

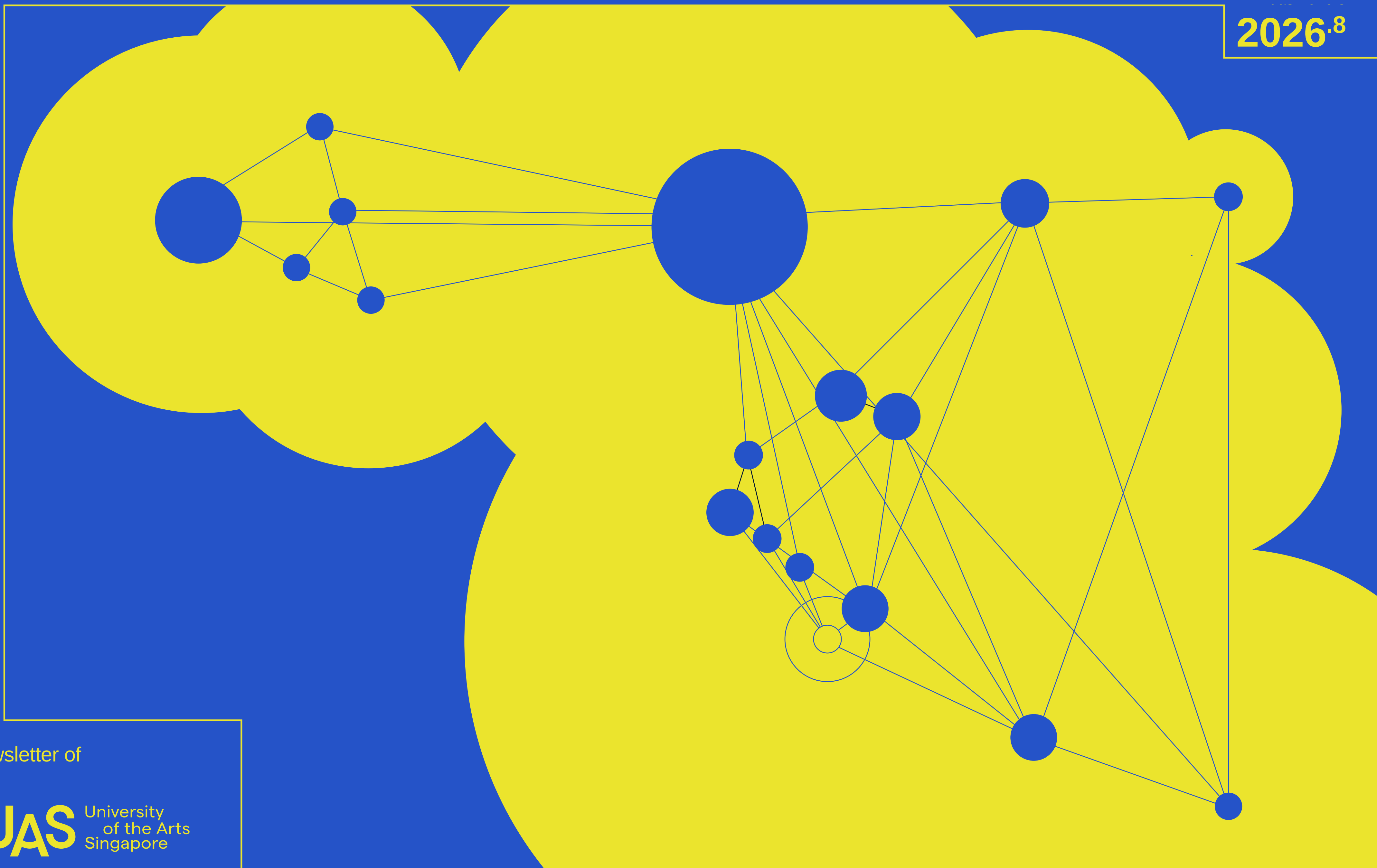
Flow

A global engagement newsletter of

NAFA
Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts

UAS University
of the Arts
Singapore

2026⁸



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Foreword



Welcome to the third issue of *Atlas*.

In previous issues, I reflected on the importance of building connections across cultures and the transformative power of learning through exchange. This issue highlights another dimension of global engagement: our willingness to remain open and adaptable when encountering new places, people, and ideas.

When we enter an unfamiliar environment, do we slow down enough to observe, listen, and learn? During a residency on Pingsha Island, China, participating artists from our MFA Fine Art programme immersed themselves in the rhythms of farming, fishing, and community life. Through conversations, collaborations, and everyday encounters, their creative works evolved in response to the people and environment around them.

A similar spirit is reflected in our partnership with UNESCO's *Embracing Shared Heritage through Performing Arts* initiative. Bringing together young artists from Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, the programme explores shared histories, cultural memory, and contemporary identity through the performing arts.

Curiosity also requires us to make space for different voices. As Charlotte Bonham-Carter observes in her reflection on chairing international meetings, meaningful collaboration is built on active listening and inclusive participation, creating conditions for understanding, trust, and mutual respect.

Collectively, the features in this issue remind us that while borders may define nations, ideas, cultures, and human connections continue to flow across them.

At NAFA, we believe that global engagement is ultimately about creating opportunities for authentic encounters. Whether through residencies, collaborations, educational exchanges, or institutional partnerships, such experiences invite us to expand our perspectives and re-examine our assumptions. They challenge us not only to learn from others, but sometimes to unlearn what we think we know.

As you read this issue, I encourage you to be inquisitive about the new, embrace discomfort as part of growth, and remain open to the unexpected possibilities that emerge when we engage meaningfully with the world around us. ■

Hazel Chan
Director, Strategic Development & Global Engagement
Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts

Ai Weiwei, *Fragments*, 2005, at M+, Hong Kong: a massive sculpture constructed from the wooden pillars, beams, and salvaged materials of dismantled Qing dynasty temples, forming a map of China from above. Photo courtesy of Hazel Chan.

Residency Flows

Hans Chew and Matthew Goh in conversation with Dr Wong Zi Hao

Residing Flows is a group exhibition featuring work by Master of Fine Arts Fine Art graduand Hans Chew and current student Matthew Goh (Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Singapore), alongside two artists from LASALLE College of the Arts, as part of a UAS–HUBART collaboration and Art Field Nanhai 2026, a biannual site-specific art festival running from 17 July 2026 to 3 January 2027 on the theme of "flowing with the water" (向水而行).

The residency (8 May – 8 Jun 2026) culminated in two site-specific installations: Matthew's *A River Within I* / 《内河》 (2026), a video installation, and Hans' *Ah Min's Mobile Farm* / 《可移动式的阿敏农场》 (2026), a mobile farm inspired by local farming practices.

In this conversation, Dr Wong Zi Hao, who accompanied the NAFA participants on the residency, engaged them in dialogue about their motivations and experiences, as well as evolving thoughts about artmaking and the community.



Matthew Goh, video still, *A River Within I* / 《内河》, 2026, bamboo fishing trap installation, digital moving image, LCD screens, and environmental sounds.

9 May 2026

Residency House, Pingsha

Dr Wong Zi Hao (ZW): We've just had a quick introduction to the island by the HUBART team, who brought us through the background of the island, particularly its agricultural histories. As we settle in, tell us about your proposals before you arrived at Pingsha Island.



A study sketch of Pingsha Island's topography. A raised road following the island's perimeter doubles as a flood barrier. The locals refer to the land inside the dyke as a "bowl". Outside the ring road, the soil is sandy and is replenished every year during the annual flooding of the river. Farmers have learnt to grow different crops inside and outside the ring system. Image courtesy of Hans Chew.

Hans Chew (HC): My initial proposal was drawn from very limited knowledge of the island: Google Maps and vlogs showing a primarily agricultural landscape. I have always enjoyed tropical fruits such as grapes, banana, dragon fruit, and papaya, without knowing how they are grown. This residency will give me access to the tools, materials, and infrastructure behind the production of fruits and vegetables. In particular, I was interested in the trellises used to grow dragon fruits and grapes, for their light sculptural quality and as human constructions that manage the natural environment.

Matthew Goh (MG): I was inspired by the island's name "pingsha" (平沙)—thinking about the character "ping" to refer not only to "flat (land)", but also to "balance". How do we find balance within the spaces we occupy? This got me thinking about labour: how do the islanders tend and farm the land? Coming from a fast-paced city, there is a desire amongst urban dwellers to slow down and

return to a simpler way of living. I was interested in the gestures of local farmers and how I might bring these into a performance installation. My initial idea was to collaborate with one or two senior residents, using soil collected from sites of their daily activities to co-create artworks and engage them in a dialogue around traditional practices.

ZW: Time is a running theme in both your initial proposals. Hans is curious about the duration, labour, tools, and processes that bring crops into fruition. For Matthew, there is an interest in slow living, which might seem unproductive compared to urban contexts, but offers a way to rethink city rhythms. What have you noticed about the place and the people so far? Which parts of your original proposal still feel relevant now, and where do you see shifts happening?



HC: My original proposal is still relevant, but I haven't entered the farms yet, so it's hard to say how plans will change. There are many other things that interest me here. I've noticed that a lot of the buildings here are made of brick, and the bricks have black marks that appear in a very organic manner. So far I haven't found out why these patterns appear after firing. I hope the weather holds up; it's been raining for the last two days and there are mosquitoes from the wetness.

MG: I'm keeping things open. I might develop the original proposal more. I'm also interested in the ways that the islanders pass time. I saw them playing mahjong and card games together. These are community activities where people just enjoy time together and serve as another way to pause and slow down. There's a special quality to the group aspect of that which I might want to investigate further. Not understanding the language has also made me more alert, listening attentively and picking up gestural cues.

Video stills of early experiments playing with soil patterns: Matthew Goh's initial proposal was to explore performances of manual agricultural-related gestures. Image courtesy of Matthew Goh.

15 May 2026

On board a flight back to Singapore

ZW: Having lived a week on the island, we encountered quite a bit of rain, but the skies seemed to have cleared up towards the end of our first week here. In fact, it became quite hot: 30 to 33 degrees Celsius on some days. The cycles of extreme heat and wetness seem to be heralding the build-up towards the torrential floods, around the Duan Wu (Dragon Boat) festival, which will happen in the second half of June, after our residency ends. Although we will not be witnessing the flooding season, which we learnt from Ah Min's stories of the island, the fluctuating weather gives us a sense of the shifting temporalities faced by the islanders in their daily life, fishing and farming. Could you share some new observations and insights from your fieldwork?



Video still of Matthew Goh's explorations performing with smaller and more flexible prawn nets. Prawn nets tend to be much smaller in size in comparison to the larger fishing nets which are made of sturdier bamboo strips. The large fishing nets are taller than an average person's height! Image courtesy of Matthew Goh.

Ah Min bringing us into his corn fields. We wore rubber boots that went up to our knees: known in Chinese as 'water shoes', to protect us from snake and large red-ant bites, if we ran into them out in the field. Photo courtesy of Wong Zi Hao.



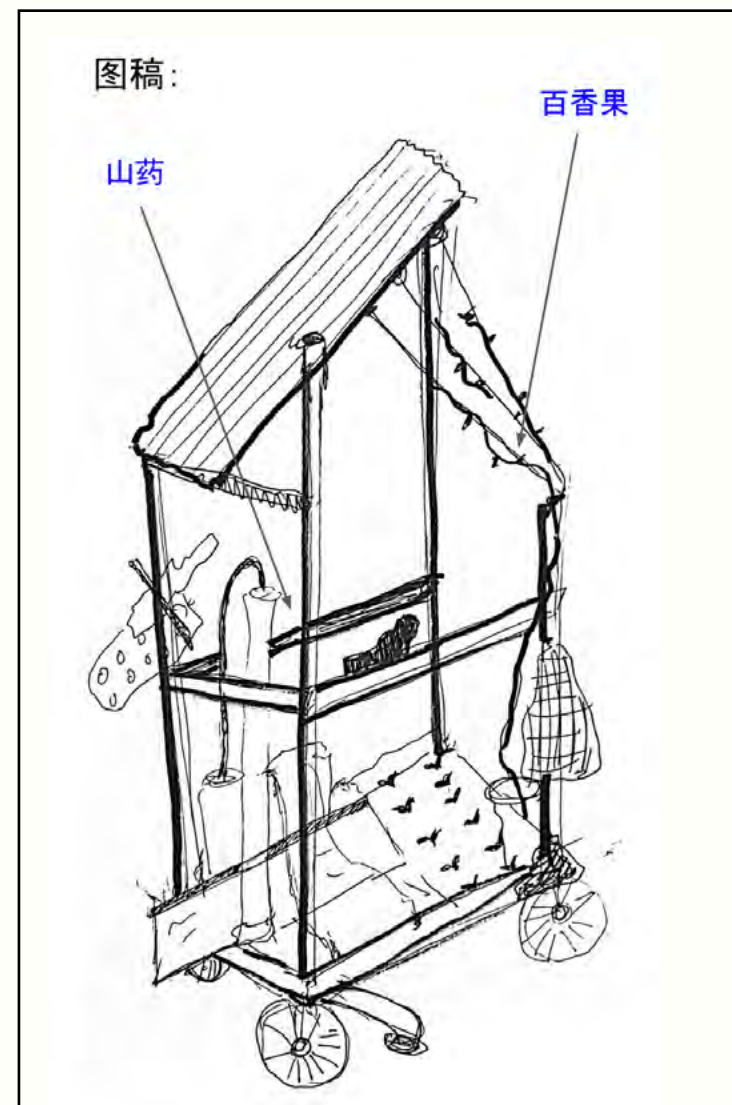
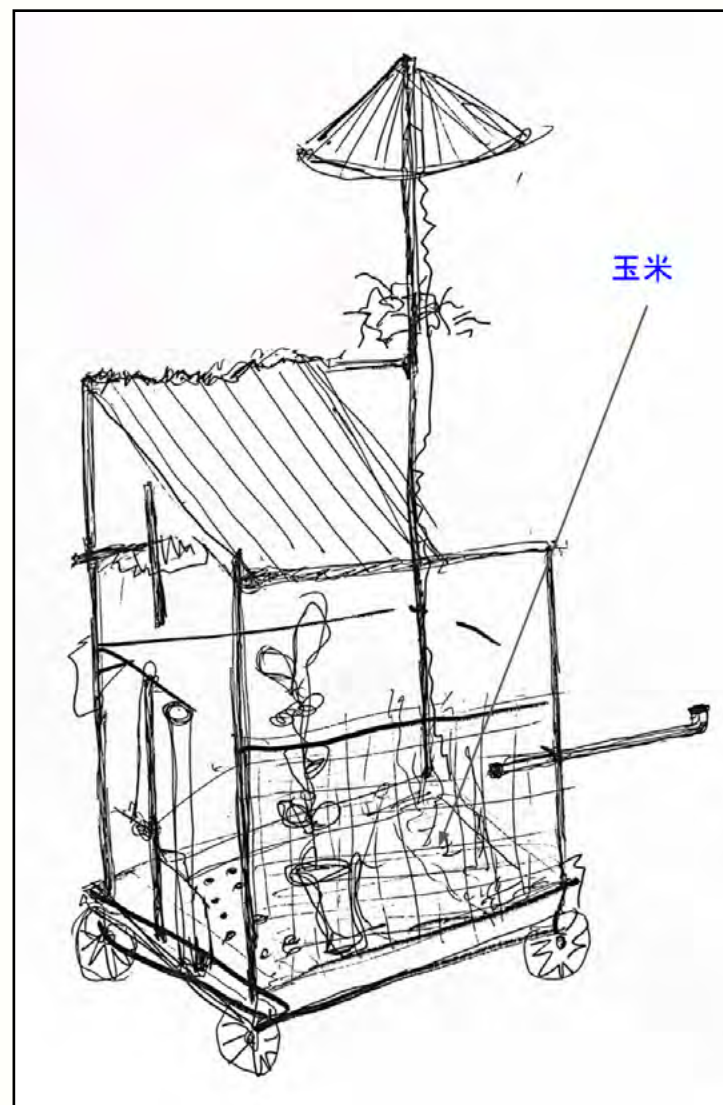
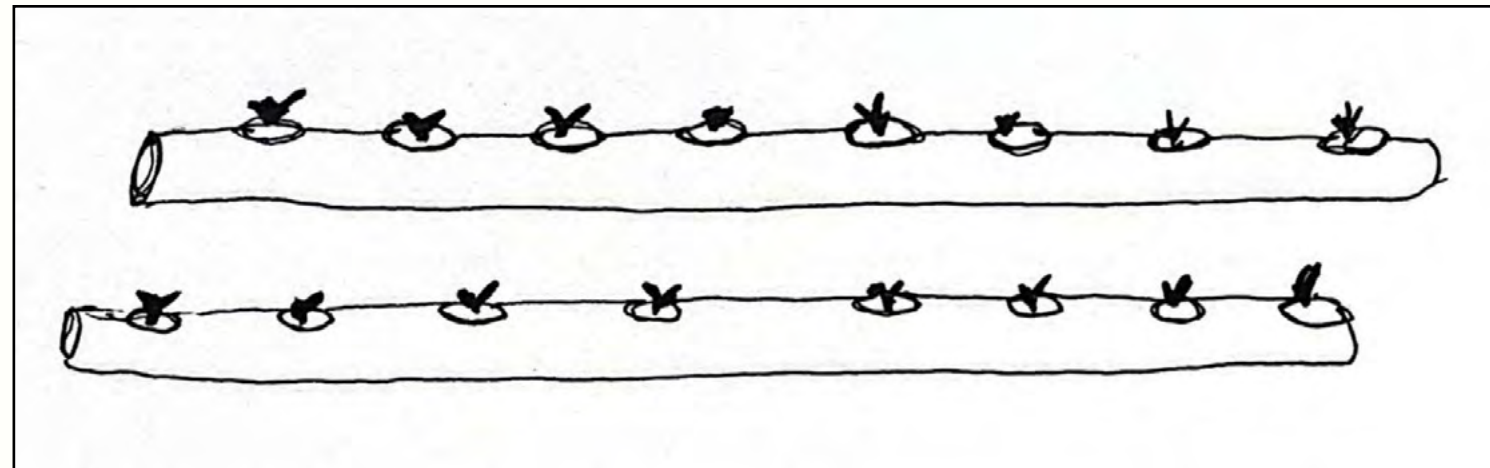
MG: I'm getting a better sense of the islanders' attunement to the environment: the weather, how the tide moves, how their crops are doing. Their close relationship with the natural environment is very different from those of us from the city. They have an attitude of just going with the flow and adapting to any changes that might happen. In my fieldwork, I am shifting my focus from the residents to the fisherfolk. As an outsider, entering the community centre where the elderly play mahjong made them uncomfortable; my camera heightened their sense of intrusion. It was less intrusive to observe the fisherfolk who work very visibly in public spaces. I watched a fisherman repairing his nets, and I became interested in the materiality of fishing nets. A younger islander, Ah Min (劳国敏), has become a crucial middleman, connecting me to local fishermen who are helping to build a fishing net that I will be using in my performance. Working with the local fisherfolk and developing part of my performance with an item derived from their netmaking has opened unexpected new ways of collaboration for me.

HC: Ah Min owns the local Seaside Restaurant (海边餐厅) and runs farms that supply produce to it. He grew up on the island, moved to the mainland for a time, then returned to tend to his ageing parents' farms. Because my fieldwork is centred on the agricultural conditions of the island, he offered an entryway into understanding the local farming practices. Ah Min granted us access to his cornfields, which are on the outer ring of the island where it gets flooded mid-year. He also has another plot of land in the middle of the island, which is protected from river flooding by the semi-natural, semi-constructed dyke, where he grows passion fruit, and rears livestock. So, it's interesting to hear from his perspective how a variety of farming practices can adapt to the different geographical contexts of the island, and how farmers like him are very flexible and adaptive in their practices. Their livelihood is very much shaped by the flooding of the river, the weather, and other environmental factors that they cannot control.

Features

Project Reflections

HC: I consider Ah Min an equal collaborator, as far as conceptualisation of my work is concerned. He has generously provided input into my proposal and helped me see things in ways I was not aware of. Like Matthew, I must acknowledge how we are outsiders. I'm now proposing to construct a mobile farm on wheels, composed of found and discarded objects from the farms and nearby village, reassembled into structures that assist crop growth—much like the trellises that first inspired me. The mobility aspect of my piece highlights how farmers on the island's outer rings must be nimble in the face of the annual flooding, moving their equipment uphill and then reoccupying the land the rest of the year.



(Top) Study sketches of Ah Min's invention for quickly shifting Chinese yam from lower to higher grounds, upcoast as the flood shifts. His solution makes use of PVC pipes with holes in them; the pipes are filled with soil that, in turn, contains the growing yam. The whole pipe is lifted from the soil when it is time for changing location.
(Bottom) Preliminary sketches and annotations of Hans' proposal for a mobile farm installation. Images courtesy of Hans Chew.

ZW: Both your project developments respond to the shifting conditions of the island: the flooding of the outer rings around June to July each year, and the reoccupation of the new fertile grounds when the river subsides. It is quite a unique experience to be on a landscape that changes and affects the seasonal farming practices. Matthew, I understand that you are also considering the negotiations between inside and outside, focusing on aquaculture knowledge?



Matthew in conversation with a fisherman uncle, connected through Ah Min. Every year from March to July, a ban on fishing in the river is implemented, to conserve the ecological sustainability of fish species. This period somewhat overlaps with the floods in May to June, since the torrential rains make it unsafe for prolonged fishing activity out in the river. During this period, when the river is closed to fishing, fisherfolk can be found on the island mending old nets and building new ones out of bamboo. Photo courtesy of Matthew Goh.

MG: Thinking about the inside and outside makes me imagine a very transient space negotiating fluid, constant change between worlds. When I observed how the fishing nets are woven, it gave me a tacit understanding of how to work with the flowing river, because to 'weave' is also to go over and under, and in and out. I wanted to explore how this idea of interweaving—negotiating between porous worlds, of fish bodies within the river's aquatic worlds, and of human bodies entangled within the island's shifting environments—could be expressed through my dancing body, moving within a fishing net. But I'm not seeing the fishing net merely as a trapping tool. I see the net as a conceptual terrain, or a map, or a grid, that is always malleable. It's like the skin of a porous body, or a boundary of a porous world that is constantly changing.

One thing I am enjoying about this process is that more people are slowly being involved in the making of the artwork, like Ah Min and the fishing uncle helping to build my net. I like to foreground these relationships, because the artist's role has changed somewhat. The artist is not highlighted as the main person who is creating the work. This process puts forward the locals' contributions to the artistic outcome.



Hans and Matthew busy at work in the yard of the residency house. They were working on making mock-ups to show their ideas at an upcoming review, marking the end of the first week. Photo courtesy of Wong Zi Hao.

10 June 2026

Post-residency reflections via an online meeting, from various locations in Singapore

ZW: You've spent almost a month on the island. By this time, all the artworks have been completed and set up in the residency house. On 6 June, just before we left Guangzhou, there was a small opening ceremony and presentation of your works. It was attended by the HUBART team, as well as faculty and graduate students from Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts. Whilst you are settling back into Singapore, it's a good time to reflect on the process and outcome of your artworks. How was the experience for you?



Hans Chew, *Ah Min's Mobile Farm* / 《可移动式的阿敏农场》, 2026, Mixed media, including found objects, soil, agricultural crops from the island, dimensions variable. Photo courtesy of Hans Chew.

HC: Matthew and I followed Ah Min to his farms: plucking corn at 5:30am, uprooting decaying trees, planting banana saplings. Somehow, we managed to help him plant a few more trees. This helped me understand more about the process of plant growth. My biggest challenge was getting materials for my artwork. Materials were found on the island or sourced from the mainland riverbank, and transported by ferry and bicycle. In many ways, the assemblage of materials followed the rhythms of the island: taking the ferry out every morning, tying everything to the bicycle, then catching the ferry back.

My artwork is a farm-on-wheels that houses three crops—passion fruit, corn, and Chinese yam—most of which were uprooted from Ah Min's farm and repotted into the installation. Ah Min will continue to tend to this portable farm, regenerating crops seasonally based on what he grows on his farm.

Behind the scenes: Matthew performing "Breath", one of three films made for the artwork *A River Within*. Ah Min 'co-directs' the performance, ensuring that Matthew remained safe along the coastline. Photo courtesy of Matthew Goh.

MG: On the day that we returned to Guangzhou, Ah Min picked us up and drove us around on his motorised three-wheeler to hunt for filming locations. It was nice how the artwork holds memory of the making process, with Hans and Ah Min helping to frame the camera for filming, all of us under the hot sun. My artwork is a video installation. I used the huge bamboo fishing net made by the fisherman uncle, reconfigured by cutting it open so it looked like a tent.

Within the structure, three digital screens play movement explorations filmed across the island. Each film was anchored by a word. "Horizon": in a grass field, I balanced the unrolled net on my head like a large hat, slowly turning and attuning to the wind. "Breath": standing in the water at the shoreline, I created circular patterns with the net, like rowing a boat in rhythm with the river. "Threshold": I ran with the tumbling fishing net, letting it pass in and out of the camera's frame, inspired by the spiralling wind patterns in the tall grass and by the rotational movement of locals going in and out of the island. Over time, I came to see the net not as a tool but as skin: to be explored from different perspectives, inside and outside, horizontal and vertical.



Features

Project Reflections

ZW: That's a sharp insight: from the three-movement explorations that relate your body, through this porous 'skin', to your interpretations of the landscape. You have come to see the net as an extension of yourself somewhat. I also remember how you concluded your presentation to the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts students: you said that having to leave the artwork in the residency space felt like you were leaving a part of yourself behind, as if a snake was shedding its skin. And the skin remnants were to be part of the exhibition offerings, telling of your body-landscape movements to the biennale audience for the next seven months or so.



Hans Chew, *Ah Min's Mobile Farm* / 《可移动式的阿敏农场》, 2026, mixed media including found objects, soil, and agricultural crops from the island, dimensions variable. The mobile work was photographed at various locations on Pingsha Island, Foshan, Guangzhou, China. Photos courtesy of Hans Chew.



Children painting on Hans Chew's *Ah Min's Mobile Farm* / 《可移动式的阿敏农场》, 2026, on Pingsha Island, Foshan, Guangzhou, China. Photo courtesy of Hans Chew.

MG: This experience has given me inroads into my art practice. Learning from my experiences on the island, and working with very limited resources, I no longer feel so afraid of not having anything to work with. Even with nothing, there is a chance for something to be found and to grow organically. As an artist, that can be our strength: to create something from nothing.

Being on Pingsha Island made me slow down, observe more carefully, see more, hear more, and sense more. Coming back to Singapore, it's hard to have that same feeling of openness. But maybe it's for me to find those pockets of space for slowing down within this urban context.

HC: As for me, I am both worried and excited to see how the crops will grow on my mobile farm over the next seven months. In our last hours on the island, Ah Min brought his family over in the rain to see the works and it was a heartwarming moment. His children spontaneously started painting on the gates of his restaurant and on the wooden base of the portable farm with brushes I'd given them. I left the paint and brushes behind so others can continue to add to the installation freely.

ZW: As we close this conversation, I have observed that the flow from residency to exhibition is less about holding on to fixed ideas than responding to actual ground conditions. Hans' mobile farm and Matthew's porous skin-net each negotiate with these conditions in distinct ways, shaped through collaboration with local contributors and elemental forces. A takeaway is that relational attunement requires surrendering authorial control and becoming porous to place and people, working within limits, and carrying traces of the island home even as parts of yourselves remain behind. In this biennale edition centred on "flowing with the water", to reside is not to stay still, but to move with, adapt to, and be continually reshaped by the forces that sustain life. What matters, perhaps, is how one continues to flow. ■



Dr Wong Zi Hao is Senior Lecturer at the School of Fine Art, Faculty of Art & Design, at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Singapore (NAFA, UAS), where he teaches and researches at the intersection of art and design. He directs Superlative Futures, a Singapore-based collaborative examining environmental fragility across landscape, architecture, art, and design. He holds a PhD in Architecture from the National University of Singapore, focusing on creative methods of landscape representation as experimental practices of environmental care. Superlative Futures has exhibited at the Singapore Art Museum, the Listening Biennial, and ArtScience Museum, and undertaken a Design Research Fellowship with the Singapore Art Museum in 2024.

Hans Chew is a ceramic artist currently based in Singapore. He graduated with a major in ceramics from Tama Art University, Tokyo, Japan. Besides producing functional pottery for a living, he also creates objects through which he explores his own sense of self. His works often deal with themes of foreignness, discord and nostalgia. As clay is a highly tactile medium, he strongly believes that the ability to think with both hands is as equally important as the ability to conceptualise and communicate one's thoughts. Hans is a recipient of the NAC-UAS Arts Scholarship for Postgraduate Studies, and has completed a Master of Fine Arts Fine Art at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Singapore (NAFA, UAS).

Matthew Goh is an interdisciplinary movement practitioner working across moving images, site-specificity, and performance, exploring the entanglements between body and space through embodied ways of knowing. He graduated from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) with a Diploma in Dance with distinction and received the Best Graduate Award in 2013. He is a founding member of RAW Moves, a contemporary dance company in Singapore, where he has collaborated with artists from theatre, music and visual arts. Alongside his artistic practice, Matthew works with children and youth with special needs, sharing the joy of movement and creative expression through dance. Matthew was awarded the NAC-UAS Arts Scholarship for Postgraduate Studies, and is currently pursuing his Master of Fine Arts Fine Art at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Singapore (NAFA, UAS).

(From left) Matthew Goh, Dr Wong Zi Hao, and Hans Chew at the Art Field Nanhai 2026 headquarters, Pingsha Island, Foshan, Guangzhou, China. Photo courtesy of HUBART.

Shared Heritage, Performing Arts, and Youths: NAFA–UNESCO Partnership

By Joyce Teo

Most young Singaporeans see Singapore simply as an independent nation, having just marked 60 years of independence. But go back further, before 1965, before WWII, before colonial rule, and Singapore was part of the wider Riau Archipelago, alongside what is now Indonesia and Malaysia. Today's borders are the product of generations of change, but the region's history remains deeply shared.

Older Singaporeans remember the Japanese Occupation and the racial riots of early independence; most youths today know only a thriving, modern nation.

Yet look closer, and Singapore's culture, from food to language, remains deeply tied to our neighbours. That was why, when UNESCO Jakarta invited Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Singapore (NAFA, UAS) to join a programme celebrating the shared heritage of Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia, we said yes without hesitation.

The real question is: how do we help youths understand, embrace, and celebrate this shared heritage, in an age of AI and global influences where K-pop reigns supreme?



Participants learning traditional walking techniques during the *Joget* and *Inang* workshop led by Mr Norisham bin Osman, 16 May 2026, NAFA's Studio Theatre, Singapore. Photo courtesy of NAFA's School of Arts Management.

Programme Aspirations

UNESCO Jakarta initiated this programme after noting that the pandemic and other recent socio-political developments have impacted artists in the region, particularly traditional performing artists. The programme, *Embracing Shared Heritage through Performing Arts*, aims to uplift these traditional art forms through the shared heritage lens, providing artists in the region with the opportunities for co-creation, co-branding as part of ASEAN, and connection to international platforms.

To achieve these aims, UNESCO proposed a learning and development programme for young artists, incorporating webinars and in-person workshops, residencies and mentorship, and culminating in a public festival. UNESCO obtained the support of Temasek Foundation Singapore as a key partner. Then, it approached various stakeholders across the three countries for partnership and participation. From the Indonesian side, the event management company, ARS Management, was engaged to oversee the overall programme. As Indonesia is such a diverse country with 17,000 islands, the decision was made to focus on the cultural city of Yogyakarta on the main island of Java. Universities such as Gadjah Mada University, Indonesian Institute of the Arts (ISI) Yogyakarta, and private arts organisations such as Padepokan Seni Bagong Kussudiardja (PSBK) were roped in to support this initiative.

In Malaysia, universities such as Akademi Seni Budaya dan Warisan Kebangsaan (ASWARA), Sunway University, and Universiti Malaya were invited and in Singapore, NAFA, UAS was identified as an institutional partner, coordinating participation among university students and arts organisations across Singapore.

NAFA, UAS as Institutional Partner

As an institutional partner, NAFA's role included sourcing for potential artists and other stakeholders in Singapore and disseminating publicity material for the various activities, including the call for participation. In addition, we were responsible for organising the onsite training and supporting this project in terms of venue sponsorship and consultancy, providing expertise for training and mentoring in Singapore, and mobilising of our arts students.

Amassing Singapore's Youth Talents

I was honoured to be nominated as the National Facilitator for Singapore. As a strong supporter of traditional arts and the local arts scene, I was very excited to contribute to this initiative. In addition to leading the call for participation and organising the onsite training in Singapore, I was keen to find out the role and perception of traditional arts among our young artists through this process.

Besides curating the programme for the onsite training, I invited the following experts to be mentors: Prof Caren Carino, Dean, Faculty of Interdisciplinary Practices; Dr Goh Toh Chai, Head of Composition, School of Music, Faculty of Performing Arts, and Mr Norisham bin Osman, Adjunct Lecturer, Faculty of Interdisciplinary Practices.

Learning and Development Opportunities

In addition to the webinars, one held in September 2025 and another in November 2025, the highlights for the students and young artists were the onsite training sessions.

The first onsite training was held in December 2025 in Yogyakarta where young artists from Indonesia and representatives from Singapore and Malaysia met with internationally acclaimed performance artist, curator, and Artistic Director of the programme, Ms Melati Suryodarmo, and dramaturg Mr Ugoran Prasad.

Mr Iskander Abori, Digital Innovation Lead from NAFA's Faculty of Interdisciplinary Practices, was nominated to represent Singapore at this event. It was at this gathering that the focal theme of Peranakan (literally, "local-born", referring to the Straits-born) was presented. The concept of Peranakan from the Indonesian perspective was a very complex one and this led to robust discussion and dialogue on the topic. In fact, Mr Iskander discovered that he had Indonesian Peranakan roots from the discussions.

The second onsite training was organised by NAFA, UAS for Singapore artists. The two-day training was held on 15–16 May 2026. To align with the main curatorial concept, the theme for this training was *Exploring the concept of Peranakan in Modern Singapore*. This event attracted more than 50 arts students, young artists, and staff of NAFA. Members of the local arts community also attended the training.



Artistic Director Ms Melati Suryodarmo giving a welcome address at the start of the 2-day onsite training in Singapore, 15 May 2026, Studio Theatre, NAFA. Photo courtesy of School of Arts Management, NAFA.

The first day of the training focused on learning about Peranakan culture. Participants learnt about the initiatives of the Singaporean Peranakan community to promote their language and culture. Artistic Director Ms Melati shared her research on the Peranakan communities in Indonesia and the challenges they faced. This was an eye-opener for all who attended, as most people did not realise the hardships that the Peranakan community went through in Indonesia. Ms Melati raised important points about “critical engagement with history and the questioning of discrimination. To ask what it means to live together in a region where histories are shared, yet unevenly experienced.”



Participants at The Intan, a private Peranakan museum, Singapore, hosted by Baba Alvin Yapp (second from the right), 15 May 2026. Photo courtesy of School of Arts Management, NAFA.



Arts manager and administrator Dr Juliana Lim explaining the Peranakan Diaspora at The Peranakan Museum, Singapore, 15 May 2026. Photo courtesy of School of Arts Management, NAFA.

An excursion to the Peranakan Museum and The Intan, a private Peranakan museum, followed, and the day ended with a lively discussion among the participants and Dr Juliana Lim and Baba Eugene Tan on what Peranakan culture is. We learned that the concept of Peranakan was not in popular usage until the early 1960s. In the past, people of this community were simply referred to as Baba (for the men) and Nonya (for the women).

On the second day of training, the participants explored the Singaporean identity and the arts as well as how traditional arts can inform and inspire contemporary arts practices. Cultural Medallion recipient Mr T Sasitharan gave an impassioned presentation on Singaporean arts and identity; NAFA lecturer Mr Norisham bin Osman conducted a workshop on *Joget* and *Inang*, two dance forms practiced by both the Peranakan and Malay communities, where participants were given the opportunity to apply some of the dance techniques into their own movement choreography. Prof Caren Carino presented notable examples of contemporary works inspired by Peranakan culture while Dr Goh Toh Chai shared his new composition for the Singapore Symphony Orchestra which contains influences of Peranakan music. The day ended again with a dynamic dialogue on pertinent issues about traditional and contemporary arts.



Dr Juliana Lim (left) and Baba Eugene Tan (centre) with moderator Ms Joyce Teo (right) discussing issues pertaining to Peranakan culture in Singapore, 15 May 2026, Studio Theatre, NAFA, Singapore. Photo courtesy of NAFA.

At the end of the training, participants gave positive feedback on the engaging talks, discussions, workshops, and visits. Throughout the two days, many participants came up to me to express their interest in the topic of Peranakan. Some aspired to learn more about the heritage they came from but did not know much about, while others were fascinated with the culture they were engaging with. Overall, it was a successful effort in generating interest in traditional arts and culture while inspiring young artists to think about where they came from and where they are headed.

Lecturers and students from NAFA's School of Arts Management worked hard to ensure that the event was delivered smoothly, and their efforts were much appreciated by all participants.

The onsite training for Malaysia was conducted in early June, closely followed by a co-creation activity held in Penang from 8–12 June 2026.

Selection of Artists from Singapore

From the artists recommended by NAFA, seven were eventually selected by Artistic Director Ms Melati to represent Singapore. The artists are:

- Nurul Atiqah: Visual artist and NAFA Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Fine Art graduating student
- Mervin Wong: Sound artist and composer, and NAFA Diploma in Music alumnus
- Peh Jun Kai: Theatre practitioner
- Elysa Wendi: Filmmaker
- Althaea Grace Wangko: NAFA Diploma in Arts Management alumna
- Dayn Ng: Sound artist and NAFA Music alumnus
- Adly Azizi Azamin: NAFA Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Performance Making student specialising in Dance

Four artists on the list were invited to participate in the research and co-creation activity in Penang from 8 to 12 June. This activity allowed participants to explore concepts of Peranakan, Urban Memory and Performance Making in Penang, through a range of activities, including site observation; collective notetaking; image/sound gathering; informal interviews where appropriate; sensing, tasting, pacing the city; nightly internal discussions; performance composition, and/or automatic writing exercises from found material.

Participants were encouraged to look beyond

They are not expected to seek a single narrative or a unified identity; rather, they follow intersecting traces of trade, migration, ritual, food, language, fatigue, and the many rhythms of life that continually shape the city. The materials gathered are not intended as a final outcome, but as a starting point for dramaturgical, collaborative, and performative possibilities that will continue to unfold long after the journey has ended.

After this exercise, participants returned to reflect on what they had learnt and prepare for their final phase of this project. All participants were given the option to consult their assigned mentors for advice as necessary.

Residency and Festival: Looking Forward

The final phase of this project will be a two-week residency in Yogyakarta from 27 September to 8 October 2026 for all selected artists, culminating in a two-day festival on 9 and 10 October 2026. The residency will provide an opportunity for all artists to work together in co-creating the performances for the festival. Audiences can expect to see some provocative performances.

As the Artistic Director noted in her curatorial concept paper:

This is not a project about celebrating diversity in its most comfortable form. It is about remaining with its tensions. About recognising that coexistence is not [a] given, but continuously negotiated through conflict, care, and imagination.

Performance here becomes a site of relation. A space where different temporalities, bodies, and histories intersect. Where meaning is not fixed but emerges through encounter. Where audiences are not passive recipients, but participants in a field of attention.

Ms Melati's curatorial concept challenges the young artists and audiences to look beyond the comfortable and understand that coexistence cannot be taken for granted.



Participants learning to incorporate traditional dance movements in a contemporary movement piece during Mr Norisham bin Osman's *Joget* and *Inang* workshop, 16 May 2026, Studio Theatre, NAFA, Singapore. Photo courtesy of School of Arts Management, NAFA.

Reflections

As we work towards the final phase of this programme, I must say that it was not always smooth sailing. Multilateral projects often come with challenges such as cultural differences and differences in the way the arts are managed in different communities. However, we have made new friends along the way and learnt how to navigate the arts from different perspectives.

For me, it was fulfilling to see our students and young artists learning more about themselves and the world around them through their participation. Based on what I have observed, our young artists are open to various traditional art forms and are willing to learn and apply them to their contemporary works. Presenting traditional art forms and the issues that are attached to them in a way that relates to what they see and experience daily is one way of engaging our youth.

As some of the presenters pointed out over the two days of training: young artists must make the effort to know themselves. They need to dig deep, and ask difficult questions, to understand what they stand for and what they believe in. That is when authentic work will be produced.

NAFA's support of this UNESCO programme sends a strong message about our commitment to champion Southeast Asian arts and support the work of Southeast Asian artists. We hope that with the support of all stakeholders, from UNESCO and partner Temasek Foundation to our local arts community, this programme can be sustained and grown into an annual event that will make its mark on the regional arts scene. ■



Arts manager and administrator Dr Juliana Lim explaining the subtle motifs in Peranakan furniture at The Peranakan Museum, Singapore, 15 May 2026. Photo courtesy of School of Arts Management, NAFA.



Joyce Teo is currently Associate Dean of the School of Arts Management at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Singapore (NAFA, UAS). She has over 30 years of experience in arts management, both as a practitioner and educator. Joyce is also a passionate musician, composer, researcher, and ethnomusicologist, best known for her efforts in developing appreciation for gamelan and Asian music in Singapore and abroad. Joyce has composed and performed at various local and international festivals. She is an adjudicator for the Ministry of Education's annual Singapore Youth Festival and external assessor (music) for the National Arts Council. She is also the lecturer-in-charge of NAFA's Gamelan CCA group.

Joyce Teo outside the Peranakan Museum, Singapore, 15 May 2026. Photo courtesy of NAFA.



Work by Roxy Burrage, 2026, Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London, London. Photo courtesy of Mitsi Moulson.

Chairing Meetings for Global Collaboration: Principles for Effective Facilitation

By Dr Charlotte Bonham-Carter

A king's throne is the embodiment of a concentration of wealth and power. A bishop's cathedra symbolises an authority to teach and govern. And the professor's chair, which was an elevated seat in medieval universities, was a physical manifestation of the intellectual distance between the master and the student. Over time, rather than referring to a physical object, the term 'chair' came to be used as a shorthand for the person occupying a special seat of authority, power, or rank in the context of a meeting, council, or assembly.

As Head of International Partnerships at Camberwell, Chelsea, and Wimbledon Colleges of Arts, University of the Arts London, I regularly attend, participate in, and chair meetings. Today, most 'chairs' do not have a special throne or even a cushy seat. Thankfully, many chairs, including myself, will seek to manage the meeting in a way that promotes listening, dialogue, and sharing towards an effective outcome, action, or resolution, rather than as a means of asserting absolute authority or control. As a result, the act of chairing is a complex undertaking. It requires organisation, timekeeping, and the ability to quickly extrapolate outcomes and actions from open-ended discussion, as well as being adept in the soft skills of reading a room, managing difficult dynamics, and creating a comfortable space in which all participants feel their views can be shared and heard.

Dr Charlotte Bonham-Carter (third from left) conducting a workshop for NAFA staff and faculty, 22 January 2026, Campus 1 Boardroom, NAFA, Singapore. Photo courtesy of NAFA.



In the context of global engagement, the role of the chair may be even more complex because the meetings will often involve partners and colleagues working in different time zones and within an entirely different set of cultural norms and conventions. Under these conditions, even small talk can falter—for example, how many times have I opened a meeting with a big sip of tea and a good morning greeting, only to remember that it's 6 pm and the end of the day for half the people in the virtual space. So, what have I learnt from all my years of participating in, and chairing, meetings in a global engagement environment?

First, and most importantly, preparation is key. There are many different types of meetings that exist on a sliding scale of formality. The more formal meetings will involve a notetaker and a written agenda that is shared and circulated in advance. At the other end of the scale, the meeting may have just a title and a list of invitees. No matter the formality, as the chair of a meeting, I always write down a list of things that need to be discussed and place them in a logical order. If an agenda hasn't been circulated in advance, it's a good idea to briefly run through the list at the start of the meeting and check if anyone else has anything to add. This gives everyone a sense of order and an appreciation of what needs to be covered in the time that is available. I respect everyone's time (it is the nature of universities that most people working within them are incredibly busy managing outsized workloads, so time is precious). I also respect my own time, and entering the meeting with a clear set of objectives can really help to ensure that the meeting is efficient and covers what it needs to. Wasted time is a huge source of frustration for everyone.

My second key principle for chairing is to remember that curiosity and active listening are more important than anything else. It is the role of the chair to ensure the conversation is productive and the objectives are met; and, most often, this means listening, recapping, checking, and perhaps, proactively asking relevant players in the space to add to the discussion. The chair needs to ensure that the right voices have shared views to add insight, resolution, or at least, further actions against the talking point. I never presume that the most loquacious or senior attendees offer the most useful insights, and I think it's a good idea to seek someone's view if you consider it valuable. Working internationally means navigating many potential power dynamics; for example, one shared space may include high-income and lower-income countries, large and small institutions, native and non-native English speakers, and senior and junior colleagues. An effective chair will balance these asymmetries by encouraging or creating space for participation when that is needed. For example, if an issue impacts both sides of two different camps, be sure to gather input from both camps. In the context of universities, it can be particularly important to hear from colleagues 'on the ground', who are directly engaging with students or systems, even if they are not the most senior attendees in the meeting.

This leads to a third and important principle of facilitation: access and equity. It is the responsibility of the chair to consider whether any members of the group are facing barriers to their full participation in the meeting. Is it possible to remove these barriers? Sometimes the format of the meeting itself can be an inclusive or exclusive factor. Is the meeting set at an awkward time of day for people with caring responsibilities? Is the in-person format difficult for someone with mobility issues? Is the meeting regularly scheduled on a day of religious observance for some communities? It is important to think about what can be done to ensure that everyone can participate in the meeting as fully as possible, or to offer different formats to accommodate diverse needs.

Despite all good intentions, the format of the meeting is a regular source of frustration for most modern workers. The relatively uncontested assumption that meetings are important and inevitable should not belie the many grievances that they elicit. Meetings are too long and sometimes too short. They do not have the right people in the room, or they have too many or too few people in the room. They don't always cover the right content. They are too frequent and also not frequent enough. They are not appropriate when an email might have sufficed, and equally, they are longed for when infinite email chains have failed to resolve a matter. They are online when they should have been in person, or vice versa. They are not productive, not effective, and sometimes, not engaging. Meetings are very likely here to stay but they are imperfect in many ways.

As chair of a meeting, it is not uncommon to uncover discontent, and to find oneself as the arbiter of dissent. Often disagreements that surface in meetings are really the tip of the iceberg of wider institutional polemics. Of course, not everything can be resolved in a meeting, but it is important to acknowledge disagreement as the confrontation of two (usually) valid and conflicting viewpoints. Surprisingly, just naming disagreement can sometimes help to defuse tension in a meeting space and turn a clash between two individuals into an operational riddle for all attendees to resolve.

If a fair resolution on the spot is not possible, it is useful to outline what further information needs to be gathered in order to move forward with a course of action. As chair, outlining the complexity of decision-making in a factual sense can help all attendees to understand how actions are determined. Like preparation and accessibility, I believe, offering transparency on decision-making, particularly in partnerships, is important.

Fundamentally, chairing meetings in the context of global engagement is not only an exercise in process and governance but also an integral part of relationship building. By respecting and adapting to different needs, and cultural and institutional norms, whilst offering a safe and ordered space, where individual perspectives can be heard and considered together, the meeting provides an important space to support the work of the partnership. By preparing in advance, ensuring that the meeting is accessible to all and bringing a clear and transparent process to decision-making, trust is earned and collaborations can thrive—which, in my experience, is the shared outcome we are all aiming for. ■

Dr Charlotte Bonham-Carter conducting a workshop for NAFA MFA Fine Art students on cultural policy, 26 January 2026, NAFA, Singapore. Photo courtesy of NAFA.



Dr Charlotte Bonham-Carter is the Head of International Partnerships at Camberwell, Chelsea, and Wimbledon Colleges of Arts, University of the Arts London (UAL), and has been a Programme Director and a Course Leader at Central Saint Martins, UAL. Previously, Bonham-Carter held curatorial positions at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Barbican Art Gallery, Institute for Contemporary Arts (ICA), and Art on the Underground. She is the author of several books on contemporary art and cultural policy, and holds a PhD in Cultural Policy and Management from City University, London.

Visiting Students

On 25 January, 27 students from School of Young Talent's Junior Dance and Chinese Dance participated in an exchange programme with visiting students and teachers of **Shanxi Province Chinese Dance Association**, Shanxi, China.

On 19 and 20 February, Faculty of Interdisciplinary Practices hosted 2 staff and 6 students from Faculty of Creative Arts and Industries, **Waipapa Taumata Rau (University of Auckland)**, New Zealand, for academic exchange. The visiting students took part in Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Performance Making classes and were hosted by NAFA students for lunch.

UAL students on Student Mobility trip (20–24 Apr) reuniting with NAFA students who completed their International Placement at UAL (Jan–Feb), 2026, outside V Hotel. Photo courtesy of NAFA.



From 13 to 16 April, School of Music hosted a delegation from **Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts (HKAPA)** consisting of Prof Nancy Yuen (Head of Vocal Studies), Prof Hsu Wei-en (Répétiteur), and students. This visit culminated in a joint performance on 16 April featuring students from both HKAPA and NAFA.

Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts (HKAPA) students and NAFA's School of Music students performing at School of Music's Concert Series: Opera Carnival, 2026, Lee Foundation Theatre, NAFA. Photo courtesy of School of Music, NAFA.

From 20 to 24 April, the Global Engagement team and Mr Tay Siang Hwee (Programme Lead, Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Design Practice) hosted 17 **University of the Arts London (UAL)** students, 2 faculty, and 1 staff for the fourth UAL Student Mobility programme. Activities included a campus tour, student networking, a Southeast Asia workshop, visits to cultural sites and exhibitions, and creative sharing. Students were selected based on Widening Participation criteria, including financial need, reflecting NAFA's commitment to supporting underrepresented communities.

Visiting Delegations

On 11 January, Dr Poom Prommachart, Head of Junior Music, hosted Prof Vanessa Latarche, Head of Keyboard at the **Royal College of Music**. The two explored the possibility of inviting Prof Latarche to host masterclasses for piano students of Junior Music, establishing a framework for artistic mentorship and cross-institutional learning in keyboard education.

From 22 to 27 January, NAFA hosted Dr Charlotte Bonham-Carter (Head, International Partnerships) from Camberwell, Chelsea, and Wimbledon Colleges of Art, **University of the Arts London (CCW, UAL)** for the 4th annual Quality Visit. Other than key meetings on the institutional collaboration and with programme leads, and observing NAFA Open House activities, Dr Bonham-Carter also delivered a workshop for Master of Fine Arts students, faculty, and staff on cultural policy.

On 23 January, the Global Engagement team hosted a **Newcastle University** delegation coordinated by University of the Arts Singapore (UAS). The delegation included Prof Nigel Harkness (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Prof Dennis Wong (Regional Provost and Group CEO, East and Southeast Asia), Prof Jonathan Galloway (Provost and CEO, Newcastle University in Singapore), and Dr Duncan Rayner (Chief Operating Officer, Newcastle University in Singapore). Key discussion points were student and faculty mobility; collaborative learning, teaching, research, project, and collaboration in policy engagement with creative industries. After the visit, both UAS alliance members agreed to pursue an MOU and Student Exchange Agreement coordinated by UAS.

Visiting Delegations

On 23 January, Faculty of Art and Design signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with **Sanjo City University**, Japan. Before this signing visit, NAFA hosted an exhibition by Tsubame-Sanjo in our Ngee Ann Kongsi Galleries in 2021. Following this exhibition, Sabrina Long (Dean, Faculty of Art & Design) and Ms Xin Xiaochang (Head, Special Projects Unit) were invited to meet with Sanjo City University's President Mr Shahriar Ahmed and Mayor Ryo Takizawa as facilitated by Ms Masayo Ave (Visiting Lecturer, Sanjo City University) in October 2025. This MOU established a framework for international collaboration and focused on academic exchange, and cross-cultural learning in art and design.

On 23 April, a **University of the Arts London** (UAL) delegation comprising Prof Karen Stanton (Vice-Chancellor), Prof Rathna Ramanathan (Provost of Central Saint Martins, and Exec Dean for Global Affairs), and Ms Joanna Brayton (Chief of Staff to the Vice-Chancellor), visited NAFA and LASALLE College of the Arts for a joint sharing session, further strengthening ongoing dialogues and collaborations between University of the Arts Singapore (UAS) alliance members and UAL. The post-discussion campus tours took the delegates through studios, galleries, and graduate showcases, offering insights into the breadth of artistic practice, pedagogical approaches, and student achievement across both institutions.

On 7 May, the Global Engagement team, along with Prof Chong Keng Hua (Provost & Vice President, Academic), LASALLE, and UAS colleagues hosted a delegation from **Bhutan's Ministry of Education and Skills Development**. The delegation learned about LASALLE and NAFA's academic models and interdisciplinary learning, followed by campus tours. The visit concluded with a shared commitment to future collaboration, ranging from knowledge exchange to capacity building.



Representatives from Uzbekistan's Ministry of Culture with colleagues from NAFA, University of the Arts Singapore (UAS), and LASALLE College of the Arts during a meeting on creative talent development and capacity building, 13 May 2026, National Design Centre. Photo courtesy of UAS.

On 13 May, the Global Engagement team hosted **Uzbekistan's Ministry of Culture**, with UAS and LASALLE colleagues. Discussions included how programmes in performing arts, design, and animation could support Uzbekistan's efforts in creative talent development and capacity building.

On 23 May, the NAFA Cultural Policy Lab hosted a delegation comprising 10 international dramaturgs and researchers who were in Singapore for **International Society of Performing Arts Congress**. The delegation, which included delegates from Czechia, Indonesia, Lithuania, Slovenija, and Thailand, learnt more about NAFA's research foci, followed by a lively discussion on cultural policy in Singapore and common trends and challenges faced.

NAFA hosted formal and informal visits by various other international delegations:

- **Tamagawa University, Japan**
- **Central Conservatory of Music, China**
- **Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), Australia**

Overseas Learning Experiences

36 students across School of Music went on their International Placement (IP) to **Royal College of Music** from January to February.

Second-year Diploma in Arts Management students went on a London study trip from 27 January to 4 February. Led by Ms Zhang Shanshan (Senior Lecturer, School of Arts Management), the students learned various aspects of arts management by visiting key art venues, attending talks, and participating in workshops.

6 students from NAFA's Faculty of Art & Design received scholarships from **Beijing Normal University** (BNU) to attend BNU School of Future Design Winter Programme 2026 from 10 to 17 January in Zhuhai and Shenzhen.

University of the Arts London received 160 NAFA students from three Bachelor of Arts (Hons) programmes—Design Practice, Fine Art and Performance Making—for international placement between January and April.

School of Arts Management student and NAFA Talent Development Programme (NTDP) enrollee Megan Tee was selected as an ambassador for the Singapore Pavilion at the **Venice Biennale** 2026. She went through a competitive selection process involving students from tertiary institutions in Singapore and was attached to the Pavilion from June to July.

FOAD diploma students undertook Overseas Immersion Programmes (OIPs) in June across three Asian destinations:

- Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia (24 students, 1–14 Jun): participated in the inaugural Southeast Asian Arts Regional Project (SRP), examining the interrelationships between spirituality, material practices, and community-based art forms.
- Xiamen, Fujian, China (24 students, 1–21 Jun): visited Yunshuiyao Ancient Town and the iconic Fujian Tulou, gaining firsthand insights into Fujian's rich heritage, history, and unique architectural traditions.
- Shanghai, China (29 students, 1–21 Jun): engaged in hands-on workshops in porcelain restoration, fused coloured glass design, and traditional Chinese stone rubbing, alongside lectures on contemporary art and design, and visits to cultural landmarks including Shanghai Museum, The Bund, Tianzifang, and M50 Creative Park.

Faculty of Art & Design students during their Overseas Immersion Programme (OIP) at Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts, Shanghai, China, June 2026. Photo courtesy of Faculty of Art & Design, NAFA.



NAFA Delegations

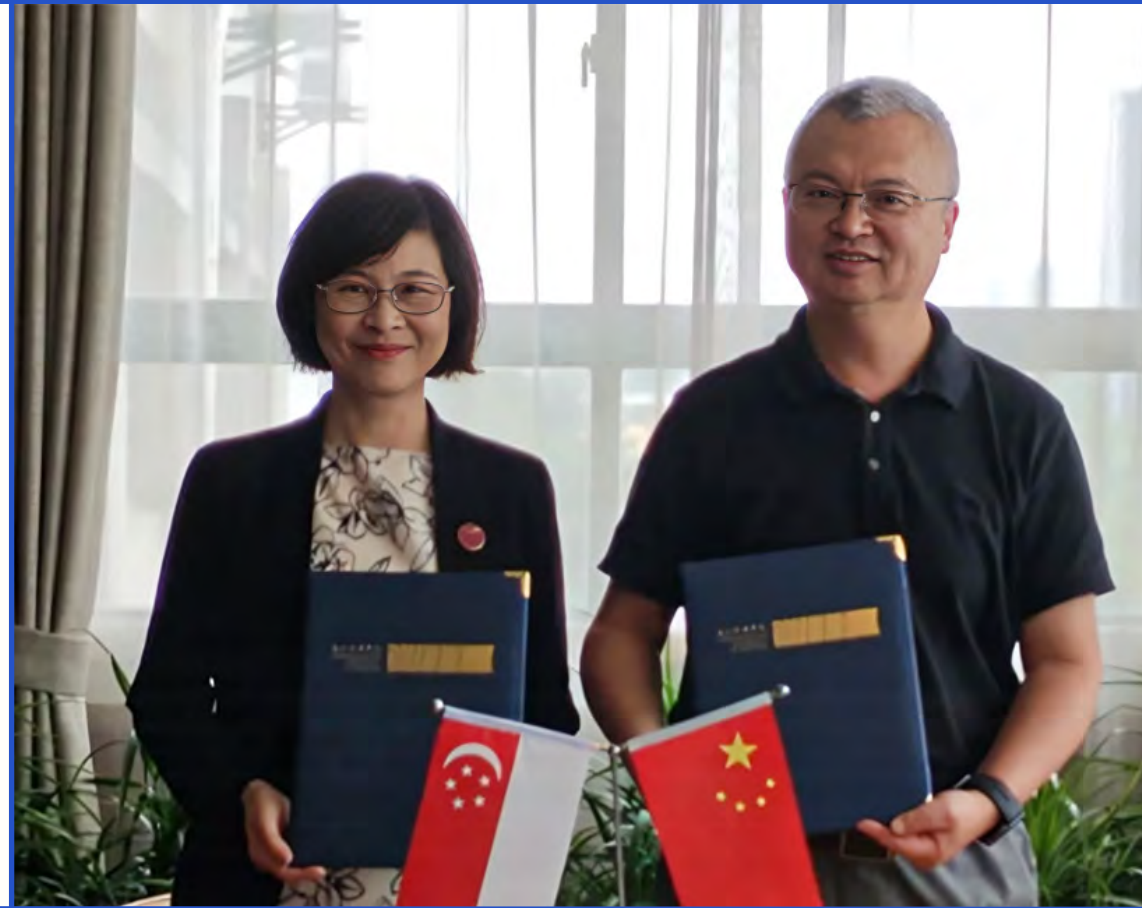
Ms Sabrina Long (Dean, Faculty of Art & Design) and Mr Fadzli Jamil (Assoc Dean, School of 3D Design) visited **King Mongkut's University of Technology** (KMUTT) from 5 to 7 February and attended Bangkok Design Week.

Dr Bridget Tracy Tan (Senior Director, Institute of Southeast Asian Arts & Art Galleries), Ms Sabrina Long (Dean, Faculty of Art and Design), Mr Fadzli Jamil (Assoc Dean, School of 3D Design), and Mr Levi Lim Kwang Boon (Assoc Dean, School of Design and Media) visited **Taylor's University**, Malaysia, on 26 February to kickstart discussions on academic exchanges.

Prof Chong Keng Hua, Mr Levi Lim, and Ms Million So visited **Chengdu University** (CU) hosted by the **China-ASEAN College of Arts** from 19 to 21 March. Amongst the engagement activities were Prof Chong's lecture on future of aesthetics, Mr Lim's interactive design workshop for Chengdu University undergraduate students, and Ms So's speech on international education at a forum with CU professors and students.

The Institute of Southeast Asian Arts & Art Galleries (ISEAA&AG) and Faculty of Art & Design (FOAD) travelled to **Institut Teknologi Bandung** (ITB), from 28 April to 1 May to pioneer the co-creation module under the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Biophilic Design (BABD) programme. The visit resulted in planning a collaborative module involving eight students and one faculty member from BABD, who will work with students from the Faculty of Fine Art (FSRD) and the School of Architecture, Planning and Policy Development (SAPPK) at ITB.

NAFA Delegations



Mrs Tan-Soh Wai Lan (President, NAFA, & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, UAS) and Ms Million So (Enterprise Developer) visited Shanghai and Hangzhou from 21 to 26 June to deepen partnerships across the arts, education and creative industries. Engagements included visits to Donghua University, Shanghai Vancouver Film School, Zhejiang University, and Communication University of Zhejiang, where an MOU was signed to advance faculty and student exchange. The delegation also met with representatives of Shanghai Fashion Week, Alibaba, and Manycore Tech, and Mrs Tan-Soh was interviewed for a live Shanghai TV news broadcast. The visit strengthened ties with alumni and partners while opening new opportunities for collaboration in China.

Mrs Tan-Soh Wai Lan (President, NAFA, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, UAS) and Prof Yao Zheng with the signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at Communications University of Zhejiang, Hangzhou, China, June 2026. Photo courtesy of Marketing & Communications Office, NAFA.

Key Participations

Dr Bridget Tracy Tan (Senior Director, Institute of Southeast Asian Arts & Art Galleries) was invited as a programme lecturer for two areas of research—Art Education in Southeast Asia and Contemporary Art of Southeast Asia—by **Curious Academy** and **School of Contemporary Art (SoCA) Myanmar** in collaboration with **Goethe Institut Yangon** from December 2025 to March 2026.

Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Contemporary Chinese Theatres alumna Zhao Jiayi led *The Jizhou Mystery* 《蓟州疑云》 presented in Beijing on 18 January. The Mandarin stage production explored themes of truth, mortality, and human complexity through a suspense-driven narrative rooted in Chinese theatrical storytelling traditions.

Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Contemporary Chinese Theatres alumna Zhao Jiayi in *The Jizhou Mystery* 《蓟州疑云》, 18 January 2026, Beijing, China. Photo courtesy of School of Theatre, NAFA.



School of Dance students collaborated with **The Presence Project**, Singapore, and students from **Trinity Laban Conservatoire** (United Kingdom) in an interdisciplinary performance for **Co-Lab Festival 2026** held at **Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance**, United Kingdom from 9 to 20 February.



Aung Myat Htay, *My Sound is Your Sound*, installation with 12 bamboo marimbas in circular structure, Public Art Festival "My Yangon My Home", Yangon, Myanmar, 2017. Aung Myat Htay is the lead agent of the School of Contemporary Art (SoCA) Myanmar, the institution that hosted Dr Bridget Tracy Tan's lecture programme from December 2025 to March 2026, and which will be joining SEArch Alliance this year. Photo courtesy of Institute of Southeast Asian Arts & Art Galleries, NAFA.

Key Participations



East 15 Acting School MFA International Acting students in *Dive* directed by Ms Sara Brodie (Theatre Director and Movement Choreographer), written by Dr Laura Hayes, Bridewell Theatre, London, England, 2026. Photo courtesy of East 15 Acting School.

Dr Laura Hayes' (Assoc Dean, Practice Research) play *Dive*, first staged by Wild Rice in 2024, was restaged in London during 12-14 February at the Bridewell Theatre, performed by students from **East 15's** Master of Fine Arts in Acting (International) course.

Mr Yong Lye Yong (Vice President, Corporate Services), Ms Hazel Chan (Director, Strategic Development & Global Engagement Division), and Mr Michael Lee (Global Engagement Lead) attended the **Asia-Pacific Association for International Education (APAIE)** Conference 2026 hosted by **The Chinese University of Hong Kong** from 23 to 27 February. During the conference, Ms Chan delivered a presentation titled "Bridging cultures through art: Southeast Asian perspectives in global education," and the delegation attended the broader conference programme. The delegation also conducted courtesy calls with existing partners including City University of Hong Kong, University of the Arts London, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, and Zuni Icosahedron, held exploratory meetings with potential partners, and met with Hong Kong-based NAFA alumni.

Dr Hoe Su Fern (Principal Research Fellow, NAFA Cultural Policy Lab) held a regional workshop to validate the new ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Work Plan for Culture and Arts (2026-2035) at the **ASEAN** headquarters in Jakarta, Indonesia on 3 March. Workshop participants included at least 2 senior government officials from the 11 ASEAN Member States, Chair of ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Culture and Arts (SOMCA), Ministry of Creative Economy Indonesia, representatives from the Korea Foundation, and the ASEAN Secretariat.

Assoc Prof Nellie Seng (Assoc Dean, School of Music), Prof Sunny Wong (Head, Chinese Instrumental Studies), and Ms Joyce Lee Tung (Adjunct Lecturer, School of Music) presented the world premiere of *Unsettled Stillness* by Mr Americ Goh (Programme Lead, Diploma in Music Teaching) at the 15th **International Chamber Music Festival** hosted by the **Central Conservatory of Music (CCOM)** in Beijing on 19 March. Assoc Prof Seng and Prof Wong also conducted piano and erhu masterclasses for CCOM students as part of the festival's educational programme.

Left to right: Prof Sunny Wong (Head, Chinese Instrumental Studies), Assoc Prof Nellie Seng (Assoc Dean, School of Music), and Ms Joyce Lee Tung (Adjunct Lecturer, School of Music) premiering *Unsettled Stillness* by Mr Americ Goh (Programme Lead, Diploma in Music Teaching) at the 15th International Chamber Music Festival at the Central Conservatory of Music (CCOM), Beijing, 2026. Photo courtesy of School of Music, NAFA.

As noted in our previous issue, Mr Michael Lee's (Global Engagement Lead) project "Spaces for Making: Sites, Conditions & Resources of Sustainable Production" culminated in a sharing on the "Creative Connections: A Korea–Singapore Exchange Project" on 24 February at 42 Waterloo Street and online. The hybrid event brought together the four Singapore participants to share insights from their field research in South Korea, under an initiative by the **National Arts Council (NAC)** Singapore and **Korean Foundation for International Cultural Exchange (KOFICE)**, which marked the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Singapore and South Korea.



Key Participations

Dr Hoe Su Fern (Principal Research Fellow, NAFA Cultural Policy Lab) held a regional workshop on Cultural Relations in Southeast Asia, on 14 and 15 May as part of the **Kuala Lumpur Arts Festival**. Participants included producers from Southeast Asia, such as Bangkok International Performing Arts Meeting, Mekong Cultural Hub, Yayasan Kelola and Five Arts Centre.

From 10 to 13 June, Dr Bridget Tracy Tan (Senior Director, Institute of Southeast Asian Arts & Art Galleries) and Ms Priscilla Leong (Manager, ISEAA&AG) were invited to the **Mekong Cultural Hub x Art & Society Hubs Asia** symposium: *Future Learning Systems—Education, Art and Social Action in Asia* in Taipei. Dr Tan served as a speaker and the moderator for the session "Regional Narratives, Needs and Opportunities," which explored the values and resources specific to Southeast Asia as a learning and practice network, with extensions to Centre for Lifelong Education (CLE) partnership development.

Assoc Prof Joyce Koh (Assoc Dean, School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Assoc Dean, Technology and Sustainability Research) presented the world premiere of *String Upon String*, performed by the German ensemble Kaleidoskop at the finale concert of **Maerz Musik** 2026, Berlin’s festival for contemporary and experimental music, on 29 March at **Haus der Berliner Festspiele**, Berlin, Germany.

Dr Bridget Tracy Tan (Senior Director, Institute of Southeast Asian Arts & Art Galleries) was appointed to the SICTAS (**Silpakorn University International Conference in Total Art and Science**) 2026 Academic Committee as an institutional panel speaker at the plenary dialogue "Unbounded Creativity: Global Perspectives and New Territories in Art and Design" at the conference held from 16 to 21 June at **Bangkok Art and Culture Centre** (BACC). She also presented a paper at the conference's research-track sessions. Dr Tan, who also serves as the ISEAA SEArch (Southeast Asian Arts Alliance) secretariat, attended the conference to network with Southeast Asian partners, with LASALLE College of the Arts as co-host institutional partner.

Residency Artists of NAFA Studios @ Cité internationale des arts in Paris

	Open Call	In partnership with UOB
Jan–Feb 2026	Andrée Weschler	Casey Tan
Mar–Apr 2026	Yong Wee Loon	Nik Mohd Shazmie Bin Nik Shairozi
May–Jun 2026	Chen Yanyun	Nguyen Anh Vu

Exhibitions & Performances

Big Fish Lab Theatre from Johor Bahru, Malaysia, performed *Room* on 9 January at NAFA's Black Box Theatre as part of our Artist-in-Residence programme. Ms Zhao Na (Programme Lead, Diploma in Theatre, Mandarin Drama) held a workshop for the participating students, as well as visiting performers and artists as part of the exchange.



Students and artists performing *Room* directed by Ms Xu Xu (Founder, Big Fish Lab Theatre) on 9 January 2026, Black Box Theatre, NAFA. Photo courtesy of Big Fish Lab Theatre.

School of Dance presented *Crossings 2026* on 1 and 2 May, with three pieces featuring guest choreography by Mr **Kuik Swee Boon** (T.H.E Dance Company Singapore) for *re:intertwining*, Ms **Tsai Hsi Hung** (Taiwan and United States-based) for *Brustroke*, and Mr **Kenny Wing Tao Ho** (United Kingdom-based) for *Flowers of Ruin*.

Co-organised by **National Taiwan University of Arts' College of Fine Arts** and NAFA's School of Fine Art, *Between Monsoons: A Slice of Contemporary Art* was exhibited from 7 March to 5 April. This exhibition, held at NAFA's Ngee Ann Kongsi Galleries 1 & 2, explored how monsoon winds and climatic conditions shape artistic practice in Taiwan, by gathering sixteen artists from National Taiwan University of Arts and School of Fine Art across generations. Part of an exchange programme initiated in 2025, the exhibition created a shared space for Taiwan and Singapore, both within the monsoon belt, to encounter and circulate their vibrant artistic cultures.



School of Dance students performing *Flowers of Ruin*, choreographed by Mr Kenny Wing Tao Ho, at Lee Foundation Theatre, NAFA, Singapore, 2026. Photo courtesy of Bernie Ng.

Co-organised by the Institute of Southeast Asian Arts & Art Galleries (ISEAA&AG) and NAFA, *Flagship Genius* featuring **Văn Miếu-Quốc Tử Giám III** was exhibited from 22 January to 8 February at the Ngee Ann Kongsi Galleries 1 & 2, in conjunction with NAFA's Open House. Drawing from the Temple of Literature as creative stimuli, the exhibition brought together interdisciplinary works by students across NAFA's schools. From 3D Design, Design & Media, Fashion Studies, Fine Art, Arts Management, Dance, Music to Theatre, the students explored themes of history, heritage and cross-cultural inquiry in Southeast Asian art. The accompanying publication, *Văn Miếu-Quốc Tử Giám III*, marks the third and final iteration of NAFA's Southeast Asian Arts Project in its current model.

Faculty of Performing Arts and Faculty of Interdisciplinary Practices performed at **Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA)**, as part of SIFA's Festival Village at the Carousel. Year 2 Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Performance Making students performed *Before Me, After You* from 22 to 24 May. Faculty of Performing Arts students performed *The Door* from 28 to 30 May.

Faculty of Performing Arts students performing *The Door* at Singapore International Festival of Arts, Esplanade Park, 2026. Photo courtesy of Vincent Ling.



Workshops & Masterclasses

On 22 January, movement artists Ms **Belinda He** (based in Singapore and France) and Mr **Baris Mihci** (based in Turkey and Italy) collaborated with School of Dance on two workshops for first-year Diploma in Dance students.

On 4 and 5 March, President and Founder of **NeuroLandscape**, Dr Angieszka Olszewska-Guizzo held a 2-day workshop for Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Biophilic Design Year 2 students. This workshop introduced students to neuro-urbanism and explored how environments influence human cognitive and emotional responses.

A 2-day masterclass led by Prof Masayo Ave (Sensory Experience Design Laboratory, **SXD.Lab**, Berlin) was held on 14 and 15 May at NAFA, with online facilitation. The session introduced young designers and artists to the link between memory and the senses through practical sensory exercises, encouraging exploration of personal experiences to inform creative work.

School of Music organised various key events with visiting artists and scholars for their students:

- 12 to 15 January: Piano masterclass by Prof Jeongwon Ham (**University of Oklahoma**)
- 27 January: Piano masterclass by world-renowned pianist and pedagogue, Mr Lee Kum Sing
- 23 February: Erhu masterclass by Ms Meng Xiaoxu from the **Affiliated Middle School of Xinghai Conservatory of Music**
- 24 and 25 February: Piano masterclass by Prof Helen Krizos (Deputy Head, Keyboard Studies, **Royal Northern College of Music**)
- 31 March: Violin and viola masterclass by Ms Addison Teng and Ms Amy Hess (both from **Fulton Chamber Players**)



A School of Music student plays the guzheng under the guidance of Ms Meng Xiaoxu (Erhu Performer, Affiliated Middle School of Xinghai Conservatory of Music) during her masterclass at NAFA, 23 February 2026. Photo courtesy of School of Music, NAFA.

On 28 January, veteran Hong Kong choreographer Ms **Mui Cheuk Yin** and renowned lighting designer Mr **Lee Chi Wai** held a creativity workshop on movement and lighting for students from School of Dance and School of Theatre. This workshop was part of Esplanade's **Huayi Festival**.

From 23 to 25 March, Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Contemporary Chinese Theatres (BACCT) students took part in a masterclass workshop by Hong Kong director, actor, and educator, Ms **Olivia Yan**. The students engaged with Ms Yan's signature "Bad Acting" methodology: a rigorous approach to dismantling hollow performance habits and unlocking

An artist talk on music, creativity, and communication featuring Mr **Gardika Gigih** (Indonesia-based pianist and composer), Mr **Makoto Nomura** (Japan-based multi-instrumentalist), and Dr **Jane Bentley** (Scotland-based musician) was held online on 12 June. The session explored how artistic practice engages with diverse communities, including elders with dementia, hospital patients, prisoners, and other marginalised groups. The artists shared their experiences of community-based work while students engaged in dialogue about approaches to working with people of varied abilities and backgrounds.

Funded by **Canada National Council**, researchers from **University of Alberta** (UAlberta) collaborated with Faculty of Performing Arts, while Prof Lin Snelling (Coordinator, MFA Theatre Practice, UAlberta) conducted an improvisation workshop for School of Dance on 30 January.

An artist talk and masterclass by Dr **Wee Hong Ling** (New York-based ceramicist) was held at NAFA from 7 to 9 May. The artist talk introduced Dr Wee's ceramics practice, focusing on her artistic ideas and the link between function and sculpture. The 2.5-day masterclass included demonstrations, hands-on practice, and feedback sessions, helping participants develop skills in form, design, and surface finishing for exhibition-quality work.

Research Café series by the Research Division

Ms **Salty Ng Xi Jie** (2025 Arts Research Scholar-in-Residence, NAFA) presented “Dreams on the Fringe: Perspectives on the State of Social Practice Art in Singapore” on 15 January.

Korea-born choreographer and practice-based PhD candidate at **Transart Institute/Liverpool John Moores University**, Ms He Jin Jang, presented “Rehearsing What Does Not Arrive: Rehearsal as Knowledge, Ritual, and Relation” on 4 February.

As part of the UCLA–NAFA Seminar Series, Prof Supeena Adler (Ethnomusicology, **University of California**, Los Angeles) presented “Fostering Belonging and Resilience: Thai Performing Arts and Community Engagement in Southern California” on 26 February.

Dr Laura Hayes (Assoc Dean, Practice Research) and Dr Richard Allen (Course Leader, Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Theatre and Performance Design, Wimbledon College of Arts, **University of the Arts London**) presented “In conversation: Laura Hayes and Richard Allen: Theatre is a Thing” on 10 March. They previously presented this at Chelsea College of Arts, University of the

Moderated by Prof Kwok Kian Woon (Vice-Chancellor, University of the Arts Singapore), Prof Balázs Gulyás (Neuroscientist, and President of the **Hungarian Research Network**) and Prof László Király (pediatric cardiothoracic surgeon, **National University of Singapore**) presented on “Neuroscience and Artistic Creativity: A Conversation on the Brain and the Arts” on 19 March.

On 8 April, 5 third-year degree NAFA students, under the guidance of Dr Lee Ming-Yen (Ethnomusicologist of Chinese and Southeast Asian music, and Senior Lecturer, School of Music), presented their research exploring how music and performance intersect with cultural identity, heritage, and belonging across Southeast and East Asia. Their papers were subsequently presented at the **ICTMD (International Council for Traditions of Music and Dance) World Conference** in Thailand and Taiwan from 2 to 8 July.

- Cheong Ying Ning (Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Instrumental & Vocal Teaching student), “Wayang Kulit Kelantan: Negotiating Heritage and Religion”
- Lim Sze Jing (Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Instrumental & Vocal Teaching student), “The Purple Symphony and Beyond: Music, Disability, and the Multicultural Identity in Singapore”
- Ng Jing Han (Bachelor of Music (Honours) student), “Migration and Musical Transformation: Sin Sai Hong and the development of Singapore’s Hokkien Opera Soundscape”
- Marion Lee Si Hui (Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Instrumental & Vocal Teaching student), “Anita Mui’s Musical Activism: Blending Philanthropy and Cultural Resilience in Post-1997 Hong Kong”
- Tan You Wei (Bachelor of Music (Honours) student), “Performing the Nation: National Day Concerts by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra”

A virtual sharing session with colleagues from **Bath Spa University’s** (BSU) Art Research Centre and School of Design, explored practice-based research across art, design, film, and media on 22 April. Speakers shared insights into their interdisciplinary approaches to art-making as research, with practical tips for navigating between artistic and scholarly domains. The presenters were Dr Conor Wilson (Research Lead for Art, School of Art, Film and Media, BSU), Dr Young In Hong (Reader in Performance and Textiles, School of Art, Film and Media, BSU), Prof Tim Vyner (Research Excellence Framework Lead and Prof of Illustration, School of Design, BSU), and Prof James Newman (Research Prof, School of Design, BSU), moderated by Assoc Prof Michael Tan (Dean, Research & Knowledge Exchange, NAFA).

Ng Jing Han (Bachelor of Music (Honours) student) presenting “Migration and Musical Transformation: Sin Sai Hong and the development of Singapore’s Hokkien Opera Soundscape” on 8 April 2026, at The Nook, NAFA. Photo courtesy of Research Division, NAFA.



Hosted Conferences & Talks

The **IDEAS Festival**, held from 27 February to 10 March, showcased the latest insights and contributions from social science and humanities researchers across universities in Singapore. NAFA faculty and staff organised 5 events showcasing how arts and creativity are powerful tools that enable people, communities, and systems to adapt and thrive amid profound technological, cultural, and societal change.

The 15th **Southeast Asia Directors of Music (SEADOM) Congress 2026** was held at Lee Foundation Theatre on 5 March. NAFA's Gamelan CCA Ensemble was led by Ms Joyce Teo (Assoc Dean, School of Arts Management) to welcome the delegates. Other performances by School of Music included a mix of traditional Chinese ensemble work, works incorporating electronics and traditional instruments, and a saxophone quartet. The congress brought together music directors, educators, and practitioners from across Southeast Asia.

NAFA's Gamelan CCA Ensemble with Ms Joyce Teo (Assoc Dean, School of Arts Management) welcoming delegates to the 15th Southeast Asia Directors of Music (SEADOM) Congress 2026, 5 March 2026, Lee Foundation Theatre foyer, NAFA, 2026. Photo courtesy of School of Music, NAFA.



(From left) Ms Om Mee Ai, Ms Ho Seok Kee, Ms Pannaphan Yodmanee, Ms Yodmanee's translator, and Ms Yim Yen Sum (UOB Painting of the Year Award-winning artists) with moderator Dr Bridget Tracy Tan (Senior Director, ISEAA&AG) at the panel discussion held in conjunction with *White Space: Unbroken Wisdom*, 18 March 2026, Lim Hak Tai Gallery, NAFA. Photo courtesy of ISEAA&AG, NAFA.

In conjunction with ***White Space: Unbroken Wisdom***, the Institute of Southeast Asian Arts and Art Galleries (ISEAA&AG) organised a panel discussion at the Lim Hak Tai Gallery on 18 March. This sharing featured 4 UOB Painting of the Year award-winning artists: Ms **Om Mee Ai** (Singapore), Ms **Ho Seok Kee** (Singapore), Ms **Pannaphan Yodmanee** (Thailand), and Ms **Yim Yen Sum** (Malaysia). Moderated by Dr Bridget Tracy Tan (Senior Director, ISEAA&AG), the artists reflected on how professional challenges and residencies became catalysts for artistic growth, while also discussing regional identity and the pressures of recognition. The dialogue highlighted how award-winning platforms open doors to a regional network of excellence and cross-border collaboration, with participants emphasising that sustained commitment to research, experimentation, and innovation remains the cornerstone of a meaningful artistic career.

Hosted Conferences & Talks

Royal Music Association (RMA) Southeast Asia Chapter held its 10th anniversary conference at Lee Foundation Theatre from 8 to 10 May. The conference brought together scholars, performers, and educators from over 20 leading conservatoires and universities in music to explore global musicology, creative pedagogies, cross-cultural expression, and music futures.

Opening address by Mr Yong Lye Yong (Vice-President, Corporate Services) at Royal Music Association (RMA) Southeast Asia Chapter 10th Anniversary conference on 8 May, Lee Foundation Theatre, NAFA. Photo courtesy of School of Music, NAFA.



New Initiatives

On 2 March, Ms Joyce Teo, Mr Iskander Abori, and the Global Engagement team met with **UNESCO Jakarta** and Ars Management staff to discuss ongoing collaborative projects under the programme *Embracing Shared Heritage through Performing Arts: Intercultural Collaboration Skills Development* across Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. One outcome was a 2-day in-person training programme held for interested young artists and students on 15 and 16 May, *Exploring the Concept of Peranakan in Modern Singapore*. This programme was organised by NAFA, UAS, in collaboration with UNESCO Jakarta in partnership with the **Temasek Foundation**. There were panel discussions, workshops, excursions to the Peranakan Museum and The Intan, talks, and breakout sessions. Following an Open Call in April, 7 young artists from Singapore were chosen by Ms Melati Suryodarmo (Artistic Director) for a 2-week residency (Sep–Oct) in Yogyakarta, culminating in a co-created work at a 2-day festival in October 2026.

Networking Session



NAFA Theatre and Dance alumni gather in Shanghai for an evening of professional exchange and reconnection, 21 June 2026, Shanghai, China. Photo courtesy of Alumni Relations Office, NAFA.

On 21 June, NAFA Theatre and Dance alumni gathered in Shanghai for an evening of meaningful conversation, professional exchange, and renewed connections. Initiated and organised by Ms Wu Xiao Dan (NAFA alumna and member of the Overseas Alumni Chapter, Shanghai, China) and Ms Zhao Na (NAFA alumna and Programme Lead, Diploma in Mandarin Drama) and supported by NAFA's Alumni Relations Office, the session brought together alumni and industry practitioners for a sharing on career development, emerging trends in the performing arts and the impact of artificial intelligence on the industry. Participants also reflected on their learning experiences and shared ideas for future curriculum development. The gathering concluded with a networking dinner, strengthening alumni bonds and reaffirming the community's shared commitment to shaping the future of the arts.

Global Accolades

Dr Poom Prommachart (Head of Junior Music) was conferred the **Christine Ip International Faculty Award** on 20 January. The inaugural award was established to support international faculty members in building their academic and artistic careers at NAFA. It serves to provide essential support, and enable recipients to focus on mentorship, creative engagement, as well as enriching student learning experience while advancing NAFA's mission in arts education.

Junior Music students aced at the **Cheer Taiwan International Music Competition** organised by Tainan Music Association and Cheer Educational Institution in Taiwan (26 Mar):

- Huang Evelyn Xiwen, 1st Prize (Primary 1 and 2 category)
- Laura Ng Yuan, 1st Prize (Primary 2 and 4 Music Major category)
- Ji Yuanjun, 1st Prize (Secondary School Music Major category)

Bachelor of Music (Hons) student Yifan Chen (guzheng) won the Excellent Play Award (优秀剧目奖) for her interdisciplinary performance *As It Was, As It Turns, As It's Fated* at the **3rd South and Southeast Asia Theatre Festival and International Symposium**, hosted by Yunnan Arts University from 25 to 30 May.



Bachelor of Music (Hons) student Yifan Chen performing *As It Was, As It Turns, As It's Fated* at the 3rd South and Southeast Asia Theatre Festival and International Symposium, May 2026, Yunnan Arts University. Photo courtesy of School of Music, NAFA.

On March 26, Junior Dance student Cheryl Tan Sze Theng won the Gold Award with scholarship under the Junior Solo National and Folklore category at the **Dance World Cup Asia Competition 2026**, as well as an invitation to the finals in July in Dublin, Ireland.

Chong Zhi Yu, NAFA Talent Development Programme (NTDP) enrollee from Diploma in Design (Furniture & Spatial), won the Bronze **A' Design Award** in the Furniture Design category for 2025 – 2026 conferred on 15 April 2026.

Diploma in Design (Object and Jewellery) programme student Annabelle Neo received a Certificate of Good Design Award from the **8th Grand Prix of Akoya Pearl Jewellery 2025**, Ise Shima, Japan. Her award-winning piece was showcased at the Pearl FALCO Singapore Gallery, OUE Downtown Gallery, in January, alongside the other Top 10 winning pieces.



Chong Zhi Yu's winning Bronze A' Design Award & Competition design *On Belay*, 2025/2026. Photo courtesy of Chong Zhi Yu.

Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) debuted in the **QS World University Rankings** by Subject 2026 and is ranked in the global top 101-150 for Art & Design; a recognition of the Academy's longstanding contribution to arts education and its distinguished place in Asia's artistic, creative and cultural landscape. As Singapore's pioneer and largest comprehensive arts institution, NAFA has nurtured over 21,000 alumni worldwide, including 16 Cultural Medallion recipients and 15 Young Artist Award recipients: the highest number of alumni conferred the nation's top arts honours among all arts institutions.

Three student teams from Diploma in Advertising, Faculty of Art & Design, were among Singapore's winners in the New Blood Awards category of the **D&AD (Design and Art Direction) Awards 2026**, with the prize-giving ceremony held on 30 June in London.

- White and Wood Pencil Winners: *Launch Pads* by Joanna Feodora, Kirani Wibowo, Sanjana Ballal, and Valerie Tan received both the White Pencil for Social Impact and a Wood Pencil. The White Pencil is a coveted special award recognising outstanding ideas that use creativity to do good in the world.
- Wood Pencil Winners: *CensARTship* by Audrey Ermengarde and Joanna Feodora; and *Overdue Pass for Wise* by Hazel Soh and Ivone Geraldine Jo.

Conference Participations

Dr Ernest Lim (Dean, Faculty of Performing Arts) was invited to speak on designing sustainable regional arts education ecosystems at the **International Seminar on Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation in Art Education**, and the **Inauguration Ceremony of South and Southeast Asian Alliance for Art Education** on 6 January, hosted by Yunnan Arts University.

Dr Lee Ming-Yen (Senior Lecturer, School of Music) presented “Southern Strings: The Development and Challenges of Traditional Chinese Music Education in Singapore” at the **Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference** in Vancouver on 14 March.

Prof Rebecca Kan (Associate Dean, Degree Studies, Faculty of Performing Arts) facilitated a workshop, “Pedagogies of Transition: Reimagining the In-Between Space of Learning in Higher Arts Education,” at the **6th Southeast Asian Conference on Education (SEACE 2026)**, Singapore Expo, 7 February 2026; drawing on her co-editorial work *Signature Pedagogies for Professions in Arts and Design* (Kan & Khoo, 2025).

Dr Hoe Su Fern (Principal Research Fellow, NAFA Cultural Policy Lab) presented “Navigating Borders: Tracing the Attributes and Variables Shaping Cultural Relations and Exchanges Between Singapore and Southeast Asia,” on 28 April, as part of the **Creative Industries Research Symposium 2026** at **Newcastle University Business School**.

Dr Matt Chiu presented his research at the 6th **International Academic Forum (IAFOR) International Conference on Arts & Humanities (IIACH) 2026** (3–7 Jan) in Hawaii on the topic, “A Silent Conflict: Guilt, Relief, and the Pacifier in Urban Parenthood” supported by the PRDF (Practice and Research Development Fund) initiative from the Research Division, NAFA.

Dr Matt Chiu (Lecturer, Faculty of Art & Design) presented two papers at the **19th International Design Conference (DESIGN) 2026** in Cavtat, Croatia on 18 to 21 May.

- “The Shape of Teamwork: Visualising Collective Design Dynamics through Synergy Bands”, in collaboration with Dr Arlindo Silva (then Assoc Prof, Singapore University of Technology and Design) and Assoc Prof Tamas Makany (Assoc Provost, Teaching and Learning Innovation, and Director, Centre for Teaching Excellence, Singapore Management University)
- “From Reliance to Release: Designing a Behaviourally Informed Pacifier through an extended Double Diamond Process”, in collaboration with Dr Emily Ng (private-practice orthodontist, Singapore)

Assoc Prof Michael Tan (Dean, Research & Knowledge Exchange) co-wrote “The arts in the prevention and management of chronic health conditions” in **The Routledge Handbook of Arts and Health** (2026). Assoc Prof Tan spoke on the same topic at the **Royal Society of Public Health Webinar** exploring the newly published volume on 18 February.

Several faculty and staff presented at the **Redesigning Pedagogy International Conference 2026**, hosted at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University Singapore, on 4 June; collectively examining how signature pedagogies in the arts and design are being reshaped in the context of generative AI:

- Ms Alicia de Silva (Programme Lead, Foundation, Office of Academic Affairs), “Pedagogies of Evocative Ambiguity in Southeast Asian Music Practice”
- Ms Peh Mei Lian (Senior Lecturer, School of Design & Media), “Pedagogies of Transition in Digital Storytelling”
- Assoc Prof Khoo (Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information, Nanyang Technological University) and Prof Rebecca Kan (Assoc Dean, Degree Studies, Faculty of Performing Arts), “Critical Reflections on Arts and Design Education”

Dr Evangeline Ching (Programme Lead, Bachelor of Education (Hons) in Instrumental & Vocal Training) presented “How learners seek, process, and act on feedback at the conservatoire: A Singapore case study” at the 2026 **SEMPRE PGR/ECR Conference** on 16 April hosted by the Centre for Music and Science (University of Cambridge) in collaboration with the Music, Mind and Brain group (Goldsmiths, University of London).

Ms Guo Yi Xian Yix (Senior Lecturer, School of Design & Media) presented and co-published “The ‘Cuteness Matrix’: Mapping Cuteness as an Affective Strategy for Purpose-Led Communication Design” at the **19th Design Research Society (DRS) Conference 2026**, held from 8 to 12 June in Edinburgh, Scotland. The paper was co-authored by Dr Mimi Nguyen (Lecturer in MA Innovation Management, Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London) and Dr David Preston (Platform Leader for Strategy & Identity, Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Graphic Communication Design, Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London).

What we missed last issue	Dr Bridget Tracy Tan (Senior Director, Institute of Southeast Asian Arts & Art Galleries) presented “Being Human: radical visual paradigms in contemporary painting and image making” at the 13th ICAPAS (International Conference for Asia Pacific Arts Studies), themed “Rethinking artistic research: new paradigm, practices and potentials”, in Yogyakarta, 8 to 9 October 2025. Prof Rebecca Kan (Associate Dean, Degree Studies, Faculty of Performing Arts) and Ms Grace Leong (PhD candidate, National University of Singapore) presented "The Scent Of Self: Dispositions In Theatre Arts And Design That Shape Identity And Transformative Learning" at the 11th SELF International Conference, themed "The Self in Context: Pathways to Flourishing, Learning and Well-being", on 19 November 2025.
Publications	Ms Park Hye Young (Deputy Assoc Dean, School of 3D Design & Programme Lead, Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Biophilic Design), Dr Emma Ferranti (Assoc Prof, Civil Engineering, University of Birmingham), and Dr Chris Rogers (Emeritus Prof, Geotechnical Engineering, University of Birmingham) published "Operationalising Cultural Ecosystem Services in Urban Green Planning: A Systematic Review" in Frontiers in Sustainable Cities, Vol. 8, 2026. Prof Rebecca Kan (Assoc Dean, Degree Studies, Faculty of Performing Arts) published “Pivoting towards professionalism: Positionality of an in-between space of learning in higher arts and design educational experiences in Singapore” in Art, Design & Communication in Higher Education, 2026.
Professional Appointments	Ms Susan Yeung (Assoc Dean, School of Dance): • Adjudicator, Dance World Cup Asia Competition 2026 Singapore Qualifier, Singapore • Adjudicator, ATOD (Australian Teachers of Dance) International Dance Competition 2026 • Adjudicator, Singapore Golden Lion Awards International Dance Festival 2026 Dr Bridget Tracy Tan (Senior Director, Institute of Southeast Asian Arts & Art Galleries): • International Review Panel Member, Silpakorn University International Conference in Total Art and Science (SICTAS) 2026, Bangkok Art and Culture Centre (BACC), Bangkok, Thailand Dr Jessica Chen (Head, Vocal Studies): • Adjudicator, 78th Hong Kong Schools Music and Speech Association Festival

Ongoing Events

Bandung (as) Method (The Ngee Ann Kongsi Galleries 1 & 2, 28 Jul–23 Aug): This joint exhibition by faculty members and alumni of Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB) explores the continuity and transformation of artistic practices across generations. Here, Bandung is understood not merely as a geographical location, but as a method of perceiving, interpreting, and producing visual knowledge. Conceived as a living ecosystem where ideas, materials, and experiences intersect, Bandung becomes a dynamic locus in which artistic inquiry evolves and visual languages remain in constant motion.

Jiwa (Soul): Fitri Ya'akob (Lim Hak Tai Gallery, 22 Jul–9 Sep): [ji.wa], meaning soul in both Indonesian and Malay, marks the debut solo exhibition of emerging Singaporean multidisciplinary artist Fitri Ya'akob. Through video, sculpture and photography that move from the indigenous sea people (Orang Laut) and fishing villages to mangroves, coral reefs and plastic debris, the works bear witness to the lives lived and living, and hold in tension, the contradictions that define the island's existence: the beauty and the neglect, the rooted and the disappearing, the intimacy of a place unmoored.

Upcoming Events

UOB-NAFA Southeast Asian Arts Forum 2026 (The Ngee Ann Kongsi Galleries 1 & 2, 12 Aug): On the theme of engaging with a neurodiverse, multi-sensory world, the 7th edition of the UOB–NAFA Southeast Asian Arts Forum, titled *Margins and Methods for Inclusive Worlds*, will take place on 12 August 2026. Organised by the Institute of Southeast Asian Arts & Art Galleries (ISEAA&AG), this year's edition of the Southeast Asian Arts Forum explores how artists use creative practice not only as a form of expression, but also as a method for inquiry, experimentation, and understanding. Bringing together artists and designers whose practices are shaped by neurodiverse realities, the Forum examines through their works across sound, animation, interactive media, and sensory-led installations how sensory processing, including modulation, can shape form, experience, and interpretation. These practices do not simply represent difference. They operationalise it, offering methods of access, translation, and care that are embedded in the making itself. Through the cumulative effort of these works, the Forum expands what we take as “normal” by widening the range of perspectives through which reality can be understood. [Register to attend.](#)



Orang Laut Ideal 01, 2018, from *Jiwa/ Soul: Fitri Ya'akob* exhibition, printed on vinyl and Hahnemühle William Turner paper. Image courtesy of NAFA.

Upcoming Events

As part of **Singapore Night Festival 2026**, NAFA presents three experiences across its campuses:

- **Jantung Pisang; Laut & Barat** (NAFA Campus 2 Fashion Gallery, 21 Aug–5 Sep): The Special Projects Unit (SPU) presents *Jantung Pisang; Laut & Barat (Heart of the Banana Tree; Of the Sea & the West)*, an interdisciplinary exhibition exploring the mythology, symbolism, and lived experiences connected to the banana flower across cultures and rituals, through immersive VR, projection mapping, performance, and installation. The exhibition runs from 11am to 7pm (extended to 10pm on 21, 22, 23 August and 4 & 5 September; closed Mondays), with an Opening Reception on 20 August at 6pm, an Artist Talk on 23 August, and a Closing Activation on 5 September. Free admission. [Register here](#) for the Artist talk on 23 August.
- **What Holds** (NAFA Campus 1 Window Displays, 21 Aug–18 Oct): Under the artistic direction of Oliver Chong (NAFA Distinguished Alumni Award, 2025), *What Holds* is a large-scale window installation across three architectural panels at NAFA Campus 1, reimagining regional folklore from Bukit Merah, Kusu Island, and Prince Sang Nila Utama through illustration, sculpture, sound, and light. Available daily from 21 August to 18 October, with light and sound activations nightly from 8pm to 11pm (21 Aug–20 Sep). Free viewing, no registration required.
- **INterSPACE** (NAFA Campus 1 Foyer, 3 & 4 Sep): Supported by Diploma in Arts Management students, Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Performance Making students will be presenting *INterSPACE* on 3 and 4 September, 7 to 8pm at NAFA Campus 1 Foyer. A post-show dialogue will take place after the show on 3 September at the same location. Free admission, no registration required.



Jantung Pisang; Laut & Barat poster. Image courtesy of Special Projects Unit, NAFA.

Siew Hock Meng: Cultural Medallion recipient and NAFA Alumnus, solo exhibition (Title to be confirmed, The Ngee Ann Kongsi Galleries 1 & 2, 10 Sep–23 Sep): A solo exhibition celebrating the work of Cultural Medallion recipient and NAFA alumnus Siew Hock Meng, showcasing a body of work shaped by decades of artistic practice and contribution to Singapore's art scene.

ISEAA Southeast Asian Arts Regional Project x FOAD (Lim Hak Tai Gallery, 24 Sep–7 Nov): 24 students travelled to Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia from 1 to 14 June to take part in the inaugural Southeast Asian Arts Regional Project (SRP), examining the interrelationships between spirituality, material practices, and community-based art forms. Through hands-on workshops, site studies, and collaborative projects with local artists, communities, and craftsmen, students engaged directly with Bali's creative communities, deepening their understanding of Southeast Asian traditional craftsmanship and contemporary art practices. Following their return, students developed a production outcome, culminating in this exhibition. Presented within a month of completing the trip, this exhibition features the resulting student artworks.

Common Ground: Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Biophilic Design Co-Creation Studio 2026 (Lim Hak Tai Gallery, 25 Nov–6 Dec): This exhibition presents outcomes from the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Biophilic Design Co-Creation Studio, developed with King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT), Thailand, and Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB), Indonesia. Rather than working from fixed briefs, students learned directly from the people, practices, and ecological systems of each place; farmers, weavers, fishers, residents, and the landscapes themselves became collaborators. *Common Ground* is therefore not just a shared place, but a shared process of learning across cultures and ecological systems. The projects shown here treat biophilic design not as a set of universal principles, but as the translation of local knowledge and lived experience into spatial proposals that support people, biodiversity, and the wider living world.

Southeast Asian Art Exhibition on neurodiversity and multisensory experiences in art (Title to be confirmed, The Ngee Ann Kongsi Galleries 1 & 2, 9 Oct–6 Dec 2026): This exhibition explores neurodiversity through art that engages beyond sight alone, featuring works drawing on touch, sound, and sensory experience to open new ways of perceiving and connecting with the world.

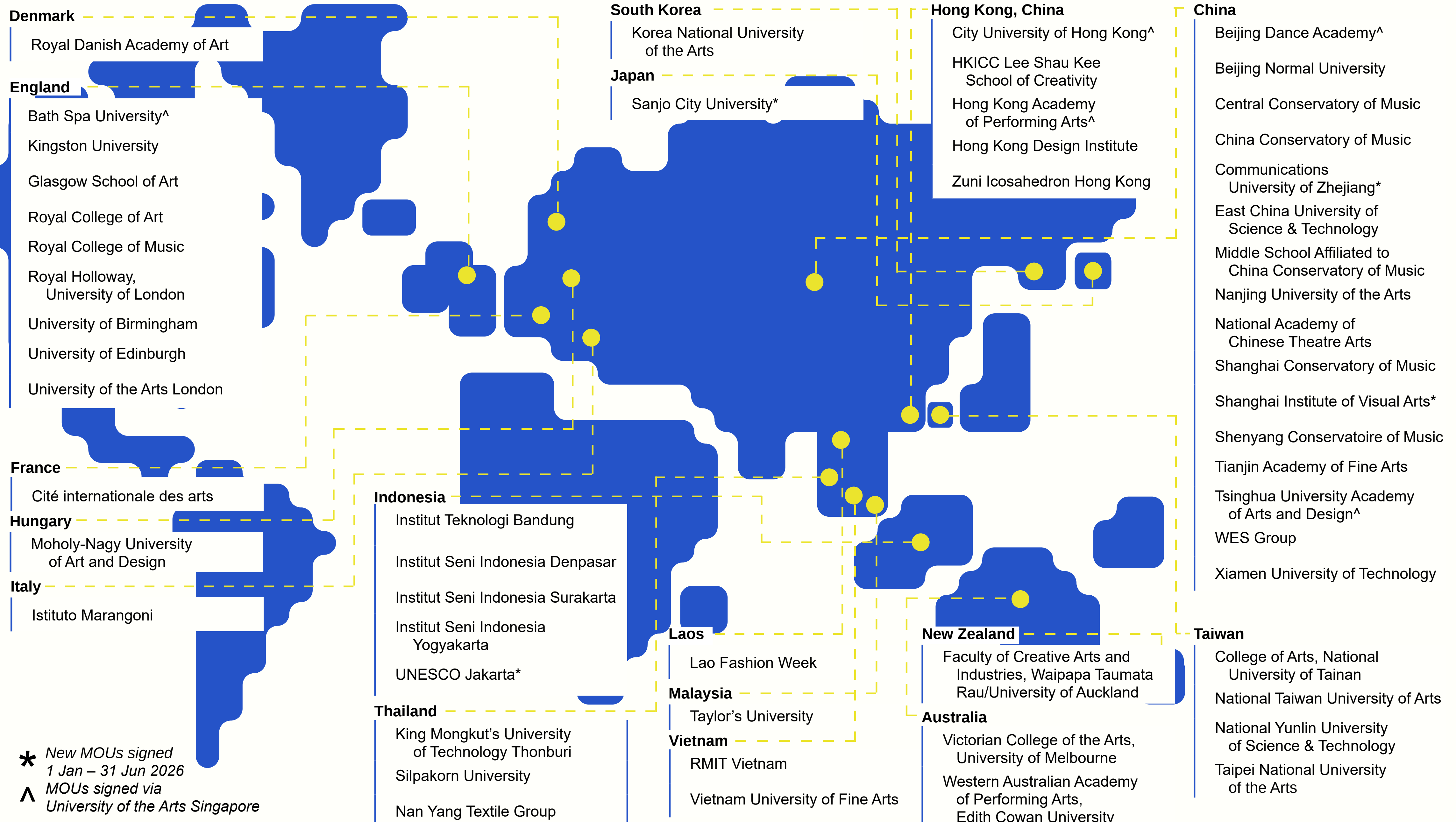
Residencies	NAFA invites Singapore and Southeast Asian artists to apply for its NAFA Studios @ Cité internationale des arts Residency Programme (CRP), which supports artistic growth and global exchange in Paris for up to two months per artist or collective. The upcoming application deadlines for the Open Call programme are as follows: Find out more. <table><tr><th>Application deadline</th><th>Residency period</th></tr><tr><td>3 Aug 2026</td><td>Jan–Feb 2027</td></tr><tr><td>3 Oct 2026</td><td>Mar–Apr 2027</td></tr><tr><td>3 Dec 2026</td><td>May–Jun 2027</td></tr><tr><td>3 Feb 2027</td><td>Jul–Aug 2027</td></tr><tr><td>3 Apr 2027</td><td>Sep–Oct 2027</td></tr></table> All dates accurate at time of publishing.	Application deadline	Residency period	3 Aug 2026	Jan–Feb 2027	3 Oct 2026	Mar–Apr 2027	3 Dec 2026	May–Jun 2027	3 Feb 2027	Jul–Aug 2027	3 Apr 2027	Sep–Oct 2027
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Research Participation	NAFA Cultural Policy Lab invites Singaporeans aged 18 and above to participate in the first national long-term research study on the impact of the arts on audiences, especially through initiatives like the SG Culture Pass. Contribute your insights to enrich national insights on the value of the arts, and help inform future programmes and policies to grow and sustain audiences for local arts and culture. Access the survey link. 												
Project Grants	NAFA Special Projects Award invites students, staff, and alumni to develop projects with the potential to reshape the arts and design landscape. Whether you're responding to a major competition, creating new knowledge through research, or building meaningful community engagement, we support innovative practice that raises NAFA's profile and addresses local and global issues. Funding up to S\$25,000 is available year-round for projects in Competitions and Showcases, Research and Innovation, or Community and Placemaking. Help us connect the NAFA community to both local and international arts scenes, and contribute your ideas to fostering a more vibrant and inclusive creative ecosystem. To apply, submit your project proposal and budget at least three months before your start date. Individual artists, collectives of up to four members, and nominated students are welcome. For guidelines and application forms, visit the Special Projects Award page or contact spu@nafa.edu.sg.												



NAFA Studios at Cité internationale des arts, Paris, France. Photo courtesy of Special Projects Unit, NAFA.

Gift an Opportunity	At NAFA, we believe that global exposure is an important part of preparing students for success in today’s international creative economy. Yet for many students from lower-income families, overseas learning opportunities such as international placements, study trips and student exchange programmes can remain out of reach. Your support can help make these transformative experiences more accessible. Every S\$2,000 raised supports one student on an International Placement, while every S\$4,000 raised supports one student on a semester-long Student Exchange Programme. Through your gift, you can open doors to new cultures, perspectives and professional networks. Help our students grow into confident, globally attuned creative professionals. Donations of S\$50 and above are eligible for 2.5 times tax deduction. Gift an equal opportunity today here.						
Contribute to Atlas	We invite members of the NAFA community to contribute to the February 2027 edition of our newsletter. This is an opportunity to share your work, ideas, and initiatives with a broad interdisciplinary audience across education, practice, and research. Suggested topics include but are not limited to: • Reflections on practice, pedagogy, or collaboration • Student trips, exchanges, or overseas learning experiences • Recent or upcoming research projects, publications, or presentations • Creative works, exhibitions, performances, or participatory initiatives Contributions should highlight how the work engages with global contexts, partners, or perspectives. If you have an idea but are unsure about format or suitability, feel free to get in touch at global@nafa.edu.sg—we’d be happy to discuss it with you. We look forward to featuring the diverse voices and work of our community in upcoming issues. <table><tr><td><i>Proposal deadline</i></td><td><i>Issue</i></td></tr><tr><td>End October</td><td>February</td></tr><tr><td>End April</td><td>August</td></tr></table>	<i>Proposal deadline</i>	<i>Issue</i>	End October	February	End April	August
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Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts
University of the Arts Singapore
80 Bencoolen Street, Singapore 189655



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global@nafa.edu.sg