

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### ***For Immediate Release***

## **SINGAPORE HOSTS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ARTS, HERITAGE AND CULTURE**

**Singapore, 6 December 2018** – Accessibility has been an ongoing topic of discussion for institutions and organisations across sectors who seek to improve and enhance their offerings. Museums, galleries and cultural institutions around the world are no exception. With a growing and varying audience profile, how do arts and cultural institutions ensure that their offerings are accessible to everyone? Local and international experts hailing from the cultural sector, urban planners, and academics are looking to answer this question at the two-day *Accessibility for Diverse Communities: The Role of Cultural Institutions* conference which commenced earlier today.

2 Organised by Culture Academy Singapore, and supported by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, the conference offers important perspectives into the positioning and responsibilities of a cultural institution in today's diverse society. Through discussions on the challenges faced by cultural institutions, the conference also addresses how accessibility refers to both physical spaces and audience needs, and how multiple access points can be created to ensure that the arts and culture remain accessible to all. The conference was attended by Guest-of-Honour Sim Ann, Senior Minister of State for Culture, Community and Youth, local and international experts in the cultural sector; arts and heritage professionals; and members of the public.

3 The two-day conference features five panel discussions, where speakers and audiences examine topics including how underserved communities and ethnic minorities can be better engaged and represented; the different ways in which digital technologies can be harnessed to create more inclusive offerings; and the economics behind making the arts and culture accessible to all. The panel discussions will be complemented by a sharing session on accessibility initiatives across the sector, to generate further discussions in these areas. More details of the programme and topics can be found in **Annex A**.

4 An authority on inclusivity in museums, Dr David Fleming – who is President of INTERCOM (International Council Of Museums' International Committee on Museum Management and Leadership), and whose vast portfolio includes being a museum director for more than 25 years – delivered a keynote address at the opening of the conference, where he reiterated the importance for cultural institutions to be more inclusive. Other notable speakers for the conference include:

- Dr Lucy Bolger, Lecturer of Music Therapy, Creative Arts Therapies Research Unit, University of Melbourne (UOM), Australia;
- Dr Rimi Khan, Senior Research Fellow, University of Melbourne (UOM), Australia;
- Mr Chad McGitchie, Head of Visitor Teams & Access Lead Manchester Museum & the Whitworth, University of Manchester;
- Mr Kennie Ting, Group Director of Museums, National Heritage Board (NHB); and
- Ms Ye Yipei, In-gallery Digital Media Team, Palace Museum, China.

As part of the conference, the panellists will share on the different accessibility programmes and efforts undertaken by the various cultural institutions they represent.

5 The insights from the conference will also pave the way for greater inclusivity in our cultural sector – an area of interest addressed in both *Our SG Heritage Plan* and *Our SG Arts Plan*, Singapore's five-year masterplans for our arts and heritage sectors. Both plans feature key strategies and initiatives to make the arts and culture more accessible to all, working towards the outcome of building a caring, cohesive and confident nation.



*Ms Sim Ann, Senior Minister of State for Culture, Community and Youth, witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the National Heritage Board and the University of Melbourne to deepen cultural collaboration over the next three years. Image Courtesy of MCCY.*

6 During the conference, a Memorandum of Understanding to intensify the cultural collaboration between NHB, through the Culture Academy Singapore, and the University of Melbourne (UoM), was signed – a testament to the Culture Academy Singapore’s efforts to strengthen capability development in Singapore’s arts and cultural sector. The memorandum marks the start of a close three-year partnership with UoM, and sets the stage for a robust exchange of ideas and expertise.

7 More information on the conference can be found at <https://www.mccy.gov.sg/Events/2018/Nov/Accessibility-For-Diverse-Communities.aspx>

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### **About the Culture Academy Singapore**

The Culture Academy Singapore was established in 2015 by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth to groom the next generation of cultural leaders in the public sector. Guided by its vision to be a centre of excellence for the development of culture professionals and administrators, the Culture Academy's work spans three areas: Education and Capability Development, Research and Scholarship, and Thought Leadership. In these areas, the Culture Academy Singapore provides networking opportunities, platforms for exchange of creative ideas and offers professional development workshops, public lectures and publications to nurture thought leaders in Singapore's cultural scene.

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## ANNEX A

### **Accessibility for Diverse Communities: The Role of Cultural Institutions conference programme**

#### **Keynote Address**

Dr David Fleming  
Chair in Public History, Liverpool Hope University

Abstract: Museums globally are facing a host of new challenges. If museums are to survive and prosper then they need to change the way they think, the way they do things, and the role they play: they need to become more socially-responsible, and to fight against the social exclusion which causes some to doubt that museums deserve to be funded in the 21st century. In the UK city of Liverpool, the organisation National Museums Liverpool has grown its audiences by a factor of five by pursuing a social justice agenda. In this presentation I shall consider how this has worked, and what are the obstacles that need to be overcome.

#### **Panel 1: Accessibility In Diversity: Who Are We Addressing And Is It Old Wine In A New Bottle?**

*6 December 2018, 11am*

What does accessibility mean, for example, what do we mean when we say that we want to provide more accessibility? Who are we addressing and what do we want to provide more accessibility to (programmes or physical accessibility, etc). Included in this discussion could be also the issue about being accessible to the new communities who have made Singapore home (New Citizens, PRs and Residents, including our foreign workers).

As we become more diverse, what must we look out for in order to remain accessible to everyone?

Is this issue handled differently in different societies? Is this focus on accessibility a completely new trend or has it just gained more traction in recent years? If so, why?

*Speakers:*

Dr Rimi Khan, Senior Research Fellow, University of Melbourne (UOM), Australia

Mr Tan Tarn How, Adjunct Senior Research Fellow (Arts, Culture and Media), Institute of Policy Studies

Mr Olivier Boasson, Director, Department of Visitor Experience, Musee du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, France

Mr Kennie Ting, Group Director of Museums, National Heritage Board (NHB)

*Moderator: Mr Paul Tan, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, National Arts Council (NAC)*

## **Panel 2: Making Arts and Culture Accessible to Everyone**

*6 December 2018, 2pm*

This panel will discuss how cultural institutions can make themselves and their offerings more accessible to everyone, not only the “general public” and the “converted” but also how they reach out to, and engage the underserved communities as well as the ethnic minorities in their programme creation and curation of exhibitions. How do we draw the balance so that there is a good representation or meeting of needs and interests without becoming a case of tokenism? How can we include the new communities that have made Singapore home and the large migrant workers here? Overseas examples will also be welcome to learn from.

The question to be also discussed is how they should be included – just by providing an add-on programme specially catering to their needs or consciously integrating their needs into existing programmes?

This panel will also discuss issues related to people with additional needs.

*Speakers:*

Ms Jean Loo, Founder, Superhero Me

Dr Lucy Bolger, Lecturer of Music Therapy, Creative Arts Therapies Research Unit, University of Melbourne (UOM), Australia

Ms Izan Satrina, CEO, Cultural Economy Development Agency (CENDANA), Malaysia

Ms Rachelle Tan, Head of Venues and Programmes Management, The Esplanade Co Ltd

Mr Paul Adams, Learning & Engagement Manager, Singapore Repertory Theatre (SRT)

*Moderator: Mrs Rebecca Chew, Academy Principal, Singapore Teachers' Academy for the Arts (STAR)*

## **Panel 3: Physical and Psychological Barriers to Accessibility**

*6 December 2018, 4.15pm*

This panel will look at several issues. First, how design plays an integral part in making a space, building or programme inclusive and welcoming or intimidating and exclusive to our visitors and audiences. Second, how do subtle and non-verbal cues and messages that are sent to our stakeholders through publicity materials and images used can also exclude

groups of people.

Third, this panel will also discuss how the use of language and/or the absence of its use and how it is used can also exclude communities who may see it as not open to them and therefore inaccessible to them. Language here is used in a broad sense from offering the option of using different languages to be able to understand what they are reading or seeing to the importance of providing good and accurate translations.

*Speakers:*

Mr Chad McGitchie, Head of Visitor Teams & Access Lead, Manchester Museum & the Whitworth, University of Manchester

Mr Jeremiah Choy, Creative Director, Producer, Curator, Festival Director, Enabling Festival

Mr Kelvin Ang, Director, Conservation, Urban Redevelopment Authority

Ms Kim Eunyoung, Educational Curator, Jeonju National Museum, Korea

Ms Susana Harding, Director, International Longevity Centre – Singapore, Tsao Foundation

*Moderator: Dr Meredith Martin, Associate Director Cultural and Public Engagement  
Chancellery, University of Melbourne (UOM), Australia*

#### **Panel 4: Making Arts and Culture Affordable – Who Pays and What Counts?**

*7 December 2018, 9.05am*

Providing greater access to arts and culture to a diverse community means that special arrangements have to be made for a smaller group than what we would plan for a mass audience base. Moreover, these special arrangements mean that an organisation has to set aside a certain budget over and above its baseline to cater to these special requirements.

Another issue that organisations contend with is where to draw the balance between providing more access, ie free tickets and balancing the books. For example, how does the Singapore Symphony Orchestra offer free concerts and still manage to balance the books? Or is providing such free concerts worth it? Does it lead to more new audiences being engaged, including the underserved?

How can we make arts and culture more affordable and accessible but also sustainable for cultural organisations?

Agencies could also share the different funding schemes and programmes available that help to defray costs for the public.

*Speakers:*

Dr Sharon Chang, Senior Deputy Director, Research, Ministry of Culture Community and Youth (MCCY)

Mr Aaron Seeto, Director, Museum Modern and Contemporary Art in Nusantara (MACAN), Indonesia

Mr Chng Hak Peng, Chief Executive Officer, Singapore Symphony Group

*Moderator: Ms Serene Lim, Director, Policy and Planning, National Arts Council (NAC)*

### **Sharing Session on Accessibility Initiatives across the Sector**

*7 December 2018; 11.00am*

Panellists:

Ms Chua Ai Liang, Senior Director, Planning and Engagement, Engagement and Participation, NAC

Ms Asmah Alias, Deputy Director, Education and Community Outreach, NHB

Ms Neo Phaik Hoon, Deputy Director, Community Arts and Culture, People's Association (PA)

Ms Grace Low, Head, Community Engagement, Esplanade

Ms Pauline Ann Tan, Vice-Principal, Academic/Student Development, School Of The Arts (SOTA)

Mr Yeo Kirk Siang, Director, Heritage and Research Assessment, NHB

*Moderator: Ms Tan Shir Ee, Head/Partnerships and Patronage, Singapore Art Museum (SAM)*

### **Panel 5: Digital Transformation and Creating Access**

*7 December 2018, 2.30pm*

As we become a SMART Smart Nation, how do we carry our artists and audiences with us and at the same time, provide different access points for those who may not be comfortable with the digital or are hesitant to embrace it? How can arts and culture help include these marginalised people to ride the digital wave and how do we embrace technology without alienating these people?

How do cultural institutions embrace technology and use it to help them further their work and to also make arts and culture accessible to everyone? Will how arts and culture be



learned, mastered, consumed and marketed and disseminated change in the future? How can we make it accessible for more people without alienating anyone and can big data help cultural institutions in their efforts to become more accessible?

*Speakers:*

Ms Ye Yipei, In-gallery Digital Media Team, Palace Museum, China

Professor Haga Mitsuru, Professor, Institute for Excellence in Higher Education, Tohoku University, Japan

Mr Jervais Choo, Deputy Director, Organisational Design and Innovation, National Heritage Board (NHB)

*Moderator: Ms Gaille Teo, Manager (Strategy & Masterplanning), Planning & Prioritisation, Smart Nation and Digital Government Office (SNDGO)*