

**OPENING REMARKS BY MRS ROSA DANIEL, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL, AT 2022 ARTS AND CULTURE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM, 25 AUGUST 2022, 9:30AM, AT SINGAPORE CHINESE CULTURAL CENTRE, THE MULTI-PURPOSE HALL.**

Friends and Colleagues from research, policy and the arts

1 Good morning. It is good to see so many of you here today. We started this Arts & Culture Research Symposium in 2017 as a community of practice to spark research conversations with 80 arts practitioners and organisations. Since then, **we have grown in scale and diversity.** Today, we have more than 200 **participants not just from the arts but the economics, health, psychology, education and design sectors.** And with the power of technology, we have another 70 participants **livestreaming in from other parts of Singapore and overseas.**

2 NAC is honoured to co-organise this edition with the Institute of Policy Studies. Led by Dr Carol Soon, IPS brings its wealth of knowledge and experience in managing discussions related to social cohesion, inclusivity and wellbeing, digitalisation and technology to our symposium today.

3 NAC places a great premium on robust research. The current 5-year blueprint – Our SG Arts Plan – identifies research as one of 8 strategic priorities. Over the past 4 years, NAC has invested more than \$6m in research studies. These studies have allowed us to understand

our audiences, the nature of arts employment and the social impact of arts.

4 As many of you are aware through our wide-reaching engagement sessions over the past year, NAC is now in the midst of drawing up the next 5-year blueprint for the arts sector spanning the years 2023 to 2027. This blueprint responds to seismic shifts in the global, economic, social and technological landscape. My colleague Lynette will be sharing more details of the plan. But in a nutshell, there will be three important pillars. First, we will continue to tap the power of arts and culture to **sustain Singapore as a Connected Society**. Second, we will intensify our efforts to **transform Singapore into a Distinctive City** through our arts and culture. And last but not least, we will **grow the Creative Economy**. Over the next 5 years, we will drive research efforts with additional funding commitment to further our work on these 3 tracks.

5 Let me share our thinking. Firstly on the pillar of connected society, NAC has made much effort to-date on understanding the societal role and impact of arts and culture. In the 2020 Arts & Culture Research Symposium, Professor Katherine Boydell from the University of New South Wales spoke about social prescription in the UK, Canada, and Australia, where health professionals refer patients to support in the community so as to improve their health and wellbeing. We are **keen to research this area further to understand the application and applicability of such interventions** in the local context.

6 At the same 2020 symposium, Dr Wong Tien Hua, established medical practitioner and a member of NAC's Board, was our keynote speaker. He spoke about the role of the arts and its value in Singapore's

ageing population. With the rise of dementia in Singapore, arts interventions such as music therapy or other forms of sensory stimulation therapies such as moving and dancing have proven to help reduce dementia symptoms and to improve levels of well-being. Beyond the medical and health expertise we draw from, we can also further our work to serve citizens through every stage of their life journey by **drawing on diverse fields such as behavioural sciences, social geography and education.**

7 Research is also crucial in driving the 2<sup>nd</sup> pillar in Our SG Arts Plan of creating a Distinctive City. From NAC's Population Survey, 8 in 10 Singaporeans say that arts reflect what we are as a society and country. How can the arts contribute to a global city of aesthetically excellent physical structures which also anchor our people as a home reflecting our cultural heritage? How can the arts enhance our green spaces, building designs, and placemaking potential of our precincts? How do our art spaces reflect our aspirations to be environmentally sustainable? The NAC funded one study on the features of spaces suited for arts and culture activities that will bring communities together. Dr Zdravko Trivic from NUS Architecture spoke about this study in our 2017 Symposium. I hope to see **more of our urban planners and architects partner our arts organisations and cultural venues to undertake similar research.**

8 On the 3<sup>rd</sup> pillar of the Creative Economy, NAC will draw from the insights of the last two years when we had to deal with challenges of the pandemic. To steer the arts sector through, NAC had to quickly determine the implications on arts consumption, arts organisations and self-employed persons. Findings from a series of **COVID studies helped NAC to build a robust case for relief measures such as a job support**

**scheme for companies, and the Self-employed Persons Income Relief scheme, or SIRS for arts freelancers.** Findings on the state of digital adoption in the arts sector were also key to helping us advocate for the \$55 million Arts and Culture Resilience Package to sustain the sector through this crisis.

9 Over the next five years, there is much more applied research that is needed. **Technology has opened up new opportunities and markets. We must understand new business models, new capabilities and the new virtual world.** For example, Non-Fungible Token, or NFT, art has taken the world by storm. During the Singapore Art Week this year, we also saw a lot of interest in this area. But we have limited knowledge on how NFT art can be sustainable financially for Singapore artists and for the sector. We need to embark on studies that design our understanding of sustainable financial models for arts creation and presentation.

10 In 2017, the European Commission studied the different value chains in the cultural sector, to understand the impact of digitisation on their competitive positioning. Besides cultural diversity, they had to **understand competitive dynamics, market imperfections and rights management** across borders. **We need similar multidisciplinary research in the next five years** to undergird our efforts to grow the creative economy. I invite our academics in economics, law and business to partner us in the cultural sector to deepen our understanding of these new complexities.

11 Fostering a creative economy, a connected society, and a distinctive city will need local and global partnerships, as well as cross-industry collaborations.

12 To expand our repertoire of research methods, share knowledge, and deepen connections for our Singapore researchers, NAC actively partners with arts councils from other countries. For instance, in 2019, NAC and the Australia Council for the Arts (AusCo) commissioned a study on the nexus between arts and social cohesion and digital cultural engagement. This was undertaken by the NUS Cultural Research Centre under Professor Audrey Yue (she is here in the audience today). Her Social Inclusion in the Arts report covers policy case studies from UNESCO, the UK, Canada, Australia, and Singapore. She has identified broad indicators for a framework to evaluate social inclusion programmes in the arts, and we have benefitted from her research.

13 We will continue to pursue collaborations with international stakeholders such as UNESCO, International Council of Museums (ICOM), and International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA), to develop further research opportunities that enable all parties to benefit from this exchange of knowledge expertise.

14 Closer home, we also have arts institutions such as NAFA, SOTA and LASALLE, as well as NUS, NTU, SMU and SUTD that we have worked closely with. We would like to express our gratitude to our institutions for your collaborations with NAC. NAC will facilitate partnerships between our academic experts and the arts community in the research studies so that research insights are better deployed to raise the arts to the next level of excellence.

15 In closing, the topic of today's symposium is most timely and relevant. The pandemic has brought not just physical health but also mental and social health to the fore. The focus on well-being allows us to encourage cross-sector exploration of new ways of living (*Distinctive City*), interacting with each other (*Connected Society*), new jobs, capabilities and development pathways required for our sector's resilience and mobility (*Creative Economy*). All these contribute towards a vibrant arts landscape that connects all segments of a society, or vision of a distinctive city at home, anchored on a thriving creative economy.

16 I invite you to openly share your views, ideas, and thoughts with us today, so that together we can enhance the value and impact of the arts and culture in our society and economy.

17 I wish you all a very fruitful morning.

18 Thank you.