near future of the arts, while looking at the landscape demanding these skills through slightly different lenses.

Below is a distillation of what our research showed are the most urgent skills needed, as reflected in these in-depth probes. The list can surely go on, but these were seen by over 200 arts and culture organisations and artists and technologists globally as the most pressing of many future needs.

---

## Technology Skills

---

Art has always been reliant on technology, from made pigments to polished lenses to digital projections. In recent decades, however, the boundaries around what constitutes art and around many of the disciplines art interacts with have dissolved, creating rich ecosystems

of exploration and experimentation. While many institutions may still separate them, the arts and sciences are deeply intertwined today. The leading edge of artistic experimentation is taking place at the intersections of art and biology, art and material science, art and physics, art and computation and so on. While the latter is getting a tremendous amount of attention through the explosion of digital arts, whether through flashy non-fungible tokens (NFTs) or amazing fusions of arts and artificial intelligence, there is practically no technology stone that is remaining unturned by experimental, and often only loosely directed, collaborations between artists and technologists, or by self-described artists who take it upon themselves to explore new tools.

The cross-sector professionals who responded to help us develop the Future of Arts and Culture study and resulting scenarios saw mastering new forms of digital creation and delivery as a key challenge facing artists and institutions in the coming decade. This recognises the feedback loop of new tools reaching new audiences through new channels—online galleries, performance spaces, marketplaces, new narrative forms—which in turn will drive even more diversification. Tools of the so-called metaverse, such as mixed reality, sensory immersion, visual worldbuilding, narrative creation, and even digital currencies, will require familiarity if not some facility, in order to work with many aspects of art and culture in the years to come. But, as described above, the touchpoints of technology and art have spread far wider, into just about any form of technology or field of science you can imagine. Removing institutional, philosophical or curricular boundaries between arts and

technology will be key to delivering the skills necessary for the future that lies ahead of us.

---

## Networking Skills

---

Somewhere, you have probably encountered an arts entity or “brand” from across the world, outside its normal geographical boundaries. This may have been through a touring exhibition, a documentary or an online experience. Through globalisation and the spread of platforms like the Internet into most corners of the world, arts institutions big and small are no longer confined to the physical communities they may be rooted in. Formal and informal networks abound in the arts today as well. Many creators, curators and producers shift between institutions, bringing new works to new audiences, creating many interconnected relationships that help hold the arts together.

In years to come, however, these networks may be both critical pipelines *and* lifelines. They will be critical pipelines in that they will play an increasingly important role in bringing new voices and talent from under-recognised perspectives and communities to audiences around the world. They will be critical lifelines as smaller and mid-sized arts institutions and platforms will need to band together to survive and thrive in a more turbulent and uncertain social, political, financial and technological landscape. As funding models shift due to changing priorities, such as climate change, or changing business models, the ability to build, maintain and grow networks and strong connections between and among institutions, creators, supporters and communities will be central to the continued existence of many arts organisations.