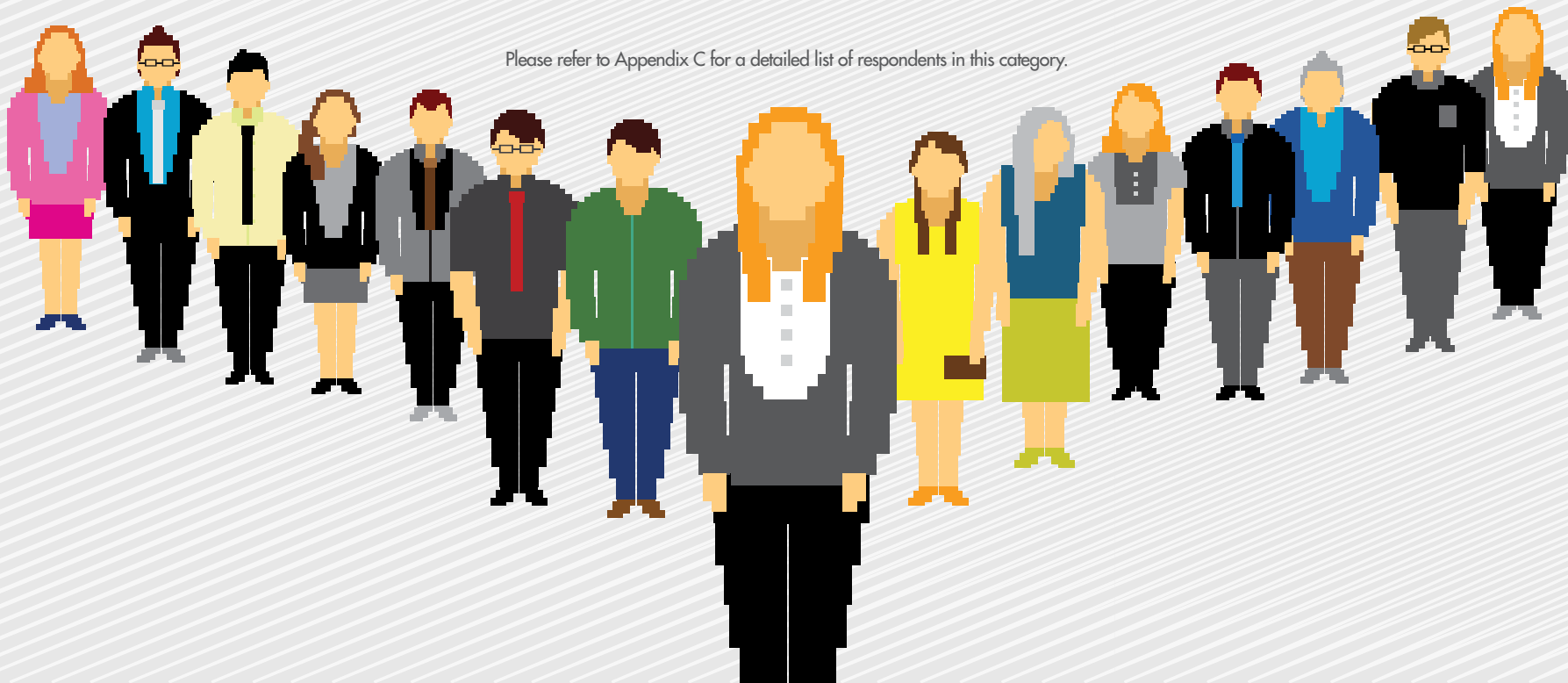


PMEBs

WHO WE SPOKE TO?

Respondents in this category consisted of 15 Professionals, Managers, Executives, Businessmen (PMEB) aged 26 to 58, including people from engineering, business, architecture, creative and public sectors.

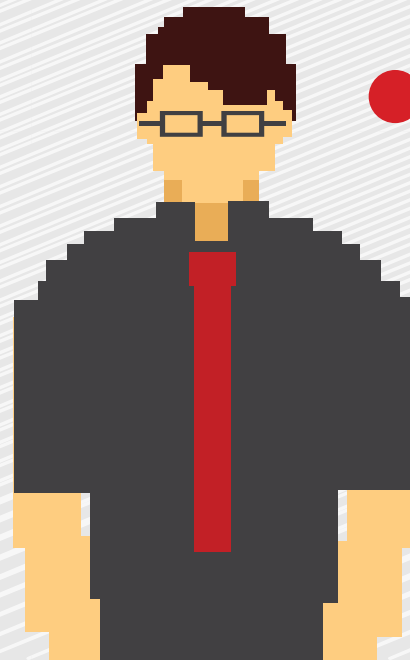
Please refer to Appendix C for a detailed list of respondents in this category.



THEIR PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE ARTS

PMEBS DEFINED THE ARTS BROADLY

PMEBs had a broad definition of what the arts are. They do not see art in terms of the various genres, for example, visual arts, performing arts, literary arts etc., but rather as an aesthetic form as a whole. They felt art can come in any shape or form and is part of everyday life. It is also intrinsically linked to culture and art can manifest itself in cultural products such as batik and Nonya food.



“

I think everyday is art... like the other night I saw the shadow of the street lamp on the bamboos that fall onto my wall and it looked like a calligraphy...I took a picture and put on my Facebook to say it's so beautiful, streetlamp can also be a calligrapher. Its very beautiful, so if you look...everyday is art

”

Jack Sim, 58, Associate Professor at National University of Singapore (NUS)

“

I think it's true, you can actually find art everywhere, anywhere. It's just whether you want to stop and actually look at it, that's the thing.

”

Dawn Goh, 35, Research Officer (Bioprocessing), ASTAR

“

I think Nonya food is an artform, and the Baju...it was heritage-art.

”

Sherwin Siregar, 35, Deputy Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Atlas Audio and Visual

The PMEBS also noted a distinction in society between “high art” and “low art”. They defined “high art” as arts that has an elitist element to it and cited examples such as classical music by orchestras and fine art found in art galleries and museums while “low art” was associated with the culture found in everyday life. Both types of art were important to this group and some of the respondents felt that there was greater focus on “high art” and its value in society, and not enough emphasis on art in the everyday. The PMEBS noted that if more emphasis was given to the arts for the masses, it would be easier to encourage their children to pursue a career in the arts.

“ My point is about the focus of high art. Because (if) you keep on focusing on high art, where’s the culture going to come from? (High art) means it must be famous, foreign, best in class, snob appeal. ”

Brian Charles, 26, Actor and political science undergrad

“ (The society is conditioning us to go) High art...and then what about ordinary life? If you see something beautiful (in the streets), there’s no value. ”

Jack Sim, 58, Associate Professor at NUS

“ This top ten percent (of the artists)...I associate with high society. That means to say you must be in the high society end, then you can survive. if we have the market for the masses, then it’s easier to encourage our children to go into this profession. ”

Philip Lam, 50, Head of Flow Solutions, SICK Group

PMEBS RELATED THE WIDE RANGE OF VALUES ASSOCIATED WITH THE ARTS TO ACHIEVING SUCCESS AT WORK

PMEBs associated a wide range of values with the arts. For those who currently have a higher involvement in the arts, they are able to articulate how the arts have added value to their lives. They also associated the arts with intrinsic values such as empathy and critical thinking. However, those with no or minimal involvement with the arts tended to associate instrumental values such as entertainment and relaxation.

It is to be noted that these values, whether intrinsic or instrumental, were often drawn in parallel with how the arts can help them to perform better and achieve success at work in areas such as interpersonal communication, writing or having the necessary emotional quotient (EQ) to relate to co-workers.

CREATIVITY

All of the respondents responded positively to the value of creativity. It was seen as an instrumental value directly linked with success at work. One PMEB who was less involved in the arts commented that while he agreed that creativity could be a value derived from the arts, it is not exclusive to only those within the arts ecosystem. It is applicable to anyone, for example engineers, to help them think out of the box and be resourceful. Exposure to the arts can give everyone a creative foundation in our lives.

“ I see a lot of promotion or focus on creativity but I don't understand why they also never focus on art because I think they are hand-in-hand, arts and creativity. ”

Philip Lam, 50,
Head of Flow Solutions,
SICK Group

“ I realized that art... is something that you need to do, when you do business, you have to create communication, the logo, the brand, the presentation, to the client, and if you don't have arts, then you lose to the other guy who (has) arts. Because if the guy is able to brand themselves properly and communicate, (it) is an amazing thing. ”

Jack Sim, 58,
Associate Professor
at NUS

CREATIVITY

“ ...You can't claim creativity to be exclusive to the arts... like what Sherwin said about engineering, they need to be creative, resource(ful), to find solutions... Maybe you can say that arts give you a richer base to create what you need in your life. ”

Mac Teo, 38,
Farming industry

“ ...(Expression) is the role of spark where creativity comes from if you're looking for creative solutions... you need that sort of empathy and understanding of the human experience to be able to do any of that. The arts provide...access and understanding for that. ”

Sherwin Siregar, 35,
Deputy CEO of Atlas
Audio and Visual

EXPRESSION

“ I didn't have a very strong inclination to the arts when I was young, I didn't desire to take arts class or any sort of music class... growing up, what made a difference for me is actually literature class; when I started reading about many things, it gave me an appreciation about how different words can be written to convey different meanings. And today, because I write a lot in my work, it helps me to express different things. ”

Xavier Wang, 30,
Communications, Land
Transport Authority

“ ...Communication skills get better, the empathy, the social skills and the EQ gets better ”

Jeffrey Wandly,
47, Co-owner of
Maya Gallery

EMPATHY

“ If I think of my formative years, it helped me have a window of empathy and understanding (of) different people and...their emotions and what they go through, like you experience it through arts whether its literature or history...I have the experiences myself...It helps me find different ways of communicating with different people.”

Sherwin Siregar, 35,
Deputy CEO of Atlas
Audio and Visual

“ I mean design is not just using the computer, it's a lot of thought going into it, it's a lot of conceptual, it's a lot of talking with the clients, having empathy.”

Masturah Shaari,
47, Co-owner of
Maya Gallery

IDENTITY (SELF)

“ When I was growing up, I thought I was very angmoh, y’know, like very westernized and all. So when I was forced to do Chinese painting (and) calligraphy, it’s really the most extreme of what I could have seen myself be doing. I thought I was a certain kind of person...do certain things, speak in a certain way. Going through two years of that, it made me feel: maybe I didn’t have to define myself so rigidly, and I had fun! ”

Amanda Lee, 30,
Corporate Communications,
GoodPack

“ Self exploration
is part of art ”

Marcus Law, 30,
Business Development,
Sun Lim Gardens Foodstuff

CRITICAL THINKING

“ I think arts (are) important because it teaches you to embrace life and all its complexities...You don't accept the status quo and what they tell you life should be, like you will get a job, get married, have two kids, live in a HDB... like art teaches you to question all these things and constantly question yourself. ”

Brian Charles, 26,
Actor and political
science undergrad

BARRIERS TO THE ARTS

Despite recognising the values that the arts can offer, PMEBS identified two main barriers to being more involved in the arts – the rational mindset of Singaporeans and the perceived regimentation in Singapore’s education system.

PMEBS ARE RATIONAL WHEN IT COMES TO THE ARTS

For PMEBS, their careers were top of mind and they were consciously rational about the arts. Many respondents constantly referred to being in a rat race, and they felt that the arts were not a priority in their lives, especially when it was perceived that one is unable to make a living through the arts.

“ I think that the problem why nobody is interested in arts, because it used to be that you can't earn money. ”

Marcus Law, 30, Business Development, Sun Lim Gardens Foodstuff

“ My mother's pragmatism killed my interest in music...my mom would force me to go for music class, piano class, but with a very practical thing. You do it, you get Grade 8, you can teach piano. You can survive through your university. ”

Sherwin Siregar, 35, Deputy CEO of Atlas Audio and Visual

“ We're living in an environment where it's a rat race. We're chasing a lot of material things, so we have no time to sit down to appreciate art. ”

Philip Lam, 50, Head of Flow Solutions, SICK Group

SOCIAL CONDITIONING IN SOCIETY

PMEBs felt that in Singapore, the education system is a barrier for a thriving arts ecosystem. The arts stream was seen by the respondents as a choice for those who were not able to excel in their academic studies. Respondents also believed there was a regimented school syllabus in place for students to follow and there was no room for creativity and self-expression, hence this led to a generation of people who did not understand and appreciate the value of the arts.

“ I have four kids, they go to school and the teacher tells them that they're not good in art, I mean, which child is not good in art? So they come home saying that I'm not good in art...that will be fixed for life, they take away the human enjoyment from the child just by one comment you know and for the rest of their lives, they're like: oh no, I'm not good in art. ”

Jack Sim, 58,
Associate Professor
at NUS

“ I didn't do very well. I think I failed maths and science, so that meant that I would go to the class where I had to do art. ”

Amanda Lee,
30, Corporate
Communications,
GoodPack

“ Teachers during my time, they didn't let the kids have their own points of view. When you write your answers for a Macbeth question, they all had their own set of answers which you had to follow and memorize. If you put your own view, they would say, this is wrong. ”

Jennifer Banse, 33,
Business Development
Manager, Imail Global

HOW?

do we make Arts
more relevant in their lives

PMEBs who were already involved in the arts thought of the arts in a very pragmatic way. They tend to draw parallels between the value of the arts and their careers. In order to reach a wider crowd who are not as involved in the arts, we need to make the arts relevant in their work life, and this would involve adopting an instrumental approach.

Amongst all the values that were mentioned by the respondents, creativity stood out in terms of its close link with work.

What we could tell the PMEBS:

The arts provide you with soft skills and creativity, to help you be more successful at work.



Respondents in this PMEB group obtained their news primarily from digital mediums such as news websites, electronic direct mailers and social media sites such as Facebook. There were PMEBs who mentioned that they have a subscription to traditional media platforms such as The Straits Times but they do not read it.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ARTS?

PMEBs believed that the individual should be responsible for the arts and the government should be a facilitator. They felt that for the arts to have a place in Singapore, it needs to be a bottom-up initiative rather than a top-down directive. They also noted that the government could give public recognition and send strong signals about the importance of the arts in society.

“ Because the government has co-opted so many aspects of the Singaporean life, I think it's almost like the onus is upon them to do it. But there's a problem because the moment it's a top down, it's never as organic as a bottom up thing. ”

Brian Charles, 26,
Actor and political
science undergrad

“ I think it's also (about) recognizing things. You know Japan has the wonderful national treasure... Something that the government says when you have something and you please just focus on your crafts. I think that would be wonderful... How many treasures do we have? But it gives a very strong signal. ”

Sherwin Siregar, 35,
Deputy CEO of Atlas
Audio and Visual

“ If you want to build a Singapore, it should be something that everybody is motivated to do just by their self. ”

Marcus Law, 30,
Business Development,
Sun Lim Gardens
Foodstuff