

ARTS COMMUNITY

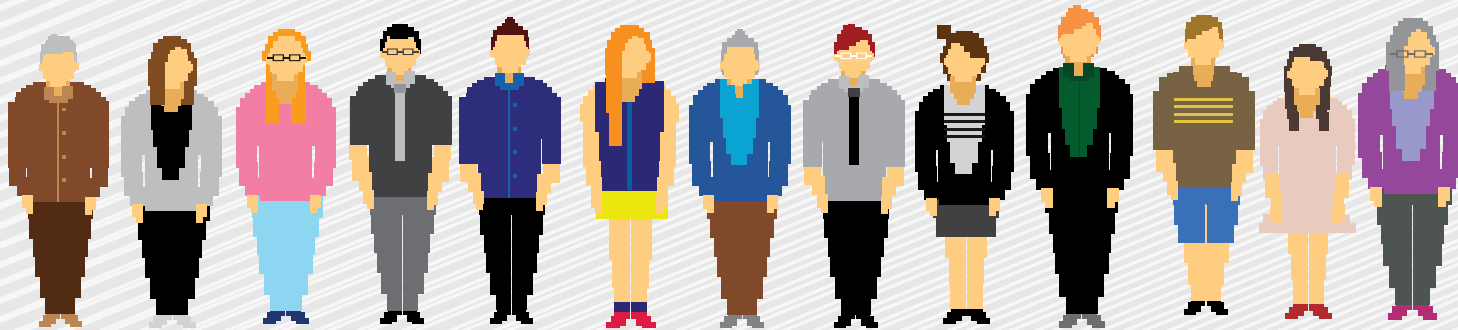
WHO WE SPOKE TO?

A total of two research groups were conducted. Respondents in this category consisted of 19 individuals from the arts community aged 19 to 64. Respondents included key opinion leaders from various arts genres such as music, dance and theatre.

This was conducted with two objectives:

- 1. To validate key findings from the public groups**
- 2. To identify specific concerns from the arts community related to the topic of arts advocacy.**

In the first session, four members of the public aged 25-62 were invited to the session in order to offer a differing view from the artists. This was done in order to identify common values of the arts between the public and the art community. The second session consisted solely of key opinion leaders in the arts industry in Singapore.



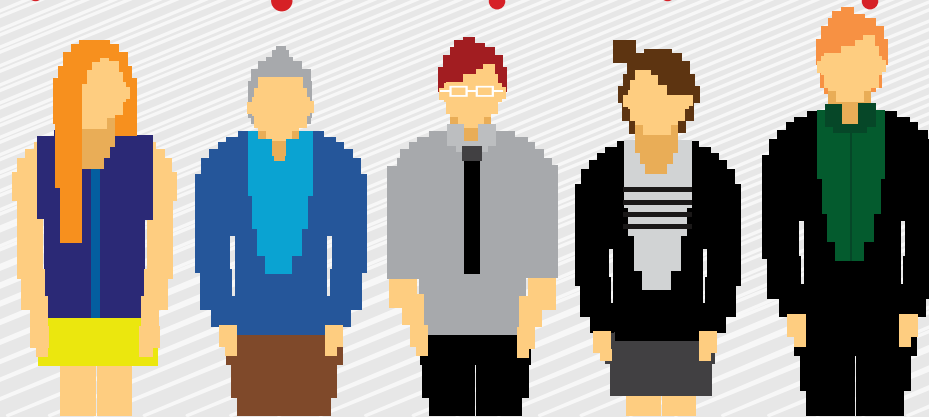
Please refer to Appendix F for a detailed list of respondents in this category.

THEIR PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE ARTS

THERE IS A NEED TO BROADEN THE AUDIENCE BASE

The artists recognised the need for the arts to have an audience and the discussion during the session focused on whether there was a need to broaden the audience base and how that could be done.

The reasons cited for the importance of growing the audience included sustainability of the arts ecosystem and an intrinsic need to spread the value of the arts to as many people as possible – the more people exposed to the arts, the more vibrant Singapore's art scene will eventually be. This could come in the form of a collective cultural hunger for the arts that leads to increased demand and supply within the art ecosystem.



“ I would like to share that value...you get entertainment, you get questions or you get the time or space to reflect... I would like that experience to be able to spread to as many people as possible. So I feel there is a need to broaden that (audience) base. ”

Koh Hui Ling,
Arts Practitioner,
Dramabox

“ But you see, the way we are doing is to grow your own audience...the patrons that commission our work might not agree with the work that we use. ”

Alvin Tan, Founder
and Artistic Director,
The Necessary Stage

“ As a venue, obviously you need an audience otherwise you just go out of business. There's no two ways about it. But to create a hunger, cultural hunger, I guess it comes with content, quality of the content and what you want to do. ”

Danny Loong,
Co-founder,
Timbre Group

“ There's value in the whole idea of exposure because once you expose as many people you can, slowly you'll trigger and find that few diamonds that will slowly grow, geminate into things that we don't know where it'll be. ”

Koh Hui Ling, Arts
Practitioner, Dramabox

“ I think what's interesting... is not so much can art exist without audiences but can art exist without patrons. And the word patrons can also include audiences. ”

Janice Koh, Stage &
TV Actress, Former
Nominated Member
of Parliament (NMP)

Respondents from the arts community also agreed that there was value in exposing children to the arts at a young age so as to nurture a generation of people who would be supportive of the arts.

“ I don't think we actually started to nurture our young, talking about art, or art being part of our lives and things like that. ”

Amanda Heng,
Contemporary Artist

“ I think if young kids get to watch arts, see arts museums and stuff earlier, classical music and everything, then you get the bunch that will naturally be inclined that will want to pursue (the arts) as a profession. But you also get the mass amount of them now getting the culture of going to support the arts. ”

Ruth Ling, Artist,
Producer and
Sound Engineer

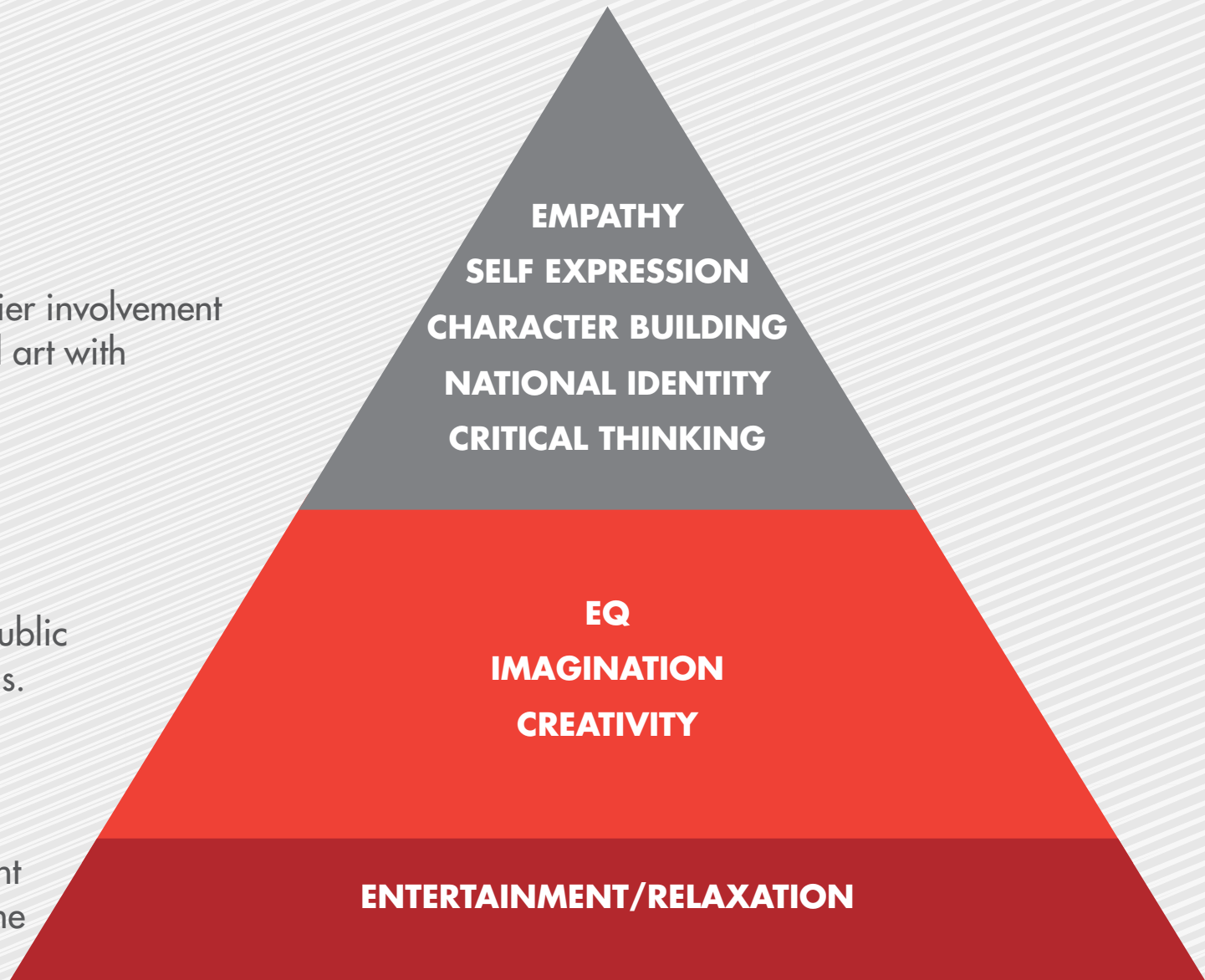
PEOPLE ARE ON DIFFERENT ART LITERACY LEVELS AND TAKE OUT DIFFERENT VALUES FROM THE ARTS

The arts community recognised that members of the public were on different art literacy levels and thus took out different values from their experiences. This ranged from the arts being pure entertainment to containing instrumental values such as creativity and EQ, and intrinsic values such as empathy and self-identity.

Audiences with heavier involvement in the arts associated art with intrinsic values.

The majority of the public is able to relate to this.

This is the lowest point of entry where anyone can relate to.



In order to drive arts advocacy at every level, there is a need to take everyone through the journey from the bottom of the pyramid to the top. We can do this by communicating the relevant values to the public at the right level, depending on their level of involvement with the arts.

“ A model, one analogy that I thought of, let's say it's a pyramid. I'm using a pyramid because I'm thinking more in terms of participation. So you have the lower end where it's much more mainstream, so it's closer to entertainment or to performances at social functions, and it draws a lot of people... I think it will be too 'atas'² of us to say that that is not art. Because a lot of people call them art. But at the tip of the pyramid, it would be the more experimental, or the more challenging forms... But actually for me when I look at it, everything is interconnected. The lower ends of the pyramid, you nurture and you cultivate and you get arts lovers. And out of them, maybe 1 or 2 percent would be able to move up. ”

Tan Dan Feng,
Director, Select Books

“ When you reflect on how you yourself fell in love with art... We started with the basics. We didn't really just jump on to the high end from the start. So you'll have to take everyone through it. ”

Christopher Cheong, Founding
Member, Orchestra of The
Music Makers (OMM)

²'Atas' is a Malay word that means 'upstairs'. It is a colloquial term in Singapore to mean sophisticated or high class.

ART CONTAINS BOTH INSTRUMENTAL AND INTRINSIC VALUES WHICH NEEDS TO BE ADVOCATED FOR

Respondents from the arts community agreed that instrumental values such as creativity are important to pragmatic Singaporeans. However, they also warned that if one only thinks about the instrumental values of art, it would be easy to lose focus on the intrinsic values, which is the most important guiding factor for any artist. As an artist, there was a need to be clear about what one is trying to present and express. As such, artists had the responsibility to balance both the instrumental and intrinsic values in the work they create.

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...people are aware of how creativity can lead to success in later stages of life for a person. For example... Steve Jobs (and) all these creative people doing very well in their lives, so people buy into the idea that creativity is good...”

Han Xue Mei,
Arts Practitioner,
Dramabox

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...the arts (are) a platform for us to re-examine ourselves, re-examine the people, the society around us.”

Chan Jun Kai,
Director,
Our Company

“

Art is also something that not everyone has the same views about. So it's also a means of discussion and engagement...the aesthetics of every art form is very different, and as a practitioner, one of the duties of an artist - first of all, you have to be very clear about what you want to present, and you also need to cultivate and nurture the audience. She goes back to art as a personal expression of values. For example in Chinese traditional opera performance, values and world views are interweaved(sic) into the performance.”

Lim Mei Lian, Co-founder,
Tian Yun Beijing Opera Society
(translated by Dan Feng from
Mandarin to English)

“ ... if you think of art in relation to economy then I can only do what I think is related to the society. But I can't do what I really want to do, I can't go experimental because I know that economically it won't (do well). ”

Koh Hui Ling,
Arts Practitioner,
Dramabox

“ I personally think (art) is something that is innate in all individuals, there is this need to express and to share... a quality (that is) forgotten...after decades of focus on other more material and pragmatic aspects. So here we are, when we are talking about advocating the arts, it's more than advocating any particular form, but actually it's advocating this – to make people remember this very human and innate medium in themselves. ”

Tan Dan Feng,
Director, Select Books

THERE NEEDS TO BE MORE SUPPORT FOR LOCAL CULTURAL HEROES

Respondents from the arts community pointed out that Singapore was in need of cultural heroes that people can look up to in order to aid the arts advocacy cause. There was currently not enough support to create cultural heroes. There could also be a correlation between this lack of support and the public sentiment that “foreign artists are better” and therefore willing to pay more to watch foreign artists perform.

“...the foreigners, \$60, \$80, they will pay for it. Locals, \$50, they bargain some more. They want \$10, less 10%.”

Peggy Ewe, Semi-retired and Founding Member of Ageless Theater

“Where are the academics talking about theatre practitioners? [Unlike Shakespeare where there are tons of writing on it]... it actually shows a huge crime, it shows that local works are not worthy of that. And that sends a huge message.”

Alvin Tan, Founder and Artistic Director, The Necessary Stage

“I think if you're looking at a higher level scholarship, it starts at universities, it starts at institutions, and there's very little support for local academics that write about the local arts.”

Janice Koh, Stage & TV Actress, Former Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP)

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In Asian cinema, we have the heroes in the past, we had Bruce Lee, we had P Ramlee... And the thing about this is we don't have (many) heroes. You know why? When a hero starts to come, starts to emerge, we all go: eh come down come down, let's not give too much empowerment to this person. What are we doing? We are not creating any cultural heroes. It's sad. When you go to Korea, you ask the Korean: who's your legendary folk artist. They'll tell you, within 5 minutes, there'll be 2 or 3 names. You said P Ramlee but that's a long time ago. Last 10 years? We talked about theatres. We got people like Ivan (who) tried to do it, but do we really have a hero like what the Americans do, what the British do?

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Danny Loong,
Co-founder,
Timbre Group

IN SUMMARY:

Our findings from the arts community are consistent with, and support those of the public.

1. The arts community recognised the need for the arts to have an audience and arts advocacy should be directed towards growing this audience and exposing more people to the arts.
2. The arts community understood that members of the public associated different values from the arts depending on their level of involvement. They agreed that it was important to drive arts advocacy at every level and to take everyone through the journey from the instrumental values to those that are intrinsic so as to improve overall arts literacy.
3. The arts community cautioned that while it was important to appeal to the public with instrumental values such as creativity, we must not forget the intrinsic reason of why we create in the first place. There was a need for every artist to balance both the instrumental and intrinsic values in the work they create.
4. The arts community highlighted a potential solution to drive arts advocacy – create a local cultural hero that people in Singapore can look up to.