



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REVIEW

What would we give to create a city that is buzzing with live acts from world-class international arts groups, engaging local performances, cutting-edge artists and flourishing arts institutions? Everything.

NAC has spared no effort to make Singapore a distinctive global city for the arts. In FY 2008, this culminated in a crescendo of homegrown talents making their mark in Singapore and around the world.

Singapore stole the limelight with the staging of the second Singapore Biennale. With 66 artists and artist collectives representing 36 countries or regions, the Biennale was a unique theatre for the world's contemporary art scene. Featuring the best talents and oeuvres, the Biennale generated a high level of interest in and around Singapore, and lit up Singapore's appellation as a major stop on the global arts circuit.

Adding to the buzz was the critically acclaimed Singapore Arts Festival which drew some 600,000 audiences. For four weeks, over 400 high-quality ticketed and free shows were staged in concert halls, theatres and studios, as well as new and unusual spaces such as the Singapore River, Bedok Reservoir, food centres and MRT trains. The festival also attracted new partners from Belgium, Italy and the UK to co-commission three works by Singapore artists. This was a clear sign of the growing credence and draw of Singapore artists and arts groups.

Through Noise Singapore, the youths were given the opportunity to be seen and heard in a venue-less and new-media focused arts festival for young people. Some 2,000 talented participants submitted 11,000 works of art, design, photography and music, of which 1,700 were selected for a three-week long festival showcase.

While the spotlight rightly beamed on these national platforms, NAC's developmental work made good progress as well. We now have numerous innovative programmes aimed at grooming Singapore artists. To aid writers, the 50Fifty Publishing Scheme was started to help Singapore authors get published. We have also actively helped traditional artists to polish their skills and keep in touch with developments in their art form. In FY 2008, a number of these artists benefited from international residencies, workshops and events outside Singapore.

Apart from developmental programmes, we recognised and celebrated artistic excellence. The 2008 Cultural Medallion, the nation's highest honour, was conferred on writers P Krishnan and Chia Hwee Pheng and musician Iskandar Ismail. To encourage younger artists, the Young Artist Award was conferred on Daniel Kok Yik Leng (dance), Xia Haiying (dance), Aidli Mosbit (theatre), Cai Bixia (theatre) and Jason Wee (visual arts).

On top of working with artists, we sought new ways for corporate sponsors to contribute to the arts. Keppel Nights was jointly launched by NAC and Keppel Corporation to make the arts more accessible and affordable through half-priced tickets for selected shows for students, senior citizens and families.

FY 2008 was also a busy year for resource development. For the immediate term, a total of 71 recipients benefited from more than \$1 million worth of arts scholarships and bursaries disbursed by NAC. To meet arts manpower needs in the longer term, an Arts Capability Development Roadmap was drawn up.

In conjunction with the launch of the five-year \$115 million Renaissance City Plan III, NAC embarked on several new initiatives. These include the Arts Creation Fund to drive creation of original and distinctive works; the International Arts Residency scheme to provide artists access to prestigious

overseas residencies; and the Arts-For-All Community Engagement Plan to develop an engaged and educated audience that not only appreciates art, but participates in arts-making as well.

The arts scene has indeed come a long way. In the last ten years, the number of arts activities has trebled from 9,900 to 30,000 a year. Today, more people are participating in the arts, with one in three attending at least one arts event a year compared to one in 10 a decade ago.

As the CEO of NAC, I have had the privilege of playing a role in shaping the arts scene in Singapore. As I move on to another role within the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts on 1 August 2009, I am confident that the future is bright for the arts in Singapore. We know that developing the arts is a never-ending marathon. After scaling one mountain, another looms. I am sure that the new CEO, Benson Puah, will steer NAC and the arts community to even greater heights in developing Singapore as a global city for the arts.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that I have had the pleasure of working with, including the committed staff of NAC and the dedicated Board members, arts advisers, resource panel members, and committee members. Working with all of you has been a privilege for me.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suan Hiang', with a stylized flourish at the end.

LEE SUAN HIANG
Chief Executive Officer