



With all of us around the world grappling with the realities of living through a catastrophic global pandemic accompanied by pre-existing issues of precarity and unease in the arts and cultural sector due to economic and political challenges, the 4th ANCER Conference took place as a virtual conference in September 2020 responding to three themes of precarity, transformation and leadership. Amidst all the disruption and devastation, we look for opportunities for reflection and reinvention. Our speakers and panelists –artists, arts managers, educators, writers, activists and more—presented meditations on their practice and work in these troubled times, clarion calls for change and action, anecdotes of resilience, and inspiring thoughts for moving ahead with greater awareness of our collective role as ecologically and digitally aware global citizens.

This report summarizes the five sessions of the conference, written by students from the Masters in Arts & Cultural Leadership of LASALLE College of the Arts, edited by Sunitha Janamohanam. The biographies of all speakers and the programme schedule is included at the end of this report.

“SMALL REHEARSALS, NEW WORLDS”

Thursday 17 September 2020

Keynote address by Amitesh Grover, Artist, Writer, Curator and Assistant Professor at the National School of Drama, New Delhi. Moderated by Venka Purushothaman, Provost, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore.

Venka Purushothaman, LASALLE College of the Arts Provost, opened the conference by establishing its key theme, "**Disruption as Opportunity**" – evoking the rapidly changing global environment which has compelled us to face the pandemic as a collective experience, highlighting how it has provided opportunities to reassess what mobility means to us as humans, while we redefine what culture is in the 21st century.

Responding to Venka and linking the conference themes to concepts of collectivity, Keynote speaker **Amitesh Grover** introduced questions of what the collective means to our times. Using the trope of the collective as a framing device, three of his artistic projects were presented as chapters: Occupation, Mourning and Velocity –each examining and demonstrating ways of association, making connections, collectivism, collectivizing, collecting, having a collection, and being a collective and how this plays a vital role in which people form their sources of expression.

Occupation

The word occupation had gone through several definitions in the last decades. It is addressed both in terms of a ‘profession’ and what ‘occupying’ means as an artistic strategy, and alongside examinations of digital labour and how we perform work. Inserting himself into one of the largest IT companies in India, Amitesh as artist/worker ‘performed’ a six-month project wherein he conducted a series of



micro-performances by prompting simple instructions for other workers while undertaking a series of unfamiliar tasks himself as an employee. Working with recordings from surveillance networks, the project raises questions about subjectivity under perpetual threat of productivity and order, changing values of team performance and how labour has been sabotaged by commercial and financial capitalism. It also captured employees' difficult working conditions and how surveillance data has changed the definition of efficiency and become an indicator of happiness index in the 21st century.

Mourning

While new kinds of collectives occupy our urban spheres, old forms of collectives are disappearing, particularly traditional practices that do not find any space in today's cosmopolitan world. Between 2015-2016, Amitesh worked with the rural Oppari **singers** of Tamil Nadu. When a death occurs in the community, Oppari singers come to the house of the deceased and perform grieving songs and poems for the family. Mostly practiced by older women, it is a practice that is improvised by nature. The current generation learns the art from the older generation and keeps adding poems and lyrics to expand the repository. Viewing these singers as another type of collective and through the staging of their performances for an urban audience with live interpreters, Amitesh examines the efficacy of translation in their work and raises questions of productivity in the act of mourning.

Velocity

For 100 days, Amitesh installed changing messages on billboards in New Delhi, a project that deal with concepts on velocity and stillness. Describing Delhi as a amalgamation of several invisible cities seen at different times of the day and in different collectives, using the same space, the project elicited different performances for its citizens. Responding to the city's current socio-political environment and the public body's routine life, every day a new text was broadcast – sometimes a thought provocation, an instruction, or simply a question. The work brings out issues of how the citizen body is framed within discourses of nationality and anti-nationality, citizenship and foreignness, Indianness, and non-Indianness.

Role of Disruption as an Artist and in the Current Times

In the question segment that followed Amitesh raised how Western discourse thinks about disruption differently from South Asia. In India, as in parts of Southeast Asia, societies are already disrupted, and disruption carries a creative force. The strategies he employs are non-confrontational and non-oppositional to enable artistic pursuits, and he views social practice as essential for the reimagining of social realities. In conclusion, Amitesh reflected on collectivizing as an urgent need, for whom and on whose behalf. While this pandemic moment shows us that sensibilities and sensitivities can unite, we are also into a moment of solitude. We have a moment to think, but how to proceed from here? To imagine new collectives or to resume the old ones? We need to imagine these collectivities in social and digital ways across our geographical borders.

by Shivani Talesara

THE “BUSINESS” OF CREATIVITY AND CULTURE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA Friday 18 September 2020

The first panel of the conference showcased a diverse set of Southeast Asian cultural organizations from five different countries, sharing a brief overview of the nature of their organizations, their business models, ongoing challenges and strategies.

Siong Leng Musical Association is a traditional Chinese arts group with a mission to promote and develop the ancient music form Nanyin in Singapore. Company manager **Lyn Lee** shared their challenges to find relevance in contemporary society, experimenting with multi-sensorial experiences and audience development strategies. The association is fortunate to own its premises, and receives funding support from the National Arts Council (NAC) as well as occasional funding from other government agencies and a pool of long-term private patrons. They have been expanding their business thinking and attempting new strategies, while being mindful of the expectations of loyal



patrons as well as funder objectives. Siong Leng works constantly to strike a balance between creative freedom, winning local audiences, and maintaining funders' trust within their niche positioning.

Serrum Studios is a Jakarta-based art collective founded by several fine arts students out of a collective desire to establish an independent art community outside the university. Represented by founding member and Financial Manager, **Arman Arief Rachman**, their journey and structure was shown in an animated video that imaginatively conveyed the ethos of their working culture and their focus on socio-political and urban issues with an educational and artistic approach. Serrum's way of collective management appears organic and informal, yet their processes and development reflects strategic approaches described succinctly through 10 narratives, starting from their origins of self-financing by the members, through their growth and professionalisation, to how in their 10th year they formed one larger 'management ecosystem' with two other collectives in Jakarta, ruangrupa and Grafis Huru Hara: the Gudang Sarinah Ecosystem (GSE). Their "joint ecosystem management" culminates in the *Lumbung* (granary), a local agrarian cooperative model as a system for sharing knowledge, opportunities, jobs, and space –a unique blend of traditional ways of working with contemporary innovation.

Hanoi-based **TPD, the Centre for Assistance and Development of Movie Talents**, started in 2002 as a non-profit organization under the sponsorship of the Vietnam Cinema Association (VCA) with the dual purpose of supporting young talents in film industries through incubator programs, projects, and developing life skills. Manager **Nguyen Hoang Phuong**, presented their programmes that include training courses in filmmaking, professional acting and screenwriting; annual support programs for feature and documentary films, as well as other small projects to assist professional and semi-professional film makers. In 2013, the organisation moved from a non-profit model to a for-profit company with income-generating capabilities, while still receiving space sponsorship from VCA. Other sources of income range from individual and institutional financial support, and production of commercial videos. TPD continues to create strong social impact by dedicating programs for audience / member development, and community building initiatives.

Pineapple Lab is a multidisciplinary platform in the Philippines for emerging artists, collectives, or communities to showcase their work in a safe space. The for-profit private company was incorporated in 2018 with Fringe Manila, an open-access, non-curated arts and community festival inceptioned by its founder **Andrei Pamintuan** in 2015, and now formally registered as Fringe Cultural and Creative Industries, Inc. (FCCI) or Fringe Creatives. The platform focuses on amplifying narratives and representing diverse voices that don't usually get to present their work, such as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA+) sector. Their work has evolved to cover 3 areas:

- Arts & Culture - Curation & Management (festivals and original productions)
- Commercial Events - Concept & Production (brand awareness campaigns)
- Community Engagement - Research & Design (art programs and access to cultural activities)

However, the physical space of Pineapple Lab has paused operations due to Covid-19, while the Fringe Creatives activities continue online.

Established in 2017, **BIPAM, the Bangkok International Performing Arts Market**, is a Bangkok-based performing arts launchpad that aims to connect and showcase South-East Asian talent and creativity, with the goal of creating a stronger and more united performing arts community in the region. It is currently not a legally registered organization but rather a group of people with a shared passion for the performing arts. **Sasapin Siriwanij**, BIPAM's Artistic Director, described financial sustainability as their key challenge, particularly the instability of income and financing, with remuneration for their team project based and well below professional rates. A bulk of their income comes from a yearly project grant from the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), supplemented by event ticket sales, their executive producer's personal investment, venue support and equipment loan from organizations like Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, the Alliance of Performing Arts in Higher Education of Thailand (PATH), and grants from international cultural agencies.

Insights and Learnings

The cultural landscape and context plays an important role in how arts organisations in Southeast Asia are being managed. These case studies are each specific to their local contexts of legal and cultural frameworks. For instance, it is doubtful if the very communal management style of Serrum could be replicated in the context of Singapore or Manila, where cultural sensibilities are more westernised and individualised. However, there are also discernible themes that cut across geography and sectors. The importance of cultivating networks is of vital importance. BIPAM's key strategy to survive and ensure financial stability is to focus on finding more partners, either for saving cost, gaining endorsements, or creating wider awareness for their initiatives. Pamintuan shared that this process requires time and patience -- Fringe Manila for instance, started the networking activities even two years before their actual launch. They strategically approach potential donors and partners that could have a strong alignment to the specific festival or project they are working on. This enables them to minimize veering away from the integrity of their project's aim, just to adapt to their patron's agenda.

Despite the obvious difficulties faced by almost all industries under Covid-19, the pandemic has played a major role in pushing organisations to create new ways of engagement through digital platforms. For Siong Leng, one of their key challenges is cultivating new and younger audiences. The recent Covid-19 lockdown has forced the association to create online materials that are helping expand their reach to contemporary viewers/listeners. TPD's immediate response was to switch their classes and community building activities online. They have taken this time as an opportunity to reconnect to former students and create an online library for Vietnamese audiences. It had been an effective way of strengthening the community and promoting their work despite the pause in other planned activities. BIPAM has created a webinar series called *Under the Sea*, which has enabled them to reach new virtual communities in countries like Brunei and Timor Leste, areas they would not have attempted to tap if not for the lockdown. For Serrum, the collective continued to be productive by taking an active role in helping their communities fight Covid. They started a donation drive and produced face shields and hazmat suits that were distributed to 108 facilities in Jakarta and surrounding cities. The Covid-19 crisis highlighted the necessity of tapping into the virtual sphere in order to stay relevant in this rapidly changing VUCA* world.

* Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity

by *Richel Hidalgo*

CULTURE IN PERIL Friday 18 September 2020

The panel "Culture in Peril," focused on the social and political tensions that persist in the region, and its impact on the state of arts and culture, and more importantly, the state of society and civil rights. Coming from a background of research on political humour, freedom of expression, and censorship, panel moderator Ann Lee, Malaysian playwright and researcher, set the premise that "culture in peril" was a "not an unknown situation" in Southeast Asia, especially with the current Covid-19 pandemic, and governments increasing control over citizens. Quoting Amitesh Grover from his keynote address, she asked "we're all being asked to wait, so what are we doing at this time?"

Navigating Politics with Art – Clara Cheung (Hong Kong)

Arts and politics intimately collide with the two major hats that the first speaker, Clara Cheung from Hong Kong, wears. An artist and art educator, as well as the Wan Chai District Councillor, Clara balances her government position with the political work of her artist-duo C&G Artpartment.

From the Umbrella Movement to the recent Anti-Extradition Law Enforcement, Hong Kong has been undergoing years of socio-political tensions with suppressive actions by the government. As a

continuation of their long-term art project, Clara and her partner navigated around the recent strict crowd control policy in their street action event, “Decongestants for West-Kowloonization: On Fire.” Taking place every other month in public and semi-public spaces of Kowloon West, this project consists of micro guerilla art activities which attempt “to safeguard Hong Kong’s local civilization” as a critique on the government’s white elephant projects – the development of infrastructure in Hong Kong which inevitably connects to enterprises in Mainland China. Among the major infrastructure is the West Kowloon Cultural District, a site for huge real estate projects and described by Clara as “a symbol of marriage of neoliberalism and authoritative governance.”

Mobilizing artists for activism, “Decongestants for West-Kowloonization” aimed to reclaim public space by reconnecting with traditional rituals of burning paper. Artists were invited to create paper sculptures, such as caricatures representing the governing powers, and borrowing from traditional Chinese rituals, burned the paper sculptures on the night of the Hungry Ghost Festival. This year saw the need for extra consideration, particularly on the safety of participating artists also because of Covid. Despite the risks, she continues her activism and sees it, not as an oppositional disruption, but an invitation for a more critical discourse. Her new government position is another avenue to push for more creative freedom and artistic spaces for the community.

Precarity of Cultural Workers – Katrina Santiago (Philippines)

Katrina Santiago is an independent cultural critic and opinion writer from the Philippines. Her work is fueled by her activism which informs issues of cultural labour, systemic dysfunctions, and institutional crisis. And the pandemic has intensified these issues in her country.

Pointing out how the pre-pandemic conditions of cultural workers have always been precarious, Katrina called attention to how cultural workers are often freelancers or independent, living by contracts or part-time jobs in order to do the work that they want to do, not by choice, but because that is how the industry operates. This is also the result of the non-existent state support, as well as laws, policies, and organizations focusing on or governing the livelihood of cultural labour. The absence of databases or data on cultural workers hinders the development of any structural support. Katrina states that “living in peril was the cultural workers’ status quo,” but it has taken a pandemic to open up a wider public discussion on this precarity. The question of “who can afford to do art?” arises as a disjuncture amongst the cultural workers in the Philippines, as basic human needs are becoming more difficult to sustain. A lack of reliable data masks disparities and state pandemic response to develop relief and assistance initiatives tends to prioritize “multi-million peso” media/entertainment producers and organisers, rather than vulnerable cultural workers, small collectives, and independent artists.

The situation is complicated further by the cultural workers’ acquiescence of their situation and the climate of fear engendered by the government. Knowing well their precarity, any job or project, despite inadequate pay and accommodations, is taken with gratitude, preventing conversations to address core problems and be critical of the state. Katrina states, “the need for targeted interventions is critical, but these must favour the majority who are most vulnerable to the current crises.”

Activism Through Community – Golf Yindee (Thailand)

Thanupon “Golf” Yindee is a director, actor, dancer, and a member of Thailand’s oldest theatre company, Makhampom Theatre Group. He works with a range of cultural workers and levels of government officials to create a shared space for empowerment through art and theatre. Using theatre as a medium for social transformation and sustainable development, Makhampom tackles issues such as political conflict, human rights, environment, and education. It has become a hub for training new artists, particularly youth to engage in transformative theatre and share their activism. “ACT UP” is a



recent project created by Golf, which is a festival of performing arts and theatre at Chiang Mai. It aims to be a platform for artists to engage in “a creative democracy movement.” Another platform “FREE ACT” advocates for freedom of expression and protest through artistic means. It is a networking event for artists of diverse practices, not just in performing arts, to come together, create, and dialogue. In an increasingly tense political situation in Thailand, the pandemic has magnified government control over citizens through the use of martial power. Golf notes that more people are recognising the power of arts and culture, and despite little to no state support, young people are actively being involved and engaging to express their opinions.

“The Gaze of the State” – Kathy Rowland (Singapore)

The last speaker was Kathy Rowland from Singapore, the Managing Editor of Arts Equator, a platform dedicated to supporting and promoting arts criticism in Southeast Asia.

Presenting data on the Singaporean response to the impact of Covid-19 on the arts and culture sectors, including cancellation of shows and loss of work, Kathy raised questions on the future of arts within the context of the Singapore government’s interest in the arts for its national image-making value, social cohesion, and economic enhancement. Despite the government’s pandemic response that includes training support, a digitalization fund, and rental waivers for arts groups, Kathy is critical of the public framing around the arts as distorted by “the gaze of the state”. This results in the mainstream perception of “artists” as the top “non-essential” job during the pandemic (as indicated in a survey by the national newspaper) and highlights the persisting societal uncertainty in grasping the true value of the arts.

The perception and precarity of arts and culture in Singapore society continues to perpetuate the vulnerability of its workers. The pandemic has exposed systemic inequalities in the society and increased state surveillance and gathering of private data. Most importantly, it has also exposed the vulnerability of arts and cultural workers, and survival has called many of them to look for other avenues of income.

Building cross-border solidarity as a solution?

Each speaker shone a light on the inevitable precarious state of cultural workers and its tension with the state. In order to overcome this situation, Katrina states that people across the cultural sector must agree on their common struggle – that they are all on the same boat, even if some may be on a yacht. The precarity of arts and culture needs to be collectively recognized for state awareness to occur. Golf adds that this solidarity must go beyond to the society at large so that cultural workers are not threatened or at risk peripherally, while Clara notes that these movements should also be shared and brought to attention across borders. Kathy states that systemic issues are endemic to the society. If art is seen as “good” for society, yet the society fails to see it as “essential,” more bottom-up movements for change needs to occur – because “if artists are in peril, then the society is in peril.” During this unavoidable presence of waiting – for a response from the state or a vaccine out of the pandemic – building a solidarity amongst all cultural workers and/or beyond is an ideal that needs to be championed, leading to subsequent questions of how to bring everyone together to realise a shared mission.

by Lee Mi Rai (Mirae)

CULTURAL POLICY – NEW DIRECTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Saturday 19 September 2020

Moderator **Sarah Gardner** opened the panel by asking if we were on the verge of a paradigm shift. Referencing John Maynard Keynes, she framed the panel with the following questions:

- (1) Whose ideas are we building upon as well as whose ideas we are moving away from?
- (2) What structures need to be in place for new ideas to be enabled and new actors to be heard?
- (3) What processes need to be reviewed for new ideas to be enacted, moving away from archaic ways?

Professor Nobuko Kawashima on the rise of cultural policy for tourism in Japan

Japan has in recent years found new relevance of cultural policy in the economic development of its economy through tourism as the focus and driving force, and this is presented from a position that developing culture as an economic tool results in new values through cultural production, distribution and consumption.

Seizing on the opportunities presented by globalisation and burgeoning Asian economies, the Japanese government has focused on its cultural exports including animation, fashion and food, and through the campaign, “Cool Japan”, successfully increased inbound tourism from 4 million to 40 million visitors. Presenting their efforts as a national and regional strategy of economic revitalisation, Nabuko Kawashima described the government’s investments in infrastructure development for culture and the arts since 2017. A substantial investment was made to prepare the city infrastructure to be ready for the 2019 Rugby World Cup, 2020 Olympics and Paralympics as well as for the Osaka Expo 2025. Other signs of investment in cultural tourism included new legislation to promote cultural tourism that relaxed regulation on the use of cultural properties, and enhancements to public transport, giving greater autonomy to custodians of cultural properties, allowing them to improve the facilities and aesthetics of heritage spaces and museums.

However, there are concerns of over-commercialisation through the Cultural Tourism Policy. Local stakeholders may lack the understanding of cultural tourism and the expectations of its policy. Visitors also may not be able to immerse themselves in the culture to truly appreciate and understand Japanese culture during a short stay. Kawashima questioned if cultural tourism can truly serve the purpose of promoting local cultures, or whether commercialisation would instead lead to cultural distortions, ultimately undermining the true meaning and worth of culture.

Professor Jerry Liu on ground-up cultural policy development and the collaborative efforts between government and cultural intermediaries in Taiwan

The network and ecosystem of Taiwan’s cultural governance is a complex, yet highly functioning one. The network identifies the respective agents in cultural governance – government bodies/public sector, and civil society (associations, cultural foundations, media and individuals/citizens). The ecosystem maps out the interaction within the network, e.g. the measures and approaches for public bodies and social agents to intervene/engage with one another. The network and ecosystem enabled cultural democracy and made civil society-activated cultural reforms possible.

Liu presented the Taiwanese model of Participatory Cultural Governance highlighting local and international initiatives which included the Taiwan Association of Cultural Policy Studies (TACPS) set up in 2015 to act as an intermediary between policy makers, advisory committees, and the public; the National Cultural Congress (NCC) organized by the Ministry of Culture (MoC) in 2017; and knowledge exchange with international cultural intermediaries such as the International Federation of Arts Council and Culture Agencies (IFACCA), National Arts Council Singapore, the Korean Culture and Tourism Institute and other similar national agencies.

Despite a fairly quick response to aid the arts and culture sectors and their communities as a result of a more democratic and autonomous system for cultural intermediaries to respond to crises in their

respective areas, Liu spoke on the challenges for relief measures and subsidies to absorb the entire losses of the industry, such as a lack of financial data, the exclusion of self-employed workers and a the lack of understanding from society regarding the special conditions of the labour force in culture and the arts, inflexibilities with reimbursement systems, and more. In conclusion, Liu highlighted several areas for further study and improvement, including learning more about inter-ministerial, inter-governmental and cultural intermediaries' coordination, addressing disconnections between bureaucracy and the people and the misalignment of culture and the vision of state leaders, and issues on the working environment of cultural workers and artists.

Professor Justin O'Connor on the fallacies in economic-centered cultural policies.

The central idea of cultural policy is the economy, where culture is an industry which can create jobs and wealth. Culture, in the guise of creativity was supposed to facilitate economic development, like past developmental trajectories, e.g. agriculture, resource extraction, manufacturing, service industry etc. Unlike these past trajectories, the culture or creative industries only relies on human capital and its creativity. It is a new hope for languishing economies impoverished by post-industrial poverty, to accelerate economic development. However, studies by the likes of Ernst and Young and KPMG have shown that culture is not an economic driver. Even governments do not have confidence in the culture sector's economic contribution. This is evident in the quick cuts in budgets for the culture sector during Covid-19.

The Culture Economy has been disrupted and kinks in the system revealed with rising unemployment and economic downturns. Culture has been treated as a commodity and partakes in the ways of capitalism, dominated by the language of economics, yet unable to bring itself to see itself in entirely economic terms.

Thus, O'Connor posits that culture be recognised as a part of the foundational economy – encompassing the infrastructure of civilized life e.g. public utility (water, sewage, electricity) infrastructure, education, health care, security etc. Instead of measuring the value of culture from discretionary consumer spending, culture should be valued based on its role and contribution to social citizenship.

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In the Q+A that followed, the speakers responded to questions on participatory cultural governance and how artists and culture workers could be more engaged in policy development, and commented on Covid-19 responses in their respective contexts.

Kawashima shared that well known artists are advisers in policy making and state governance structures. The arts and culture communities are now lobbying for a more dedicated body to look after the arts and culture, like a ministry of culture or a national art and culture council. Liu highlighted that there has been considerable number of citizen demonstrations which forced government to listen to the people. Academics have also actively intervened in finding a balance between reforms and radical movements. Trust has developed between the government and the people through sustained dialogues. O'Connor pointed out that cultural workers have always been socially aware and active in contributing their creative efforts to public service. The present problem is the insistence on looking at their contributions in economic terms. They would be better appreciated if their roles are defined within a social framework instead. One may consider reorganising the cultural labour force into cooperatives and unions, and rebuilding culture in civil society. Government can also invest directly to provide work/projects as seen during the Works Progress Administration in the USA in the 1930s. Cultural workers should be confident in their own social contributions and social worth and demand financial support from the government.

In Japan, despite Covid-19, artists are still creating and distributing their content, albeit with the greater use of online means. At this point, artists are grappling on how to monetize the distribution and the

protection of their intellectual properties, and this is especially challenging for smaller arts groups and heritage institutions. O'Connor suggested that the biggest beneficiaries during these Covid times are the tech companies. Liu shared that there has been a heightened awareness of the working environment (risks, working hours) and the social and financial security situation amongst cultural workers. Coupled that with the greater use of digital space, this calls for studies on the social and cultural impact of both onsite and online work environments of cultural workers and their contributions to civil society.

by Kenneth Tan

THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT?

Saturday 19 September 2020

In the final panel of the conference, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on life and the environment was discussed from three distinct perspectives: arts and culture from Dr Oonagh Murphy, Arts Manager, Writer, and Lecturer at Goldsmiths University of London; Kuala-Lumpur based human rights and technology activist Jac sm Kee; and Indonesian urbanist Marco Kusumawijaya. Moderated by Audrey Wong, MA Arts & Cultural Leadership Programme Leader of LASALLE College of the Arts, each speaker presented initial thoughts from their respective areas of specialism, and then engaged in a fluid and spirited discussion.

Oonagh Murphy shared innovative new ways in which arts organizations have responded to art form and audience engagement throughout the lockdown period of the pandemic whilst also tackling several key challenges that were identified as having impacted the industry. Emphasising the value of technology and the role it plays in global connectivity in a social context of disconnect and alienation caused by the lockdown, she questioned how technologies can be used to create a more equitable society whilst addressing issues of digital access and educational attainment in the midst of increasing dependency on digital platforms. Oonagh also discussed the relationship between space, digital platforms, audiences and experiential engagement as a contemporary challenge that illuminates the question of purpose-driven action from the point of view of social gain.

Drawing on the work of John Cotton Dana and the concept of the 'useful museum' to position the museum as a space that is modern and provides enlightenment through relevance to its community, Oonagh encourages arts organisations to focus on the value of content, art form and the experience of the audience – ensuring that the latter is not restricted to being merely a passive recipient of technology, but rather an engaged participant who is empowered to create conversations, and asks what service an arts organisation provides to the audience today and in the most relevant way in the new spaces that are emerging.

Jac sm Kee offered vivid perspectives of a shared global experience caused by the pandemic, that illuminates a stark awareness of the limitations of what we truly know. Likening our situation to an existential crisis, Jac highlights the community's submission of physical autonomy to the state caused by Covid-19, but with digital technology to reimagine borderless space with infinite potential to connect. Posing the question of how technology can evoke a feeling of physical closeness and whether such an intangible sensation can be augmented digitally, she critiqued a reliance on digital infrastructure which inadvertently changes the entire concept of 'being', using Zoom as an example of how it can contribute to anti-social behaviour and denies the individual autonomy to control actions and movement, thereby bringing to question where power actually lies.

The analysis of the power dynamics between digital platforms and the audience creates an arena of experts vs. participants, posing a challenge to arts organisations to approach the interdependent relationship between art forms and technology to consider the participation, engagement and experience of the audience. Jac's provocations challenged organisations to consider ideas of how space can be transformed to potentially augment the experience of physical interaction, how technology could analyse the idea of space and allow for a physical representation of the body in a

digital space that has no form. She further raised the spectre of surveillance –where does the power lie, and with who? Are we using technology to be disruptive or formative? Is technology about innovation or enterprise? And what impact does it have on our environment?

Following Kee, **Marco Kusumawijaya**, Urbanist and Director of Jakarta-based Rujak Center for Urban Studies, introduced a perspective on the pandemic’s impact on the environment, linking the impact of Covid-19 to that of climate change, revealing that both catastrophes are influenced by the concept of urban emission. In this scenario, Marco connected the challenges faced by industries struggling to survive to biological root causes and poses an ultimatum: as a global community, we either deal with the consequences, or we attempt to solve the root problem, which the speaker identified as being urban expansion.

Marco called upon the arts and culture industries to spearhead the solving of this problem by bringing into the forefront the concept of a shared space, wherein we as a global community share common resources. In the face of a biological catastrophe, creative practitioners are called to act ecologically when thinking of innovative ways of creating new forms of art that help solve the root cause of the problem.

Insights and Conclusion

The conversation centred on three areas of thought: technology & the digital platform, the concept of the body & space, and the question of progress.

With the disruption of the concept of physical space by digital platforms, practitioners are compelled to reimagine the concept of space in collaboration with technology, paired to fulfil specific purposes. In this environment, our attention is drawn towards identifying the culture that is being created, and its impact on future generations. It becomes evident that the arts is posed with a challenge with how it is going to adapt and provide alternate spaces of experiences that engage and interact with audiences. This aspect of dependence on technology is viewed as having a detrimental impact on the growth of culture based on social interaction, foretelling a possible generational gap between groups in society that would have known the benefit of social and physical connectivity and those that will not.

The idea of body and space, the physical presence and the deconstruction of physical borders adds to ongoing discourse of reinventing ways in which engagement with audiences can be optimized using technology that substitutes the lack of physical interaction. The impact on industries reliant on physical space is posed with a challenge. In this situation, we are drawn to consider the possibilities that technology can provide when reimagining ecologically responsible solutions that leave a positive environmental footprint.

The dependency on technology is cautioned to be observed with a critical eye, when considering access to virtuality and increasing surveillance. The dialogue further observed new roles played by arts practitioners during and following the pandemic while considering the potential areas in community planning that will need immediate attention.

COVID-19 was not just a disruption to life as we knew it, but a vivid and aggressive disruption to our cultural and social slumber; a wake-up call to our cultural policies being in dire need of reinvention to help sustain communities and practitioners in the arts who were caught off-guard to survive in a disrupted global economy with widespread precarity.

by Sasha Pinto Jayawardena

Speakers' and Moderators' Biographies

Andrei Nikolai Pamintuan is a director and independent producer. He is the founder of the Fringe Manila Festival and the Poblacion-based Pineapple Lab, an artist-run creative hub dedicated to providing a platform for contemporary Filipino artistic expressions. He was a 2019 Fellow of Australia Council for the Arts Future Leaders Program. He was also part of the first contingent of the Japan Foundation Asia Centre's Next Generation Producing Performing Arts Program (2017-2018) and completed the New York Foundation for the Arts' Directing and Producing Program (NYFA-IAP) in Brooklyn, New York (2015).

Born in Tawau, Malaysia, **Ann Lee** is a playwright, researcher and lecturer. Her plays are published in *Sex, Stage & State: KualI Works Plays* (Parama Adhi Perkasa, 2011) and *Southeast Asian Plays* (Aurora Metro, 2016). She was Artistic Director of KualI Works, an all-women theatre group, for over a decade, and is currently protem Chair of the Women Writers Committee, PEN Malaysia, as well as a committee member of ReformARTsi, an independent coalition of over 170 Malaysian arts organisations advocating reform in arts education, arts funding, and freedom of expression. Ann recently completed a doctorate in Southeast Asian studies at the National University of Singapore, and is writing a book on political humour in Indonesia and Malaysia. She also holds a MSc in History of Science, Medicine and Technology (Oxon). Ann is a past Fellow of the Asia Leadership Fellow Program (Japan Foundation and International House of Japan).

Amitesh Grover (b.1980) is a performance-based artist living in New Delhi, India. His works move beyond theatre, into visual arts, films, photography, installations, and processes. He performs, directs, writes, curates, and keeps his practice firmly anchored in the politics of performance. His works are shown internationally in theatres, galleries, public spaces, and on the internet. He is the recipient of several awards including MASH FICA New Media Artist award, FORECAST Emerging Artist (HKW Germany), Arte Laguna Prize nomination (Italy), Bismillah Khan National award (India) among others. He has been on numerous international artist-residencies and has spoken about his work on prominent global platforms. He is currently the curator for the International Theatre Festival of Kerala (ITFoK). He writes prolifically, works in a hybrid environment, and teaches at various art universities. His works, writings, and press reviews are available online <www.amiteshgrover.com>.

Arman Arief Rachman is a printmaking artist who works primarily with woodcut and is a graduate of the Faculty of Language and Art, Jakarta State University. His works have been presented in leading exhibitions and festivals such as the Triennale Seni Grafis II Jakarta, the 6th NBC MESHTEC Tokyo International Screen Print Biennale Japan, and Pameran Nusantara "Kontraksi: Pasca Tradisionalisme." Arman is one of the founders of Serrum, a Jakarta-based collective of art studies, the programmes of which focus on socio-political and urban issues through educational and artistic approaches. Through their dedicated art handling division, Serrum art handling provides professional support for the preparation, planning, and production of art exhibitions. Their professional technical service has supported many major Indonesian and international art exhibitions such as the Jakarta Biennale 2013 - 2017, Art Jakarta 2014 - 2019, Art Stage Singapore 2015 - 2018, and Art021 Shanghai Contemporary Art Fair.

Audrey Wong

Audrey Wong is Head, School of Creative Industries and Programme Leader of the MA Arts and Cultural Leadership programme at LASALLE College of the Arts. Audrey was previously artistic co-director of The Substation (2000-2009) and in 2009, she was nominated by the arts community in Singapore and appointed as a Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP). She has served on various institutional boards and committees including the Singapore Art Museum, National Arts Council and the Arts and Culture Strategic Review Committee (2010 - 2012). She is on the board of Nine Years Theatre and continues to research, write, and present on arts management and policy issues at various local and international fora. Most recently, she contributed chapters to *The State and the Arts in Singapore: Policies and Institutions* (2018, ed. Terence Chong), and *The Routledge Companion to Arts Management* (2019, eds. William J. Byrnes and Aleksandar Brkic).



As one of the founders of C&G Artpartment in 2007, **Clara Cheung** often works with her partner Gum Cheng as an artist duo to curate projects and create artworks. With a strong concern over the art ecology, C&G use their art to respond to social and political issues. In Nov 2019, amid the anti-extradition bill protest, Clara ran in the Hong Kong District Council election for Wan Chai constituency and won. Being a District Councillor, she is exploring various tactics to address community and social issues with artistic means.

Jac sm Kee is a feminist activist working on the intersections of internet technologies, expression, culture, sexuality and social justice. Her activism includes sexuality and gender justice, feminist movement building in a digital age, internet governance, digital rights, open culture and epistemic justice. She is located within these movements at hyper-local, networked and global levels. Jac co-founded several award winning initiatives and projects, including the Take Back the Tech! collaborative global campaign and the Feminist Principles of the Internet, and is a founding member of the Malaysia Design Archive (MDA), an independent visual culture community archival centre that focuses on open culture, engagement and participatory history through design.

Jerry C Y Liu is a Professor of the Graduate School of Arts Management and Cultural Policy at the National Taiwan University of Arts, and the President of the Taiwan Association of Cultural Policy Studies (TACPS). Liu serves as an ENCATC International Correspondence Board Member (2015-2021), is an Advisory Board member of ANCER, and was Guest Professor at the Burgundy School of Business in 2019. Liu has been the consulting member of Culture Basic Law since 2011, and the Global Outreach Office of Ministry of Culture in Taiwan. He is also the International Scientific Committee member of Cultural Management: Science and Education. Liu is a Contract Columnist for the United Daily News, Taiwan. His recent publications include *ReOrient: An East Asian Approach on Cultural Policy and Cultural Governance* (2018, in Chinese), *The Mapping of Cultural Rights in Taiwan* (2015, in Chinese) and *Global Cities, Cultural Governance and Cultural Strategies: Art-Cultural Events, Festivals and Cultural Images* (2013, in Chinese).

Justin O'Connor is Professor of Cultural Economy in the University of South Australia. He has been involved in cultural/ creative industries policy development in the UK from the early 1990s, focusing especially on the urban dimension. He has worked in Europe, Russia and East Asia, and since 2008, in Australia. He was a member of the Global Expert Facility programme for UNESCO's 2005 Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 2012-18, and currently engaged in a three-year Australian Research Council funded project on this. An edited collection *Re-imagining Creative Cities in 21st Century Asia* (Routledge) comes out in October 2020, as does his *Red Creative: Culture and Modernity in China* (Intellect).

Kathy Rowland is the Managing Editor of ArtsEquator.com, which she co-founded with Jenny Daneels. The site is dedicated to supporting and promoting arts criticism with a regional perspective in Southeast Asia. She was a member of the International Programme Advisory Committee of the 8th World Summit on Arts and Culture, 2019. Kathy has worked in the arts for over 25 years, running arts and culture programs and arts media platforms.

Katrina Stuart Santiago is an independent cultural critic and opinion writer from Manila, with a decade of work in print and online. She holds an MA in Philippine Studies from the University of the Philippines, and her critical work on theatre, film, visual arts, and popular culture was published in *Rebellions: Notes on Independence and Romances: Variations on Love* by the Ateneo de Naga University Press in 2017. Her role as critic has fueled her activism, which cuts across issues of cultural labour, systemic dysfunctions, and institutional crises. She is a contributing writer for CNN Philippines, and teaches multimedia arts at the College of St. Benilde-School of Design and the Arts. She maintains the review website gaslight.online, the opinion page disquiet.ph, and has been writing at www.katrinasantiago.com since 2008. She is founder of PAGASA-People for Accountable Governance and Sustainable Action, which seeks to build a new civil society for the urgencies of the present.

Lyn Lee is an Arts Manager at Siong Leng Musical Association and an advocate of *Nanyin*. She has worked with various institutes and schools as an educator through presenting at workshops and lectures on the development of *Nanyin* as a form of local culture and heritage, bridging audiences

closer to this traditional art form. Lyn has a Masters in Arts Pedagogy and Practice from LASALLE College of the Arts where she was awarded scholarships from the Singapore National Arts Council, LASALLE College of the Arts and the Hokkien Huay Kuan. Since then, she has been analysing the disparities among the historical, aesthetical and mythological perspectives of *Nanyin* and researching on the trends within practicing countries to ensure preservation and sustainability of *Nanyin* in Singapore.

Marco Kusumawijaya, M.Arch. works in the fields of urbanism and arts. He chaired the Jakarta Arts Council from 2006-2010, co-founded Rujak Center for Urban Studies (RCUS) in 2010 and was its director until 2016. He was a fellow at the MAK Center for Arts and Architecture, Los Angeles, in 2008, and at the International House of Japan, Tokyo, in 2009. Since 2013 he runs art programmes at RCUS's *Bumi Pemuda Rahayu* learning center in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He co-founded the SAM Fund for Arts and Environment in 2015, and has served in several selection panels of art programmes, as well as facilitated/ directed/curated art/architecture/ urbanism projects. He is currently working on a book on Indonesian cities.

Nobuko Kawashima is Professor at the Faculty of Economics, Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan. She holds a PhD in Cultural Policy (University of Warwick, UK) as well as MSc in Social Policy and LLM, both from the London School of Economics. Her areas of research interest include cultural policy, cultural economics and the creative/cultural industries. She directs the Center for the Study of the Creative Economy at Doshisha University. She is a former President of the Japan Association for Cultural Economics, and serves the Scientific Committee of the International Conference on Cultural Policy Research. She has co-edited (with Hye-Kyung Lee) *Asian Cultural Flows* (Springer, 2018).

Oonagh Murphy is Lecturer of Arts Management at Goldsmiths, University of London. As an arts manager, writer and lecturer her research centres on examining international best practice on the scalability of emerging technologies for cultural organizations. In 2019 she received funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council to found the Museums + AI Network in partnership with the National Gallery (UK) and The Metropolitan Museum of Art (US). She has been invited to speak about her research at leading cultural centres in the UK, Europe and US, including the Barbican Centre, V&A, National Theatre, the Belvedere, Cooper Hewitt and New Museum. She is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and Fellow of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust.

Phuong, Hoang Nguyen (b. 1981) majored in Electronics and Telecommunications at the Hanoi University of Technology. Driven by a passion for films, however, he decided to pursue a career in cinema. Since 2001 Hoang Phuong has implemented a large number of film-related projects and activities such as film-screenings, filmmaking courses and press conferences; has overseen the installation of the first movie library in Vietnam; and has been a key figure in the development of a young filmmaker community. He has also been a very active collaborator with a variety of newspapers and magazines specializing in cinema. Hoang Phuong has worked at TPD, the Center for Assistance and Development of Movie Talents, since 2004 and is now TPD's General Manager.

Sarah Gardner has 30 years' experience as a leader in the culture sector covering policymaking, networking, governance, public affairs, marketing, research and international project management. In 2001, she founded the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA) which serves government arts funding agencies in 70 countries through networking, advocacy, research and capacity building. She has been an advisor to UNESCO, the Sydney Culture Network and various other cultural organisations, and was previously Director of Strategy and Policy at the Australia Council. She has a master's degree in Public Policy and has lectured in cultural policy.

Sasapin Siriwanij is an independent theatre artist and producer, and a core member of B-Floor Theatre, a leading physical theatre company in Bangkok, Thailand, and has been the BIPAM Artistic Director since 2018. She was awarded Best Performance by a Female Artist in 2017 by the Theatre Critics Association Thailand (IACT) for her work *Oh! Ode (Oh! What Joy, What Goodness, What Beauty Calls For Ode No.7012)*, a performance art later presented at the 4th Berliner Herbstsalon at Maxim Gorki Theatre in 2019. She has also initiated a number of discussion platforms and workshops that



aim to nurture the ecosystem of the local performing arts scene, including Producers of Thai Performing Arts Network (POTPAN) of which she is a founding member.

Sunitha Janamohan has been an arts manager, curator, producer, venue manager and heritage manager. She has an MA in Arts Administration from Columbia University, New York, and is now teaching Arts and Cultural Management at LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore. Her research interests include community or socially engaged arts practice, and local arts management models in developing Southeast Asia. In 2019 she was the lead researcher for a UNESCO commissioned study on the financial environment and operational realities for organisations in the Cultural and Creative industries in Southeast Asia.

Thanupon “Golf” Yindee

Thanupon “Golf” Yindee is a professional theatre maker and has been a member of the Makhampom theatre group since 2012. His practice includes Dialogue Theatre, movement and dance, theatre for children, and applied Circus Theatre. Trained in peace studies and conflict transformation, and design thinking for sustainable city development, Thanupon is committed to making connections between the performing arts and social movement in making a positive and transformative impact on societies. In 2019 he created a performing arts and theatre community platform in Chiangmai called “Act up: transformative theater festival”. He works with educators, artists, NGO workers, officials, students and more, to create a shared space for empowerment through arts and theatre.

Venka Purushothaman is Provost at LASALLE College of the Arts Singapore. He is an award-winning art writer and academic with a distinguished career in the arts and creative industries in Singapore. Venka’s pedagogic philosophy is to ensure that contemporary Asia is given appropriate place and voice in curriculum thereby representing the voice of a new generation of artists. He is the founder of the Asia-Pacific Network for Culture, Education and Research (ANCER) to facilitate cultural leadership and research in Asia, and speaks internationally on arts higher education specifically on transformative art and design education. He has published widely and is currently editor of *Issue*, an annual international peer-reviewed art journal. Venka holds a PhD in Cultural Policy and Asian Cultural Studies from the University of Melbourne and is a member of the Association Internationale des Critiques d’Art, France, (AICA Singapore) and Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts, UK.

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE	
THURSDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2020	
5:00-7:00 pm SGT	<p>Keynote Address</p> <p>Amitesh Grover, Inter-disciplinary Artist, Writer, Curator and Assistant Professor at the National School of Drama, New Delhi, India Moderated by Venka Purushothaman, Provost, LASALLE College of the Arts</p>
FRIDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2020	
11:00 am – 1:00 pm SGT	<p>Roundtable</p> <p>The “business” of creativity and culture in Southeast Asia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Andrei Pamintuan, Creative Director, Pineapple Lab and Fringe Manila (PH) o Arman Arief Rachman, Financial Manager & founding member, Serrum Studios (ID) o Lyn Lee, Arts Manager, Siong Leng Musical Association (SG) o Nguyen Hoang Phuong, Manager, TPD, the Center for Assistance and Development of Movie Talents (VN) o Sasapin Siriwanij, Artistic Director, BIPAM, the Bangkok International Performing Arts Meeting (TH) <p>Moderated by Sunitha Janamohanam, Lecturer, LASALLE College of the Arts</p>
2:00 – 4:00 pm SGT	<p>Panel: Culture in peril</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Clara Cheung, Artist and Wan Chai District Councillor (HK) o Kathy Rowland, Managing Editor, Arts Equator (MY/SG) o Katrina Santiago, Art Critic and Writer (PH) o Thanupon “Golf” Yindee, Director, Actor, Dancer, Makhampom Theatre Group (TH) <p>Moderated by Ann Lee, playwright, researcher and lecturer</p>
SATURDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2020	
10:00 am – 12:00 pm SGT	<p>Panel: Cultural policy: new directions and opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Nobuko Kawashima, Professor at the Faculty of Economics, Doishisha University, Kyoto o Jerry Liu Professor of Graduate School of Arts Management and Cultural Policy, National Taiwan University of Arts, President of Taiwan Association of Cultural Policy Studies, Taipei o Justin O’Connor, Professor of Cultural Economy, University of South Australia, Adelaide <p>Moderated by Sarah Gardner, Freelance consultant and founding Executive Director of IFACCA</p>
4:00 – 6:00 pm SGT	<p>Panel: The end of the world as we know it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Jac sm Kee, Feminist Activist, Writer and Researcher (MY) o Marco Kusumajaya, Urbanist, Director Rujak Centre for Urban Studies (IN) o Oonagh Murphy, Arts Manager, Writer and Lecturer, Goldsmiths University of London (UK) <p>Moderated by Audrey Wong, Programme Leader, MA Arts & Cultural Leadership, LASALLE College of the Arts</p>