



Image: Ken Tan, Director of Lehmann Maupin gallery speaking at a professional development workshop by Art Outreach. Source: Art Outreach

# Arts and Culture: From Education to Employment

**Dear  
Readers,**

With the worst years of Covid-19 and its restrictions on in-person arts engagement behind us, Singapore is back on track in its efforts to grow and diversify its arts and culture ecosystem. But will the background of new technologies, gig work, platformisation and shifting social norms enhance or reduce the employability of arts and culture graduates? In this issue of Culture Bytes, we look at the themes of education and employment in relation to the arts and cultural industries.

This issue's main feature is a keynote speech, "Building a National Collection in a Changing Nation", by Kaywin Feldman, Director of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. In this speech, she touches on the transformative power of museums in fostering diversity and empathy to ignite material change within the cultural landscape and society at large. The speech sets the tone for how museum leadership can **embrace a diversified workforce to strengthen the future of the arts and cultural sector**. The second article is a study by Coffield, Markham, Crosby, Athanassiou and Stenbom on postgraduate students enrolled in museum, gallery, or heritage studies programmes at a UK university. It offers a **student-centred perspective when exploring perceptions of identity and employability** opportunities post-graduation. Concluding this issue is an article by Comunian, Jewell, Sunmoni and Dent that explores how Arts and Humanities graduates in Europe have **performed in the labour market and how they can make socio-political and cultural contributions to society**, beyond the economic.

It is important to address the employment prospects and opportunities available to individuals passionate about a career in the arts and culture sector. These graduates need to be agile and adaptable to capitalise on current trends in order to unlock new opportunities for work across the arts and culture, and adjacent sectors. Higher education has an important role in fostering well-rounded individuals who can apply their artistic knowledge and practices to cross-disciplinary contexts in a rapidly changing world. At the same time, employers must be equipped to appreciate the diversity and strengths of new graduates entering the workforce. Only then can there be improvement of the quality of education and employment outcomes of the sector.

*From all of us at Culture Academy.*

## Main Feature

### Building a National Collection in a Changing Nation

By Kaywin Feldman



A prominent figure in the art world, **Kaywin Feldman is the first woman to lead the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.**, where she has made significant contributions as Director in expanding the institution's reach and impact. Prior to her role at the National Gallery, Feldman was President at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, and served as the Nivin and Duncan MacMillan Director. Under her leadership, she is committed to reinventing museums for the 21st century to promote equity and empathy.

Image: Kaywin Feldman. Source: The National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

In this speech, Feldman delves into the position of a national museum as it navigates challenges and opportunities in an ever-evolving cultural landscape. While a national museum plays a vital institutional role in preserving the heritage and the collective identity of a nation, it should also strive to have a positive impact in uniting the local community and society at large. The national museum not only celebrates the nation's achievements in various fields; it also takes on a bridging role in fostering understanding in times of conflict. In navigating issues related to the future of museums, Feldman focuses on prioritising diversity and fostering a more inclusive environment to create more opportunities for underrepresented artists and professionals. Her speech inspires further conversations on the prospects of employment in the museum sector. For museums to make significant material change and engage diverse audiences, the people in the museums, as well as the artists behind the art should draw from different voices and perspectives. By amplifying different voices and perspectives, museums contribute to a more inclusive narrative of art history and expand conversations around art. This shift provides aspiring artists, scholars, and art historians with a broader range of role models and references which can help to nurture their professional growth and inspire new artistic directions. Engaging with different voices and people in the discourse and production of art can help to draw deeper connections between people. Through this, one of the main points of Feldman's speech, museum scholarship is always in service of something greater – the creation of experiences that deepen understanding of our shared humanity. The national museum is thus not only a building for the works of art, but also a place of connection and a symbol of the human spirit.

*This keynote speech was organised by the National Gallery Singapore.*

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## Research Articles

### Article 01

#### 'Lacking' Subjects: Challenging the Construction of the 'Empowered' Graduate in Museum Gallery and Heritage Studies

By Coffield, E., Markham, K., Crosby, J., Athanassiou, M., Stenbom, C.



Image: Students browsing art books in the Tan Boon Hui Collection, a publicly-accessible reading room at Art Outreach. Source: Art Outreach

In Higher Education, employability-related teaching is increasingly becoming part of the core curriculum. This is aimed at ensuring graduates are 'work-ready', in other words, employable. Yet, students enrolled in these courses can sometimes still feel themselves as subjects 'lacking' the resources needed for work, often feeling that they do not have adequate experiences needed to meet expectations of employers. The trajectory from 'lacking student' to "employable graduate" often relies on acquiring advantages that is not equally available to all. In the discourse of graduate employability, graduate-centred understandings of employability are missing as conversations on employability continue to be about the students rather than a conversation with students.

The authors collected data from two cohorts of postgraduate students enrolled in museum, gallery, or heritage studies programmes at a UK university between 2018 and 2020. It covers the sentiments and motivations of postgraduate students and the different forms of subjectification when navigating employment. The study urges more discursive approaches to employability, and to consider the identify formation of graduates during the process. Specifically, there needs to be critical reflection on how discourses of employability are shaping higher education, and more attention paid to the lived experiences of students. Findings in these areas underpin future research on students' employability.

[Read here](#)

### Article 02

#### For What It's Worth: European Arts & Humanities Graduates' Employability and their Engagement in Society

By Comunian, R., Jewell, S., Sunmoni, A., Dent, T.



In a study across Europe between 2013 and 2019, despite an increase in enrolment in higher education, the number of graduates enrolled in Arts and Humanities (A&H) degrees declined. This sparked concern on the future health and value of these subjects, and the need to demonstrate and promote the impact and value of A&H higher education. This paper explores how European arts and humanities graduates contribute to their economies and societies beyond the financial/economic. It examines how A&H graduates have performed in the labour market, their monthly earnings in various sectors of employment, as well as variables that may explain these labour market outcomes including the undertakings of volunteering and internship engagements outside of their studies. European A&H graduates have lagged other graduates in the labour market - they are less likely to be employed and more likely to be in part-time work. In the longer term, while their prospects of a full-time job may improve, their earnings penalty increases as does the likelihood of their being over-educated. However, A&H graduates have significant societal participation as measured by their volunteering rates or through legal, social, and cultural occupations. As such, the authors recommend measuring the broader contributions of graduates to society to emphasise the importance of Higher Education in shaping graduates as critical and engaged citizens in society.

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