

MEJA BULAT:

SIDANG SUARA SENI

A report prepared by RogueArt
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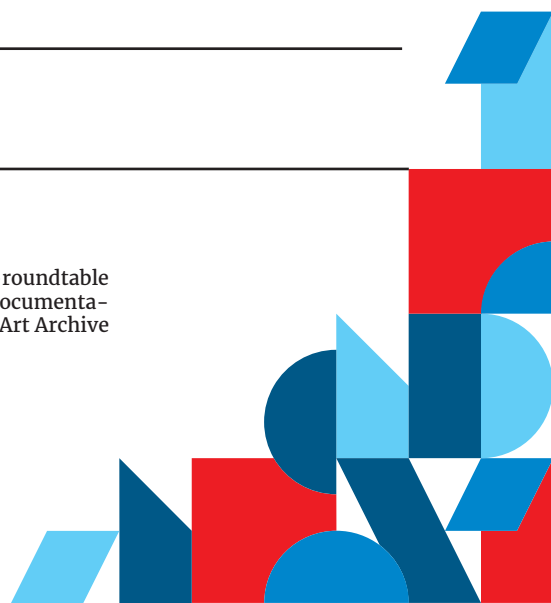
(Please also refer to [Appendix A](#) for the full transcript of the roundtable discussion, post-roundtable contributions, programme and session guide and to [Appendix B](#) for the project budget. Video documentation of the roundtable can be accessed at CENDANA's [YouTube Channel](#) or at MARS (Malaysian Art Archive Resource Support), please contact malaysianartarchive@gmail.com for details).

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01

About Meja Bulat: Sidang Suara Seni

MEJA BULAT: SIDANG SUARA SENI was a roundtable held on 10 November 2018 at Publika (Sunrise Innovation Lab), and streamed on FB Live for open participation.

In recognition of the lack of a shared platform for artists and other members of a fast-growing visual arts scene to meet and discuss issues, the roundtable aimed to gather voices from the visual arts community to share ideas for the development of the Malaysian art scene.

Organised by CENDANA in partnership with RogueArt, as part of CENDANA's Art in the City programme for 2018, it was intended as a pilot project which could become a regular platform in the future, providing an opportunity for taking stock and generating conversation among the visual arts community. A working committee comprising visual arts practitioners, educators, curators and organisers drew up aims, processes and themes for the event, and identified participants and moderators through a nomination process. The committee focused on getting a range of artists to exchange ideas and have their voices heard in dialogue with representatives from the visual arts industry/ecosystem (institutions, education, galleries, organisers, curators / facilitators), media and government.

Over 60 participants attended, from Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Penang, Perak, Kelantan, Melaka, Johor, Sabah and Sarawak, including senior, mid-career and emerging artists, art educators, representatives of artist collectives and state-based artist associations, directors / curators of national, state and corporate galleries, independent curators, art activists, gallerists, patrons, collectors, and representatives from Ministry of Tourism Arts and Culture. Over half were practising visual artists. Several online participants posted comments and / or sent feedback after the roundtable.

The roundtable took the form of a one-day open discussion, in three moderated sessions, held in English and Bahasa Malaysia, as follows [please refer to the [Session Guide](#) for more details]:

SESSION ONE

What do artists want?

moderated by Nur Hanim Khairuddin and Ahmad Fuad Rahmat, drew out how artists perceived their role in relation to the public, what they felt was needed (or not) in terms of support for their practice, and what they wanted to see in the visual arts landscape.

SESSION TWO

KL, I love you, but... – Forming support systems for the visual arts in Malaysia, beyond Kuala Lumpur

moderated by Nadira Ilana and Simon Soon, invited participants to share experiences, challenges and perspectives finding or creating, and ideas for forming support systems, especially outside of the Klang Valley 'centre'.

SESSION THREE

Building platforms – Inviting ideas for spaces, places, projects, transmissions

moderated by Yap Sau Bin and Nur Hanim Khairuddin, asked participants to contribute fresh ideas for building platforms for a future visual arts landscape.

02

About This Report

The report and transcript of the roundtable discussion are made public so that it may be used as a reference by:

- The visual arts community
- Agencies such as CENDANA, policy-makers and government departments
- Potential parties interested in supporting or researching the visual arts in Malaysia
- Anyone interested in the perception, role and future of the visual arts in Malaysian society

Aside from the introduction and concluding reflection, which include additional information and analysis from the makers of this report, the report draws exclusively and comprehensively from issues raised and suggestions made (unless deemed too personal / specific) during the roundtable by moderators and participants, as well as from comments from invitees prior to the event, and further thoughts submitted by physical and online participants immediately after the event.

While the working committee focused on inviting a range of participants to the physical roundtable, and the discussion was open to all online, readers of this report should take note that it does in no way claim to comprehensively represent the views of artists or the visual arts community in Malaysia, but hopes only to provide an indication of prevailing issues and present ideas raised by moderators, participants and contributors at the discussion.

Due to the number of speakers (most attendees spoke), and the informal and open format of the conversation, contributions did not always follow the sequence of specific themes and directed questions. Therefore, this report compiles and reorganises the material as responses to the larger question of **“What do artists want?”**, identifying broad areas of perceived lack and issues in the visual arts ecosystem, and framing them within a broader perspective of the direction of the visual arts scene in Malaysia going forward.

Kindly note that salutations have been omitted in the general text of the report. However, honorifics are detailed in the List of Participants.



03

Introduction: A Visual Art Industry or Ecosystem?

The visual arts scene in Malaysia has grown exponentially in the past 20 years, using the late 1990s as a benchmark for emerging contemporary art practices and developments in visual arts infrastructure, including an increasingly active art market. It has grown from a close-knit community into an “industry”, seeing a proliferation of artists and galleries, and the establishment of an art fair and several auction houses. Meanwhile, there are new generations of artists, and art practices continue to diversify, giving rise to different needs and desires.

Has this “industrialisation” been met with adequate or appropriate support:

- a) For the development of the art scene, to create a nurturing space for art in engagement with society?
- b) To support the practices and livelihood of artists, and those who support them?

What kind of “ecosystem” exists for the visual arts, and what kind of ecosystems might be envisaged?

As a guide, a visual arts ecosystem may comprise of the following interdependent elements:

- Artists, working as individuals or as collectives, some of whom may belong to associations
- Education sector – fine / visual / media arts, arts management, art history and curatorial studies at tertiary level; graduate and other research programmes and initiatives; curatorial training programmes
- Infrastructure, including:
 - Art institutions (museums, national / state art galleries)
 - The art market (private galleries, collectors, auction houses)
 - Alternative spaces and initiatives (hybrid creative / event spaces, artist-run spaces, residency programmes, among others)
 - Funding sources (government, corporate, private patronage, crowd-funding, among others)
 - Art workers (curators, writers, researchers, managers, technicians, assistants, among others)
 - Art publication and media (books, catalogues, journals, magazines, art columnists / critics / bloggers, aside from general press coverage)
- the public

At a glance, Malaysia would seem to have many of these elements in place, and yet, as shall be seen from the following report, there is a general sense that the ecosystem is not functioning very well.

This report, drawing from the roundtable discussion, attempts to identify gaps and imbalances in the existing ecosystem, and gather ideas for a healthier development.

04

What Artists at This Roundtable Want



Drawing from responses during the first roundtable session and reviewing participants' contributions as a whole, these primary points addressed by artists and other visual art community members were identified by the makers of this report in answer to the question "What do artists want?" :

WHAT DO ARTISTS WANT?

1 To Make Art and Survive

2 Recognition for Art and Artists

3 Expansion of the Perception and Understanding of Art In Malaysia

4 The Crisis in (Tertiary) Art Education to be Addressed

5 More Awareness and Understanding; More Exposure

6 Opportunities and Funding for Art-Making, Activities, Engagement

7 A More Balanced Geography, Greater Connectivity

8 Platforms For Networking / Association / Solidarity / Knowledge and Information-Sharing

1. To Make Art and Survive

Clearly, as a first priority, artists wish to have the freedom and opportunity to make art, and at the same time find a means of survival. However, “making art and surviving” does not always equate to making a living through making art.

In Session 1, Ahmad Najib Dawa, Director General of the National Art Gallery (NAG or “Balai”) and an artist himself, pointed out that it was important to note that **different artists have different needs**. Those he termed “elitist” artists may have different concerns, for example, from artists who sell their work to tourists at Central Market.

Perak-based artist, organiser and educator Noor Azizan Paiman made a similar point, differentiating between artists who make work for the art market and those who make the art they want to, without considering the market system but which may happen to appeal to the market. However, artists making more experimental artworks find it hard to sustain practice in the existing market model.

Hamidon Ahmed, Vice President of GAPS (Gabungan Persatuan Pelukis SeMalaysia) underlined that the basic desires of artists are **“ruang dan juga peluang” (space and opportunity)**. He introduced GAPS as a confederation of artist associations from different states and noted that “kita di negeri-negeri perlu dipertingkatkan kemudahan itu” (we in these states need to improve their facilities). Hassan Ghazali, president of Angkatan Pelukis SeMalaysia [founded as Angkatan Pelukis Semenanjung in 1956], used examples from among his past members to illustrate that apart from money, all these artists wanted was a place to work, to exhibit their work, and publicity. However, President of Johor Serupa2 and GAPS committee member Fakhru Zaman felt that artists should be able to make a living from selling their work, but that those who belonged to associations tend to be happy enough just getting to the level of exhibiting their work once, not pushing themselves to a further level.

Arts activist and filmmaker Nadira Ilana talked about contemporary heritage artists working with traditional craft and culture, particularly in Sabah and Sarawak, struggling to find a balance between basing themselves in their original environment and finding ways and funds to participate in an art world that is urban and peninsula-based.

Representatives from artist collectives such as Lostgens (KL) and Pangrok Sulap (Ranau), who work to engage communities on social and cultural issues, talked about the various creative means by which they sustain themselves and their activities.

Artists participating in the roundtable were involved in very different kinds of practices and came from different backgrounds, yet the themes and concerns brought up in the roundtable point to holistic ways in which the environment in Malaysia can be more conducive for “making art and surviving” for visual artists as a whole, while issues and suggestions for solutions were also raised for more specific groups.

“Art is now’ – kita pun perlu lihat apa kehendak-kehendak pengkarya-pengkarya yang muda... sekarang ni persoalannya masih ada juga di mana sebenarnya yang kita nak ceritakan model yang mana sesuai untuk artis yang mana” (we need to find current/new models for discussing issues of artistic practice today to help [young] artists find direction going forward). (Noor Azizan Paiman)

2. Recognition for Art and Artists

“Ini art ni macam orang kata macam sampah je; macam apa nama, melukut di tepi gantang. Ada pun tak apa; tak ada pun takpa...” (Art is like junk, insignificant. If you have it, it's no big deal; if you don't have it, it's no big deal either).

Baharudin Arus, pioneer new media artist, lecturer at Universiti Malaysia Sabah and President, Persatuan Pelukis Sabah, began session 1 with this damning remark about how artists are regarded in our society. **“We have to realise ourselves that we are not important.”** His statement expressed a wider perspective that Malaysian society remains disconnected with artists and art.

Artists in some areas feel particularly left out / discriminated against, particularly in East Malaysia. Baharudin cited the example that, while Sabah might make a lion's share contribution to the nation's tourism income, in his understanding, there is no allocation for art in Sabah. Even within the art trade, there is discrimination and prejudice. Nadira Ilana cited an Orang Asli artist being told not to make indigenous art, and a Sarawak artist who had had their work called “jungle people art”, by gallerists.

Baharudin called for **a forum of artists** of some form, going as far as to call for an artists' political party.

Former National Art Gallery Director General Wairah Marzuki talked of the role of institutions: “So, what was important for us in the Gallery / institution was for somebody within the organisation to recognise the artists' achievements. And there are many artists in the country in the making. So, from the institutions that Malaysia has formed, through art schools, to galleries to universities, there's many artists in the making. So, where do they go? Where would they be awarded recognition? One exhibition, one purchase, one auction... it's a vast space whereby somebody has to look after the artists' welfare and also in terms of financial gains, in terms of art values.” She also pushed for finding ways of **valuing artists through more awards at institutional / national level**: “In this field, artists have to be recognised by the Ministry, by somebody.”

Online contributor Christianne Goonting, a Sabah artist and gallerist, called for **“recognition [for arts] as an equal entity in the Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture [MOTAC]**. Focus on its own policies, short term and long term objectives, benchmarks, rightful and equal budget allocation... to safeguard, promote and invest in the preservation and development of our Cultural Heritage, to be recognised as an important indicator of being a developed nation.”

However, as the discussion unfolded throughout the day, it became clear that more holistic solutions are called for to address this issue.



3. Expansion of the Perception and Understanding of Art in Malaysia

“A future Malaysia needs its population (100%) to value, uphold and invest in its Artistic and Cultural Identity – and these values of art awareness and appreciation are instilled through effective art and culture education right from day 1.” (Christianne Goonting)

A number of participants echoed Baharudin Arus in finding that the **lack of recognition for art and what artists do is due to an education policy which separates arts and sciences, and favours sciences**. Sonia Luhong Wan of creative platform Borneo Bengkel provided an illustration, “One of the main problems starts from secondary school. After Form 3, you are separated into art and science stream. For example, I was in the best science set, but I was always art-inclined. So, from that moment, I already had a kind of identity crisis and I think I’m not the only one.”

“Art education should not be sidelined but on par with Maths, Science, Commerce and Language”. (Christianne Goonting)

UNIMAS senior lecturer and Deputy Dean of Student Affairs Yakup Mohd Rafee talked of how most art students are labelled as “third-class” “because the community looks at us as a community who produces artwork without research, without process, or anything else.” The way to resolve this is: “menggalakkan pendidikan dan mendedahkan pendidikan tu ke mata masyarakat; isu pendidikan, isu proses, isu apa tu patut ditekankan selain daripada penghasilan karya” (to encourage education and expose this education to the eyes of the public; issues on education, issues on process and other issues need to be emphasised apart from the production of artwork).

UTAR lecturer Carmen Nge called for **“a reform in how we think about art as a whole”**, arguing that we tend to think of artists using their hands while scientists use their brains, while art-making in fact involves much more than manual skill, and artists’ work has many values for society. Artists are, for example, “documenters of history”.

It was felt that there was a **general need to educate the public / communities on art, and to inculcate interest, awareness and understanding at all levels of education**.

ILHAM Gallery director Rahel Joseph made a call to **“incorporate art and culture in the school curriculum”**, and to discuss with the Ministry of Education how to get artists into schools, and schools into galleries. She underlined the importance of not “dumbing down” art-related activities for children, citing the success of children’s tour programmes at ILHAM which use art to encourage critical thinking and thinking “out of the box”. However it was noted that one challenge could be a fear of introducing art in education because it encourages personal expression and subjectivity (Carmen Nge). Rahel also brought up the more practical difficulty of connecting with national schools for non-government art institutions and organisations.

Izan Satrina, CEO of CENDANA, noted that CENDANA would be focusing on an artists in schools programme in 2019, and also that they had identified two donors active in supporting school art excursions to galleries.

In post-roundtable feedback, Nadira Ilana suggested **exposing secondary students to different professions in the visual arts**, bringing up the FINCO Mentor programme as a good model, or potential partner.

Baharudin Arus **underlined the importance of art history as part of education in inculcating an awareness, understanding and recognition of art and artists**: “We have people teaching in institution yang bukan pakar. Jadi, kita ada art history cerita pasal melukis. Tak cerita pasal isu-isu yang lebih kritikal... kita tengok balik macam mana di sekolah mengajar art history ni, mengajar universiti; siapa yang ajar art history tu (We have people teaching in institutions who are not experts. So we have an art history of painting and drawing, but not of more critical issues. We need to look back at how art history is taught in schools, taught in university; who is teaching this art history). Nadira Ilana noted the lack of awareness of the work of indigenous or heritage artists in Borneo as “our education system has been so peninsular-centric”.

Artist, curator and writer Zainol Shariff (Zabas) talked about **getting more non-practitioners and non-arts majors interested in art through art history at undergraduate level as a major subject, as well as art management, and encouraging cultural and art historical debate** especially on the main canons of art, and **discussions of arts and culture not only on a regional, international but also “intranational” level**. Sarena Abdullah, art historian and deputy dean at School of the Arts at USM, said there is now an option to take a minor in art history in undergraduate programme packages at USM.

Christianne Goonting calls for “**systematic auditing of the effective delivery and end results in art education** by both Ministry of Tourism Arts and Culture and Ministry of Education [MOE] with predetermined benchmarks and parameters.”

Izan Satrina noted that arts education reformist Janet Pillai was to lead / has been leading a committee in reviewing arts education in the Malaysian curriculum, under MOE.

4. *The Crisis in (Tertiary) Art Education to Be Addressed*

The problems rooted in an education policy which sidelines art continue into tertiary education. Educators and practitioners identified what amounts to a crisis in tertiary art education specifically, which has impacted and will continue to impact generations of fine / visual arts graduates, citing the following interrelated issues:

Most fine / visual arts graduates drop out of the art ecosystem. Fuad Arif, artist and senior lecturer in UiTM's Fine Arts Department, shared that out of 70 to 80 students that enroll in Fine Arts every semester, only three to four will become artists, in the sense of exhibiting in galleries; instead, they mostly go on to teach or do things like sell insurance. Artist and founder of independent art space HOM Art Trans Bayu Utomo Radjikin said this indicated a system failure, comparing the situation to the 1990s, when out of 15 students in the department, three might become artists. Ahmad Najib Dawa warned that there are 5,000 fine arts graduates per year, and 17 new universities opening programmes.

Outdated modes of teaching art practice. Deputy Dean of the School of the Arts USM, Sarena Abdullah felt, “The way that we teach in our classes, the programme itself has to change because we are adhering or we are preparing students to become artists today, not 30 years ago... In the art school, there are many ways to introduce to our students that there are many ways of art-making that you can still sustain if you're passionate about teaching about art”. Educators agreed that art education must change to recognise many ways of art-making, and consider issues of teaching methodology and artistic process, and research. Visual art could be complemented with other disciplines.

For example at UNIMAS, where the emphasis is on technology, they bring in social sciences and engineering (Yakup Mohd Rafee). Fakhru Zaman explained, “Mereka mengajar pendidikan melalui modul-modul yang ditetapkan. Jadi, maknanya, kita kena kreatif dalam menyampaikan pendidikan tu, maksudnya tidak semestinya dalam bilik darjah, tetapi kita perlu keluar” (They are teaching through fixed modules... so we need to be creative in delivering that education, not necessarily in a classroom, but going out.) He went on to introduce the example of Balai Artgeng, an artists’ group [who conduct outdoor camps and workshops with kids] introducing art-making to future generations.

The perception of fine / visual arts students as “third-class”, as raised by Yakup Mohd Rafee. Senior lecturer at UiTM Alor Gajah Sharmiza Abu Hassan also noted that fine arts have little support within universities as it is not valued as academic but considered practical / vocational. Universities also do not value achievements in artistic practice.

Ahmad Najib Dawa talked about the **importance of teaching graduates “survival skills”** and cited the Young Art Entrepreneurs programme he has introduced at NAG to train them how to “go to market”, “position”, and “take their artwork to go to the gallery”. Janet Pillai said that once visual artists leave university, “there’s actually no alignment and no intermediary that connects them to the various job possibilities within the visual arts as in the performing arts” and suggested **funding small intermediaries / facilitators to connect graduates to job possibilities**, for example via internships or residencies. Sarena Abdullah agreed that there seems to be **no link between tertiary art education and the art industry**. There should be **more options at undergraduate level to introduce students to careers in peripheral industries (arts management, curating, art history)**. However Muhammad Amir Amin of multidisciplinary art collective ARTO Movement pointed out that with UiTM’s effort to focus on support system options like arts management through their Visual Arts Studies programme, from what he knows, not a single student from the five semesters the course has run has entered the industry or shown an interest in such.

Sunitha Janamohanan, arts management lecturer at LaSalle College of the Arts, compared this to the situation in Singapore which “benefits from a policy that has been thinking about it on a larger scale, so the education policy is tied up with the arts policy... there are capacity-development training workshops to happen for artists after they graduate, there are extensive education systems at all levels at the tertiary level as well as school levels to develop students in their education learning journey as artists, and there are also systems to look at once you’ve entered the field and how they can support you better.”

5. *More Awareness and Understanding; More Exposure*

In tandem with expanding the perception and understanding of art through education at school and tertiary level, much was discussed about growing and engaging audiences for art in the more immediate term.

Veteran artist Sylvia Lee Goh summarised, “What kind of audiences do artists look for? We look for people who have an understanding of art”. The issue then emerged of how to cultivate such an audience.

More curators, writers, research

For conceptual artist and researcher Tan Zi Hao, **“The key lies in the peripheral industries**, whether it’s art-making, art writing, curatorship or art research, and I think these are important industries to be invested in. So, there’s not just artists.” Zi Hao underlined the importance of “cultural research institutions and collectives because these are the things that would allow the bridge between the audience and the arts as well”.

Bayu Utomo Radjikin, who is also a co-founder of MARS (Malaysia Art Archive and Resource Support), saw that a main issue was that a support system has not been built: “We do not have a school that teaches curatorship or art writing, for example”. He suggested cultivating curators through education grants, or funding grants for independent curatorial projects, and creating platforms for art writers. Janet Pillai cited a system in Japan bringing emerging artists and curators to train together in baby ecosystem for one year, overseen by an arts institution through grants from the federal government via state / province / city. Session 3 co-moderator Yap Sau Bin suggested artists find their own way of supporting the peripheral industries: “Maybe 10 artists, each of you fork up RM200 a month and support a curator or an artist, or an art writer, no strings attached”.

Space for coverage, review, criticism, discourse

Another main problem lies in the **very limited spaces for art coverage, review, criticism, or discourse** (compared to in previous decades).

Wairah Marzuki felt that “the whole situation of the media is not being well-translated”, whether electronic, or in newspapers; for audience development, “the schools have to be added in, the town / city folks have to be added... it needs a platform, the structure, bold execution and also the political will for the next generation... it’s a bigger audience that the artist needs”. Izan Satrina attributed the poor coverage of art in the media to the fact that there is not profit in it: “there’s not many people actually investing and putting advertisements out in the arts”.

Rahel Joseph pointed out that “we don’t have enough art writers who are actually writing about the work that’s in the media, now. You very rarely have critical pieces talking about an exhibition or a work”. Session 3 co-moderator Nur Hanim Khairuddin felt: “Mungkin kita boleh imbas kembali, tahun 70-an, ya. Begitu ghairah sekali discourse ataupun wacana yang berlaku di dalam majalah-majalah seperti Dewan Sastera, Dewan Budaya dan sebagainya. Dan itu adalah satu lagi hal yang kita boleh try and revive balik bersama dengan mungkin pihak Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka ataupun mana-mana lagi agensi penerbitan” (Maybe we can reflect back to the 70s. There was so much exciting discourse that was happening in magazines such as Dewan Sastera and Dewan Budaya. Maybe this is something that we can revive with Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka or other publishers.) Sarena Abdullah hoped there might be a revival of the art journal Sentap!.

Amir Amin felt, “Mungkin kita dah start untuk melihat virtual spaces sebagai salah satu daripada platform ataupun spaces untuk kita mempamerkan ataupun menjadikan satu discourse centre” (We should start looking at virtual spaces as one of the platforms or spaces for exhibition and / or a discourse centre), believing that “Twitter ataupun any other social media boleh digunakan sebagai satu platform untuk satu sesi discussion yang menarik” (Twitter or other social media can be used as a platform for interesting discussions). He introduced @tweetseni, where a different person is invited to “curate” a conversation about art every week.

Specialist zines, such as those published by participants Amir Amin and Samsudin Wahab’s collectives were raised as another exciting platform “for trans-cross-disciplinary approach where the artist can actually publish their thought statements, by inviting writers and art critics and art historians to write and publish and to sell this merchandise at Zine festivals and to make more connections.” (Tan Zi Hao).

Collector Bingley Sim also mentioned the Art Friends collectors group's effort to write and publish on their art collections. Baharudin Arus, and also Session 3 co-moderator Yap Sau Bin underlined the point that **artists should take an active role in writing and commenting on art**. Session 2 co-moderator Simon Soon felt it was important "to really promote writing on most platforms as a medium to encourage the voicing of opinions and sharing of one's ideas. Because when you share an idea, you do not just share it in the present day. It doesn't just address the contemporary audience and it's not just all about urgencies. It's also about addressing a future audience".

Better promotion of artists

Various participants also felt that artists in Malaysia needed to find better ways of promoting their work and practices, both in the art market context and in general. Most felt that artists need to be able to be articulate about their work while others felt artists often could not talk about themselves. However, it was also voiced that artists should not be distracted from their main work of making art, and need to find representatives or managers to work with. Zabas felt it would be helpful to ask art majors to minor in a verbal subject at university. Haryany Mohamed, Curator / Director of Penang State Museum & Art Gallery, held up the example of artists in France, who both "know how to package themselves" and work with representatives as a common practice.

Online participant Daniel Chong suggested that the National Art Gallery could have an online profile page for artists which could become a primary source for Wikipedia, which would be efficient for global search results.

In terms of initiatives for helping artists with commercial marketing, the NAG's YAE programme seeks to help young artists market and package their work, and Fakhrol Zaman described a similar project [Sana Seni Sini, in collaboration with NAG] where artists in Pontian had an opportunity to sell their works and merchandise with the Tourism Information Centre, which they found helpful in developing a market.

The role of institutions

For Yakup Mohd Rafee, the major issue for artists in Sarawak is space. Although there have been independent collective and private initiatives such as HAUS KCH and La Galleria, there is **a real need for a public gallery in Sarawak**.

Ameruddin Ahmad, Deputy Director of the National Art Gallery, talked of challenges for this central institution today: "Jadi, untuk relevan dengan masyarakat, sangat challenging, ya, bukan sahaja di satu group, bukan pelukis sahaja tapi kami perlu relevan kepada masyarakat iaitu society... sebelum ini Balai hanya memberi tumpuan kepada seni visual dalam kontek artistic expression. Sebenarnya ada aspek yang kita perlu beri perhatian supaya relevan dengan society iaitu benda yang berkaitan dengan seni visual dalam ceremonial, functional, narrative dan juga persuasive. So, empat-empat perkara ini adalah berkaitan dengan artistic expression dan semuanya ini juga akan melihat kepada kepentingannya ekonomi dan national significance dan signifikan yang berguna kepada negara" (So, to be relevant to the community, it is very challenging. It's not just for a group of artists, we need to be relevant to the community, society... Before this, NAG only focused on visual art in the context of artistic expression. In fact there are ceremonial, functional, narrative and persuasive aspects that we need to pay attention to in relation to society in terms of the relevance of visual arts. So, these four things are related to artistic expressions and all also relate to their economic and national significance and usefulness to the country.)

Haryany Mohamed and Siti Melor, curator at Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery, both introduced their institutions and their general role regarding their collection, exhibitions and working with artists and the community. Rahel Joseph said that apart from exhibitions, ILHAM Gallery's key priorities are education and public programming, and looking into working with curators and art writers.

Artist chi too felt there was an issue in that artists in Malaysia are not being properly represented by institutions: “Collectors here in Malaysia are playing the role as tastemakers right now... filling a void that has somehow formed in Malaysia because **the institutions are not playing their parts**... the institutions do not have the power and autonomy to promote that kind of art / artists that should be promoted in Malaysia... do not have that capacity to actually look at all these amazing artists that we have”; “unfortunately, the only sort of institutions that’s available out there to set the agenda [of] who gets shown and who gets seen are commercial galleries”. This followed from Sylvia Lee Goh’s complaint that there was very little awareness of senior artists as they were being sidelined in favour of contemporary artists in gallery representation.

Intan Rafiza called for the artist community to stop putting all the responsibility and blame on a single institution like Balai Seni, and called for more engagement on their part: “Kenapa tak mengaku kita part of institution? Ini yang kita boleh tolong dalam institusi seni. Artis-artis volunteer ataupun macam mana, datang untuk buat aktiviti yang memang secara sukarela”(Why can’t we acknowledge that we are part of the institution? We can help in art institutions, artists can volunteer to do activities).

Shared audiences

Curator and project manager Sharmin Parameswara felt: “More and more, we need to try and figure out how to grow audiences”, both by collaborating within the visual arts and by tapping into arts festivals, or other non-visual arts events and other platforms “in which we share audiences, whether it’s architecture and visual arts, photography and visual arts, NGOs and visual arts.” Yap Sau Bin said her point illustrated that “the audience for the arts actually is not one-dimensional only, it’s not just an aesthetic pursuit or collecting of artwork but you are engaging a different form of urban and modern phenomena”.

Claiming / reclaiming public space for art

Public spaces for art are a key point of contact and exposure, but seem to be under or mis-utilised.

Christianne Goonting suggests that public / publicly visible facilities could be used to promote art through showing or advertising artworks, e.g. banks, petrol stations, post offices, hotels, airports and digital advertisement hoardings.

Noor Azizan Paiman talked about the LUMUT Distro project, where abandoned government buildings were turned into a cross-disciplinary space with a community arts space, bookshop / library, experimental music venue and backpackers’ hostel by Kumpulan Aktivis Sahabat Alam (KUASA), and pointed out that artists could be proactive through these kinds of projects: “Yang mungkin kita boleh cadang; banyak space-space kerajaan yang tak dipakai yang boleh dibuat untuk benda baru” (It is possible for us to propose – there are many government spaces that are not in use that can be re-purposed).

Wairah Marzuki highlighted that, “There’s an ASEAN sculpture garden in the city, in the Lake Gardens, but it’s left there to rot and no one cares a thing”, and called for a specific channel to reach DBKL on such matters. Sharmiza Abu Hassan mentioned that authorities tend to appoint contractors whenever there are planned public art projects / festivals, rather than approach artists: “We also need somebody to represent the artist community with the state council, city council who plans for any festival, any urban planning”.

More awareness and engagement from local councils, government

Penang-based independent curator, researcher and artist Lee Cheah Ni found that when organising community-based projects, there was much difficulty working with and navigating different departments and authorities. Long Thien Shih opined, “Even at my stage, now, sometimes, I need help in the matter of art activities, I don’t know where to go. The only thing I know, I go to National Art Gallery. Now, tell me any other avenue that I can look for? Tell us your unit or the institution where we can ask for help and teach us how to ask for help.”

Online, Goh You Ping, who works in the performing arts, asked specifically: “How many government agencies take care of visual arts? What is their KPI? Are they doing a good job? What to improve?” Izan Satrina described the complex structure: “There’s the federal agency, the state, the local councils. And under each of them, they have different departments managing the arts. At Ministry of Tourism [Arts] and Culture, there are nine agencies working with [the arts]. State [authorities] are also divided, [e.g.] Kuching Utara and Kuching Selatan have their own different departments. And local councils also have different departments. Sarena Abdullah stressed, “What artists need is those agencies to come down and actually talk to local artists”.

Ahmad Fuad Osman felt that problems in the system could be addressed if there was knowledgeable leadership, “Masalah dia sekarang ni meletakkan orang yang tepat di tempat yang tepat. Masalahnya kepala kita tu... kalau kita boleh meletakkan di atas tu, orang yang understand, orang yang tahu tentang bidang ini, benda ni akan jadi lain. Sebab dia, benda tu, dia akan turun, structure dia akan turun ke bawah (The problem is that we need to put the right people at the right place. The problem is with our leadership... if there are people at the top who understand the field then things would change going down the system).

6. Opportunities and Funding for Art-Making, Activities, Engagement

Basics

As a whole, participants did not talk about basic support for artists. However, Baharudin Arus, with his experience of artists in his association in Sabah, did suggest in post-roundtable feedback basic support for artists’ materials and working space in the form of one-off grants for artists registered with state artists’ associations for cash or materials, the gazetting of strategic locations for artists to work freely with a permit, and some sort of artists’ identification card that would entitle them to discounts for artists’ materials.

Developing and expanding art-making practices

“How can we survive as someone working with fine art? The conception of art itself has to be expanded. How we, as artists, respond to this, besides thinking about making a living with our artwork and so on?” (Lim Kok Yoong, media artist and senior lecturer at MMU)

In discussing existing support systems for art and possibilities for improvement (Session 2) and expanding ideas about platforms for art (Session 3), it became clear that encouraging the development and expansion of art-making practices would naturally create more opportunities and platforms, with the potential to create new connections, audiences, knowledge and ways for artists to engage with society. Participants contributed many different ideas for this kind of expansion.

Kampung as mobile platform. Nadira Ilana talked about how artists in Borneo have found a “mobile platform” in the kampung, since this “is already an ecosystem where you go in and learn and exchange knowledge”. She suggested “a funding or a support system that could actually help Malaysia’s cultural heritage by sending artists into kampung, even if it’s their own kampung, to learn from their elders and have that contribute to their artworks”, and also mentioned developing access through working with NGOs and social enterprises. Perak-born artist Samsudin Wahab likewise wondered, “Kenapa tak kita residensi balik ke kampung ataupun kita residensi kat satu tempat pembuatan bahan-bahan tradisi di pelusuk-pelusuk negeri yang kita tak explore lagi” (Why don’t we do a residency back in our kampung or a residency at a place where local crafts are made which we have not yet explored?).

Knowledge-sharing through tapping into other disciplines. Lim Kok Yoong called for artists to “start working with other people from other disciplines, there are plenty of opportunities and resources as well”, for example, “**perhaps... the scientists and the technologists, they’re very eager to work with the artists**”. Yakup Shafee also saw “a big possibility” in “further creating knowledge in visual arts and also in science social sciences”. He received a limited grant to work with art and anthropology from the Ministry of Higher Education, and felt “Mungkin satu part yang dengan CENDANA boleh dicadangkan ialah melihat bagaimana potensi grant-grant ini tadi boleh dikembangkan lebih jauh, tidak ada terhad kepada penghasilan karya-karya seni semata-mata tapi jugak menyumbang kepada bagaimana ia boleh digabungkan ataupun diterjemahkan dalam penghasilan karya yang menyokong ilmu” (Maybe one of the things that CENDANA can propose to do is to look at the potential of these grants to be developed further, not just limiting them to the creation of artworks but also how this can be combined or interpreted in the production of other creations that supports knowledge-sharing from other fields).

Co-founder of creative hub Zhongshan Building and OUR Art Projects gallery Liza Ho asked, “Do we have to think so far to do science? We actually haven't even mentioned fashion, interior design, graphic design and all these other art disciplines that are next to us”. She talked about the experience of setting up Zhongshan with “people within our network who do different things” such as Malaysian Design Archive and (Kg Attap) Library, and the Tandang Records store; “we wanted to have somewhere where we can learn from each other, other disciplines”.

At the same time, Simon Soon moved to “reassess the value of discipline” as “a commitment to a kind of rigour and persistence”, and “to recognise that each discipline is in and of itself already cross-disciplinary”, i.e., that there was much to learn from the history of one’s own discipline.

Thinking beyond Balai. Zabas suggested that artists should “check out other departments apart from Balai Seni, apart from other galleries” such as National Museum, National Library, National Archive, Ministry of Defence. Artists could send proposals, and even suggest **tie-ups between the National Art Gallery and other government departments**. Tan Zi Hao felt that such “cross-disciplinary approaches, I think, have to be initiated by institutions because artists might not be able by themselves to convince non-arts disciplines”, and suggested that **museums in Malaysia could invite artists to look into their collections**.

Answering the question of “**in what ways can art be brought closer to society?**”, Intan Rafiza talked about **how artists could be involved with social causes**, for example, helping to raise awareness and educate on recycling, home farming or developing seed banks to help the urban poor. Nur Hanim Khairuddin suggested working with the [Department] of Environment, citing the work of artist groups in focusing on environmental issues. She also reminded participants of the short-lived National Space Agency residency during which artist Kamal Sabran extracted sound waves from Jupiter.

In expanding practices in this way, Yap Sau Bin reminded participants to consider: “What does the artist learn from the community?” “What does the artist learn from the neighbourhood and from their audience that they work with, their collaborators?” in order that “transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary becomes meaningful”.

Encourage experimentation. Ahmad Fuad Osman brought up the issue that “dengan masalah-masalah yang kita tengok tadi tu, pasal kita tau arts sekarang ni kita dekat sini memang very market-driven. So, kebanyakan production memang based on saleable or commercial standard. But then, ada artis-artis yang cuba nak explore karya-karya yang experimental yang di luar boundary ini.” (Looking at the problems, we know art here and now is very market-driven. So the majority of artworks produced are based on saleability or a commercial standard, but there are other artists that try to explore beyond these boundaries with their artworks).

He brought up the example of London's Art Angel, which realises "impossible projects", inviting artists to send in proposals for unrealised projects that are ambitious but not commercially viable.

Funding and policy

Aside from the question of how artists "make art and survive" through the art market or other means, participants discussed opinions on government funding and policy, and ideas on how to raise funding to support visual arts activities and art scene development.

On **government policy for the arts**, participants had mixed views in response to the question, "**Do we need to redefine the national art direction that seems inclined towards art industry, tourism and economy?**" (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, Session 1 co-moderator). The question followed chi too's statement that, "I do not want to see my government recognising this problem, 'oh, there's a problem with the arts', saying, 'Let's set up an economic development agency to solve the problem of the arts'." (Izan Satrina responded that "CENDANA's only mandate is to economise the arts because there are already existing agencies that are looking at the issues daripada segi discussion, narrative, engagement" and proposed, "Could we possibly work with the existing agencies to address some of these matters?").

While Fakhrol Zaman said that programmes helping artists to market their work commercially had been useful, Lee Cheah Ni felt "I think we should redefine because in Penang's situation, it's arts, heritage, culture, tourism together. And obviously, there are conflicts to each other". While Nadira Ilana felt that protocols for safeguards should be in place to support indigenous artists and others working with cultural heritage, along the lines of practices in Australia and Canada, to counter "the national cultural policy that Sabah and Sarawak's native languages are actually banned from schools, banned from the radios as well", Long Thien Shih felt that formulating a direction or national policy for art "would be directing the artists that you should go for this direction, this kind of thing, that kind of thing" and firmly stated his position: "I think it's not on. I don't agree with that."

Sarena Abdullah also felt "**We don't need top-down administration to tell us what to do, what artists need to do...** The younger artists should be free to define whatever future that you want". However, she pointed out that "If you know where the money comes from, then we should go to whatever kementerian. We need to know where the money comes from because we need to know that this comes consistently... If you have this agency giving residencies or (grants) to do research and all that, we know that it's gonna come every year in what month and how much is the amount that they can pitch for. We need to plan ahead, not only for 5 years; we need to plan ahead 10 years, 15 years, 20 years along the line." She added, "And we need to have integrity in [it] kalau kegunaan wang dan sebagainya, because this is all taxpayers' money."

Bayu Utomo Radjikin expressed ambivalence: "Kalau kita ada Kementerian Kesenian, bagus. Tapi kalau tak ada pun takpa. For me, arts, dia boleh masuk ke Kementerian Pertahanan pun takpa. (If we have a Ministry of Arts, great. But if not, it's no big deal. The arts can be under Ministry of Defence for all I care). Because what we need is the money... if we're already under Tourism or under Kesenian, they will do things sometimes that don't fit with our needs. What's the point? Our point is artists are doing their own direction. Artists are creating their own work, their own "political party", whatever it is, but I think it must come from them, it must be coming from the artists, the needs of the artists, what artists want." On government funding, "Every 4 years, things are shifting and we cannot depend on that... it's out of our reach. There's nothing that we can do. And kita akan jadi hopeless, we're all the way down hopeless. Because we're hoping this, we're hoping that, and it will never be coming to reality."

Izan Satrina said that from her earlier research on the arts ecosystem, “The government has something about half a billion every Rancangan Malaysia ke-9, ke-10 and it goes to all the arts. The arts itself berpecah antara 4 kementerian (split up between 4 ministries) and under each kementerian ada up to 25 government agencies.” “So, that’s where all the money is going. Money usually comes at Kementerian Kewangan disalurkan kepada (and distributed to) different kementerian... setiap government agency di bawah kementerian tu pulak kena pay (has to be paid). So, bermakna tahun ni ada duit, tahun depan takda, tahun seterusnya takda. So, macam Dasar Industri Kreatif Negara dulu yang telah memberi alokasi sebanyak 150 juta kepada sektor seni dan kreatif in 2012 sampai sekarang (which means this year there will be money, next year no money, and the year after no money. So for the previous National Creative Industry Policy which allocated RM150 million to the arts and creative industry in 2012 until now), there was never any injection; so, there’s no money. The Jabatan Kebudayaan Kesenian Negara and the other government agencies have been moved every 4 to 8 years from Kementerian Unity kepada Kementerian Pelancongan kepada Kementerian Youth. That, I think is one of the biggest challenges for the arts because the institutions that are in place always have to restart, re-brief monthly, re-lobby and pitch again. And they have to restart with every change.”

Sonia Luhong Wan, agreeing with Ahmad Fuad Osman’s earlier call for the right leadership, underlined **the need for targeted and accountable funding**: “When you release funds, you need to justify how the funds are released and therefore, we have to answer about KPI and all that. So, only someone who is well-versed in arts can decide the correct KPI.”

During the discussion, Rohana Mohd Yusof, Head of Exhibition Management, Collection and Conservation Department at the National Art Gallery, said that **applications for funding could be made to the National Art Gallery, and that NAG could also help apply for funding from MOTAC** via its funding assessment committee.

It was useful to gather information on **how artist collectives and associations fund themselves and their activities**.

Artists’ associations in the various states need funding for their activities, and appear to get funding from government agencies and in states where there is quite a lot of art activity, for example, in Johor or Pahang, they get given grants directly from the state government (Hamidon Ahmed). Baharudin Arus said that Sabah is poorest of all states in art funding, and that his association has only about RM100+ for every project budget. Haryany Mohamed noted that Penang has many registered art groups and societies, and agencies giving grants for artist residencies, use networking to channel corporate funding to artists, naming Butterworth Fringe Festival and Georgetown Festival as examples.

Senior artist Long Thien Shih talked about the Sasaran Arts Association’s yearly Sasaran International Arts Festival, which attracts 1,000+ visitors a day over 10 days. The event, organised by the association comprising of artists and village community members, is funded by help in kind from community and funding from friends, with a small amount from MOTAC.

Among artist collectives represented at the roundtable, Lostgens in Kuala Lumpur runs exhibitions, curatorial projects, a residency and exchange programme with Germany, with no government support, and are funded from the foreign cultural organisations and communities they work with; Borneo Bengkel promotes cultural and knowledge exchange through a residency, community outreach, and discussions, working collaboratively and has been supported by self-sustenance, crowdfunding and to a small extent the state; Pangrok Sulap from Ranau, Sabah is self-sustaining: “Guna duit sendiri (no dana), ajar bengkel seno, jual karya ke luar, merchandising” (Rizo Leong).

In Penang, Lee Cheah Ni mentioned one group having good experiences getting support from a private patron, Hin Bus Depot. Yeoh Lian Heng of Lostgens said: “As artists, our first job is to make ourselves survive and then continue to do work. I think to run the art space also have the same thought.” Co-founder of Rimbun Dahan, arts patron Angela Hijjas spoke up for the important role played by such groups: **“What artist groups are doing is an opportunity to recognise that the artists are in a unique position to initiate projects for the betterment of the arts industry and more activities for the public.”**

Participants discussed ideas on **how to raise further funding for the visual arts.**

At a government and corporate level, collector and consultant Suhaimi Ahmad felt that “if you can put together all the contributions made by government through various agencies and GLCs and whatnot, I think the amount can be quite staggering, but it’s all in silos” and suggested establishing a foundation where government, GLCs and individuals can contribute; however, this would require incentives like tax rebates. Such a foundation, he said, could include an arts council on its agenda. Founder of art haven PUDGi Khairul Anuar suggested, “Maybe the government should consider their developments to have certain funds to be reserved for arts because there’s a lot of townships actually using arts.” Angela Hijjas felt such practices were too open to abuse: “In some countries, they initiated that there must be a certain percentage of the building budget dedicated to including artwork but invariably, this would go astray”. Christianne Goonting also suggests a mandatory art budget allocation for property developments and tax deductions (same or 2 / 3x value) of local art purchased by businesses or individuals, but acknowledged that such measures would require transparency and oversight and alignment to market values.

Angela Hijjas suggested that **CENDANA or other organisations could match corporate donors with artists and artist groups for specific projects**: “Artists are not terribly good at presenting themselves and corporate donors don’t really want to get involved in supporting the arts because they see it as being too complicated, too difficult and something in which they have absolutely no experience... the corporates can get a huge mileage out of putting in more efforts and more finance into supporting the arts”. She also noted that CENDANA “is well-placed as a respected affiliate of a senior corporate player to assist in getting sponsorship to encourage philanthropy somehow”, feeling that “no strings attached” philanthropy lay at the heart of Rimbun Dahan’s success.

Sharmin Parameswaran believed **“We need more collaborations, whether it’s within the visual arts or outside the visual arts.”** From her experience, artists have difficulty realising ideas that may not be easily commercialised, as a lot of resources are needed, including technical resources “because if the idea is not selling or it’s going to be harder to sell, how are we going to do something?” She talked of possibilities of how within the visual art industry, venues, project managers, galleries could work together – “the galleries, they help sell because a lot of these art projects, at the end of the day, you can sell the work if you manage to get it out... a lot of this can happen if we collaborate or even talk to each other.” She also said she encourages artists to talk to other artists to learn from each other’s practical experience.

Session 3 moderators asked participants to think about **how to encourage policy or programmes for cross, trans or interdisciplinary exchange** (Yap Sau Bin) and suggested CENDANA might tap into this idea (Nur Hanim Khairuddin).

Yap Sau Bin called for **artists to “be more imaginative and playful with the resources that you can have to change the game”**, for instance to pool resources to support curators and art writers. Nadira Ilana said the discussion showed that “creativity shouldn’t just be restricted to the process of the art-making itself but also creativity in terms of how you actually fund your artwork, let’s say [if] the institutions are not providing the sort of support or the kind of creative freedom that is necessary.” As Liza Ho reiterated, “If it’s a bottom-up approach, come on, artists are the biggest stakeholders in this art scene. So, I think they can think of something.”

7. A More Balanced Geography, Greater Connectivity

Session 2 of the roundtable focused its discussion on support systems for art across Malaysia. Around a third of participants attending the roundtable came from outside of the Klang Valley, covering Sabah and Sarawak and six of the peninsular states, representing artists' associations and collectives, art education, as well as institutions. It was felt that **"a lot of activities or a lot of events in Malaysia are very KL-centred"** and that art funding is not evenly distributed – **"the national fund, I think it should be distributed equally among everyone"** (Sonia Luhong Wan). For Yakup Mohd Shafee, in Sarawak, for example, the lack of a public art gallery and state government support, and the logistical difficulty and expense of bringing works out from the state, posed major issues: "Kehendak utama saya rasa artis di Sarawak ialah peluang untuk membawa karya tu ke luar. Satu masalah ialah logistic" (One of my priorities is that I feel artists in Sarawak need the opportunity to bring their artworks out. Logistics is one of the problems). Moderator Nadira Ilana underlined in the wrap-up, "Why it is important for art to travel around the country is also that different parts of the country can provide different interpretations of the work. And those different interpretations need to exist for us to gather better understanding of the Malaysian visual arts and landscape."

Notably, many, if not most, art students go to study in the Klang Valley – Fuad Arif points out that most of his students at UiTM Shah Alam are not from KL, and cannot continue in art when they go back to their home state or kampung. Collector Bingley Sim said, "I don't think there's anything wrong having KL being the centre of or core of art activities"; for collectors, KL is "a melting pot of all the artists who from all over the country... it does not matter where the good artworks come from because there's a lot of us art collectors; we go to where the good artworks are".

Nadira Ilana, as Session 2 co-moderator, felt "maybe it is that discussions need to be had with KL on **how to talk about Malaysian art in a way that is more inclusive.**"

At the same time, there was a push to decentralise mindsets: "There is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all sort of a story for the whole country because Sabah is different, Sarawak is different, and all the different states in Semenanjung have different stories, have different ways of doing things... we are all looking towards the KL model of doing things – the KL model of being an artist, of selling your works or asking institutions for money and things. And I don't think that's a model that necessarily works... **Stop thinking of how we can support other states based on KL terms and 'peninsular' terms...** give that money to the state and then, let the people in the state and the state decide how they want to spend that money" (chi too). "I think [what's] very important is you need to change your mentality: **where you are, that's your centre...** I think artists can be like, you go back to your kampung and then, make your kampung become a centre" (Yeoh Lian Heng).

Yap Sau Bin brought in the example of Indonesia, where researchers, artists, thinkers, activists have been decentralising from Jogjakarta, Jakarta and Bandung, "the 3 centres of creative production and marketing and collection", "into where they come from" – "it's all about being activist, independent and critical of the system of both production and consumption; how as artists we produce, and how you notice that there is a problem in the way work is being channelled or how it's being distributed... they do not just ask and look for a solution, they take the initiative".

He felt that what Borneo Bengkel is doing is interesting because “if you keep on that idea of being independent in tandem, in conversation with institutions, with other agencies, we can spread the idea, you can co-influence each other”, and that what is “very important when we start looking at others whether local, national or regional, is that we need to compare the models, those models that work, whether from Arts-ED, whether from Penang or from different places; so that our friends, fellows from different persatuan in the negeri, also understand, ‘Oh, there are different ways of doing things’; whether we think this condition works for us or not is another issue.”

From participants’ contributions, it was encouraging to find that **efforts, largely initiated by artists, are in fact being made to spark activity outside of the KL “centre”, providing models for other initiatives.**

Sonia Luhong Wan felt that “since the past three or four years, the creative scene in Kuching has really boomed, across all sectors which is music, performance arts, visual arts”. Borneo Bengkel has done their part as “a platform to unite and to celebrate Bornean creatives through interdisciplinary discussions and artistic and cultural exchange of knowledge”. For example, it travelled to Kuching, Kota Kinabalu and Pontianak to research art scenes and issues, and has held workshops in kampung with outcomes shown at HAUS KCH in Kuching, the latter a good example of “bridging between urban and rural communities and artists so that there can be an ecosystem where we are also sustaining cultural and heritage, also helping to encourage contemporary cultural heritage artists” (Nadira Ilana).

On the Perak coast, LaKar (Laman Karya), as part of LUMUT Distro, is a space which works across disciplines on activities with the community, including art activities with craft, children, and so on. Projects so far have included a tanglung festival involving tanglung-making workshops “sebab problem dia dekat Malaysia ni yang selepas tu kita tengok dasar kebudayaan kebanyakan paksi dia kepada budaya Melayu saja. Tapi dekat situ, kita nampak bagaimana kita nak menyantumi budaya lain” (because the problem in Malaysia is that we see cultural policy as mostly based on Malay culture only. But here, we see how we can embrace other cultures) (Noor Azizan Paiman).

In rural Johor, Hujung Tanah Artist Residency arose as a response to the issue of audience / society, operating somewhat like a school in the outdoors, with “bengkel-bengkel di kampung di bawah pokok” (workshops in the kampung under a tree); “Jadi, ini peranan artis; satu-satunya yang kena dilihat dibanyakkkan lagi di mana-mana, khususnya, kawasan-kawasan di luar bandar” (this is a role for the artist, and we can see it grow everywhere, particularly in rural areas) (Fakhrul Zaman).

Haryany Mohamed denied that Penang people looked at KL as a centre – “We do things our own way”. She touted Penang-based cultural heritage initiative Arts-ED and art centre Hin Bus Depot as pioneering models for the rest of the country. She also introduced plans for a RM30 million Penang Art District project, to be led by Penang State Museum, as a hub for the arts scene on a 9.2 acre plot of land given by state.

There was discussion on how to have better connectivity between art scenes, even “bypassing” the centre. Co-moderator Simon Soon asked, “**How do we build that visual arts network throughout Malaysia to include other urban centres, rural or marginalised communities?**” While Fakhrul Zaman thanked NAG for giving room and opportunity to artists through collaborating with him [through Hujung Tanah artist residency in Johor on a joint programme, Sana Sini Seni], so far there appears not to be much co-operation between artists / institutions in different states. Sonia Long Wuhan offered Mampu Art Market held at Hin Bus Depot in Penang and then in Kuching as a rare example and stressed, “**It’s not a one-person effort or one-collective effort. I think there has to be a common understanding and awareness that there is this need, and working together**”.

Sabah Art Gallery Curator Jennifer Linggi called for a **creative body with information about associations and collectives and their work, as a platform for networking and expanding networks.**

Virtual platforms as a platform for exhibition and discourse centre as raised by Amir Amin would also be key. Daniel Chong said it might be interesting “to have some initiatives or events that are digital-first initiative whereby there’s no art to go to; let the beauty or message flow out from the screen to wherever that is the centre that you occupy.” Christianne Goonting calls for the “development of a comprehensive national online website that brings Malaysian and other collectors together with artist and artworks from every region of Malaysia”.

Janet Pillai suggested some form of research on the model of what Borneo Bengkel is doing, “where they’ve found some money to have facilitators to go around and maybe make a directory and make the networking happen. So, this form of intermediary, small intermediaries... that means somebody funding small intermediaries to help make the connections between the centre and the periphery”.

Tan Zi Hao suggested, “We can tap into existing infrastructural networks such as Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, who already have space outside of KL, but are they actually actively promoting cultural or arts literacy in that particular locality?”

On measures / initiatives that could be taken by the state, Baharudin Arus even suggests a quota and shared costs provided for Sabah artists to exhibit on the peninsula, and a certificate of recognition from each state that would enable artists to take up residencies in communities / government or private sector / colleges and universities. He also recommends regular exhibitions in local malls: “This provides an opportunity to artists to meet the community and indirectly the community gets educated on the arts in each state.” Christianne Goonting advocates for “**each state – one art gallery**” and also for each district “to have a dedicated area to promote the district artists” such as the library, district office or post office. Yakup Mohd Rafee suggested “satu platform khas untuk artis-artis di setiap negeri tersebut atau kawasan tersebut untuk sama-sama menyumbang dalam perkembangan seni di sini” (**a special platform for artists in each state to support art development**).

Izan Satrina mentioned that CENDANA might consider expanding its focus beyond KL (contingent on resources) in the future.

The issue of **how Malaysian artists could plug into regional and global networks outside the country** was also briefly discussed. Once again the problem of artists not having the knowhow to package or present themselves arose. Bayu Utomo Radjikin felt, “Networking is very important and there must be an effort untuk membolehkan the access of all this opportunity of getting networking in global art by the third party”. Rizo Leong found that Pangrok Sulap got promoted by fellow Sabahan artist Yee I-Lann and also supported by a certain gallery / galleries, and felt that artists’ work would speak for itself: “Artis kena buat kerja yang bagus. Kita tidak boleh tunggu.... kita buat baik betul-betul untuk masyarakat, duit itu akan datang kemudian” (Artists have to make good works. We can’t wait... We make good for society, money will come along our way).

Long Thien Shih cautioned that artist group trips and travelling exhibitions do not necessarily further a career, being successful abroad needs a lot of hard work. Samsudin Wahab also pointed out that certain overseas residencies may not necessarily be meaningful, advocating spending time researching local places and traditions: “Kadang-kadang kita pergi New York pun tak tahu buat apa. Makan angin” (So sometimes we go to New York but we don’t know what to do. Just travelling). Yap Sau Bin noted that artists should recognise that international museums / biennale curators have certain research or collection interests that may or may not apply to an artist’s practice, while “going back to your locality or source of production can build confidence of what is being made.”

In the experience of APS, who are exploring opportunities to exhibit in China and Indonesia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has assisted with networking, but there are practical issues of selling works overseas, as some artists are not familiar with import / export regulations for overseas exhibitions, or how to sell works overseas: “Saya tak tahu macam mana, tapi memang saya tak tahu apa cara yang paling mudah untuk karya kita bawa ke luar negara, kita boleh berjual” (I do not know how, and I definitely do not know the easiest way to bring our artworks to sell out of the country) (Hassan Ghazali).

Sylvia Lee Goh noted a global network [World International Women Artists’ Council] started by late artist Yuen Chee Ling that was based in Penang, which organised touring exhibitions around the world, illustrating possibilities for different forms of networking initiatives.

8. *Platforms for Networking / Association / Solidarity / Knowledge and Information-Sharing*

Aside from raising the issue of connectivity among artists, groups and art scenes around Malaysia, the roundtable also highlighted a **growing generation gap**, with a substantial part of Session 1 spent in heated debate about the relationship between senior and younger artists. Veteran artist Sylvia Lee Goh asked pointedly, “Are senior artists a forgotten lot? And how do you plan to perpetuate their contribution?”, feeling that there was much more focus on the contemporary nowadays. Sonia Luhong Wan countered, “How I feel as a young generation artist is that the older generation or the more established artists do not make enough effort to try to reach out to emerging artists. I feel there’s a gap between generations because there’s maybe a lot of young artists nowadays, they venture more into contemporary or street art. Older artists are more fine art and they’re more professional in the sense [that] they get galleries and all that. So, I feel there’s a gap of interest or understanding”. She called for working together to address and connect the generation gap, “We can’t just be stuck in our artist mindset and say, okay, you know what, let’s be passive and fine artists. We have to be active and go out and actively document and involve artists who are more senior and younger than us.”

It was clear from the range of participants’ perspectives and experiences that although there are many associations and several active collectives across the country, **different groups of artists seldom communicate**, and although every effort was made to bring together a broad cross-section of voices at the roundtable, many other types of voices will not have been heard.

One of the key observations from the roundtable then, was that **there need to be more platforms for networking and sharing knowledge and information**.

In discussing matters of navigating government departments regarding funding, public art, and working with communities and spaces for projects, it was found that there was a **lack of shared or formal channel for voicing community concerns**. Participants and moderators raised questions of how artists might assert / protect their rights to freedom of expression and intellectual property. “Maybe an artist that deals with political issues will face more obstacles than an artist who deals with issues pertaining to identity. How can a support system or protective net be extended to these different kinds of artists?” (Lam Shun Hui, online contributor).

Various platforms were called for and discussed. Tan Zi Hao felt, “There should be legal assistance, there should be a **form of solidarity network that actually can support the artists**” in cases of censorship, for example: “Say, if their artworks have been taken down, who do the artists go to aside from exposing themselves to the media or social media?”

Jennifer Linggi mooted “the possibility of setting up a kind of **organisation that reports, or agency on some level that facilitates knowledge.**”

Nadira Ilana suggested that “having a platform for networking and expanding networks can be addressed in a symposium. So, perhaps, gatherings like this could be more helpful towards artists across the country.” At the same time, “organic networking may work better, considering the diversity of voices, there’s no one size fits all for in terms of networking”.

In her opening remarks, Izan Satrina had talked of CENDANA’s role as facilitator and advocate, and how feedback during the roundtable would help them in their role: “As we move to visual arts, we also don’t want to be disconnected from what the community needs, what the community wants, what our gaps are. CENDANA’s strength is on the policy and facilitation side and advocacy [and] CENDANA needs to advocate with the community.”

In terms of a **database of artists / collectives** for information, Rohana Mohd Yusof said that the National Art Gallery has a form of directory and is making an archive, and invited participants to contribute their information. Christianne Goonting specifically suggests a “**regular listing of annual existing grants, scholarships, residency programmes, competitions or loans available**”.

Sarena Abdullah mooted the idea of a **professional association of art educators** for knowledge-sharing and advocacy, using the example of the College Arts Association in the United States, with a biannual conference on art-making, research, professional issues, education; such an association would be more equipped to push for changes, e.g. in the art education curriculum. She also mentioned that it could consider artists who want to professionalise. Simon Soon noted that such associations could also be “a strong platform for advocacy for various social issues” but cautioned against such an association as “a professional body that regulates the knowledge and the industry, becomes a membership of gatekeepers.”

Moderators tentatively brought up **the question of whether Malaysia needed an arts council.** However, this remained a looming question as it was felt to be too large and specific a topic to address by the time the roundtable came to a close. Haryany Mohamed did mention that Penang has an Arts Council which was previously registered as an NGO but is now to be parked under a state government exco. Sunitha Janamohan introduced a forum on Arts Policy to take place in January 2019 which would look more closely into the issue, and sketched out some considerations for participants. She noted that, “Everywhere after the elections, there was a lot of interest in people talking to the government but what became apparent is a lot of people don’t know how to talk to government. We don’t know how to be active as a civil society, not just as artists.”

Yeoh Lian Heng commented, “Of course, I agree to have an Art Council, but I think we’ve not reached that time yet, but maybe **we should think about an Artists’ Union, I mean, Pekerja Seni (Art Workers’) Union.**” Reiterating Baharudin Arus’ call at the beginning of the roundtable for some form of an artists’ forum, he explained, “We need to have a voice, [an] independent voice from the ground, and then, we can dialogue [with] whatever Ministry [what] we want to have to voice out. I think it’s very important because if you park the Arts Council under government or this and that, I think [our] voice couldn’t be heard, or is controlled by certain group and like this.”

05

How Much Help Do Artists Want?

The session revealed different attitudes to whether artists should be supported in terms of funding and other forms of support. With the exception of Baharudin Arus who felt that he had to “beg” money for artists in Sabah, no participants asked for handouts or stipends but rather actively sought funding for activities, and developing new projects, and ideas for improving infrastructure / the ecosystem like supporting peripheral industries. Participants were open to government and private funding, support and initiatives, yet keen on collectivisation and self / community-led development, though no clear lines were drawn. Different perspectives included:

“What artists want is to make art. That’s all. Making art is the whole purpose of being an artist. Without making art, you’re not an artist. As simple as that. And without all this political platform, all this subsidisation, exposure, sales and market – would that make you less creative? Would that make you less of an artist? Would that make you stop making art? I don’t think so.” (Jalaini Abu Hassan, artist, associate professor, Faculty of Art & Design, UiTM)

“We need to change our mentality because I think we cannot just always be thinking that the help should be from the top-down or from someone or from government but I think it should be from ourselves.” (Yeoh Lian Heng, artist, co-founder, Lostgens)

“Too much help is like the zoo. The animals in the zoo, they got everything provided. After a number of years, a number of generations, they are not the real animals anymore.” (Long Thien Shih, veteran artist)



06

Everything is Broken? The Future of the Visual Arts Ecosystem

"Kita percaya benda tu. Benda kita percaya memang ada ekosistem. Pergerakan seni bergerak sebab ada ekosistem ni; sebab tu, kita terus berkarya. Kalau tidak cacat di satu badan kalau let's say takda galeri, takda institusi, ekosistem tu cacat. So, memang kita bekerja dalam ekosistem tu" (We believe in "that thing". That thing – we believe there is an ecosystem. Art moves because there is this ecosystem; and because of it, we continue to make art. If not, the body is handicapped, let's say there is no gallery, no institution, that ecosystem is handicapped. So yes, we definitely work in that ecosystem). (Samsudin Wahab, artist)

"I'm having issues with current 'power' and 'authority' hierarchy, affiliation, banal working culture among the institutions and agencies that innate from last regime until today without reassessment by art community or new government. I don't see any hope or change in coming future in my field, outside or inside the institutions neither." (Tan Hui Koon, curator)

"Waktu sekarang ni, kita dah kena tukar ada satu persepsi ataupun mentaliti untuk membangunkan negara; ini bukan kerja 10 orang, atau 150 orang staf Balai Seni" (At this point in time, we need to change our perception and mentality to develop the nation, this is not the work of 10 people or 150 Balai Seni staff). (Intan Rafiza, performance artist, curator)

"Artists have to create their own institutions, meaning that you have to plan and strategise the kind of things that you're going to do to bring things further." (Mohd Nasir Baharuddin, artist and educator)

"Although there is no right way to create an ecosystem for art, there can be best practices to create support systems for artists. And over the years, and especially in the past decade, art world infrastructure, state, private and market, has certainly expanded in the country but it is sometimes felt to be disconnected from the real lives and needs of artists and art workers or even misdirected or under-utilised, benefitting only some. Arguably, some of the most effective and dynamic support systems have come from among artists themselves through collective practices and initiatives." (Nadira Ilana, filmmaker and arts activist)

"I want an art ecosystem that does not centre on art as a commodity." (chi too, artist and art worker)

"I think the current approach that we're having right now is that we are focusing too much on result-based investment which includes collectors' acquisition whereas process-oriented approach is quite lacking such as residency programmes; programmes that focus on the research process itself but not art exhibitions." (Tan Zi Hao, artist and researcher)

"We need to create conditions that empower and enable artists to function independently, devoid of these other networks and systems of support, and allow them to network, but we also need to have institutions that are better-managed and held accountable. When we talk about corporate support, there have to be systems of incentives. We also have to understand how city governments are interested in developing their respective cities, understand how we, in the arts and corporate sectors, can also take part in that development." (Sunitha Janamohan, arts management lecturer, LaSalle College of the Arts)

"The principle of collaboration is recognised as central to how we must grow our art scene in the future." (Simon Soon, art historian, curator, writer and educator)

"The systemic issues that we deal with – issues of transparency, accountability still need to be addressed but I think artistic forces and creativity can be used to play in a different way or else, your creativity is just being subsumed into a neoliberal system of doing things." (Yap Sau Bin, artist, curator, and educator)

"The methods of creating are shifting. Which I believe also means that the reason for artistic creation is changing as well. What does an artist want? Who are the audiences? It translates into a multitude of personal and structural needs but I think ultimately it is about what the times deemed them to do.

And with globalisation and Internet emphasising on connectivity and solidarity, and the idea of "terror" in its variations of meanings that seek to set people apart, I think these might be very useful tools / framework for creative workers to think / work on in the future.

Intersecting is also a question of expanding pools of resources, not only relying on personal or governmental resources for help. Or structures such as exhibitions and biennales or expos or residencies. Kampung visited by creative bodies, "outsider" exhibitions, working as teachers, what are the initiatives on our side to grow an organic, less rigid, if not sustainable future?" (Lam Shun Hui, creative worker)



07

Bottom line Messages to Government Policy-Makers and Administration

1. Recognise Arts as an equal entity on par with Tourism and Culture in Ministry of Tourism Arts and Culture (MOTAC)
2. Need to inculcate art education in schools; art education should not be sidelined but on par with other subjects, and address issues in tertiary art education
3. Need informed and relevant people in leadership, well-versed people overseeing arts in Ministries or government agencies
4. Funding policy and funding for the visual arts should be consistent and sustainable, but there is no need or desire for policy to formulate a direction for artistic practices
5. Resolve difficulties in where to look for help and information and resolve difficulties in navigating many different departments dealing with arts under federal, state, local councils; departments and agencies should engage with artists
6. Agencies should focus on research, residencies, long-term rather than one-off projects, e.g. with cultural research centres, museum collaborations; can act as facilitators, e.g. for corporate support of art
7. Perspectives of art are too economic-centred, representation of art too market-driven because institutions do not have capacity, power and autonomy to play leading roles
8. Focus on arts management, art history, curatorial training to foster support system and engagement
9. Need to distribute arts support and infrastructure more evenly across Malaysia, not only centre on KL system and engagement
10. Public spaces and facilities can be used to promote art awareness across the country through working with artists

08

Concluding Reflection: Macro or Micro Models of Ecosystem?

What models of visual art ecosystems might we look to for reference?

Session 2 co-moderator Simon Soon quoted artist Sharon Chin's Facebook post comparing the model of Singapore, "a top-down model in which almost all artistic activity is funded and overseen by state institutions" with a good infrastructure and highly trained workforce but where success is measured in KPIs and "that which cannot be measured loses its value in all but name, including mental and spiritual wellbeing, cultural inclusion and diversity, a sense of belonging and community, and respect for individual human rights", with that of Oaxaca, Mexico, a world-renowned printmaking centre which is an organic, arts community-led phenomenon, with libraries, institutions, workshops, collectives, co-ops, residencies, art fairs, and a Biennale dedicated to the print scene.

There are also hybrid models we can refer to. In Indonesia, dynamic ecosystems have emerged in a chaotic manner in the face of very limited government support and funding, lack of state art institutions, and uneven formal art education. These include a collector-led active art market and private institutions, decentralised community engagement led by artist collectives with the support and cooperation of local communities and at times city councils, and art ecosystem development initiatives also led by artist collectives, e.g. incubation / education programmes for artists, art workers and collectives. While much further support may be desired in the Indonesian context, innovative models of artistic, curatorial and ecosystem practices have been developed.

Recently in Taiwan, a bottom-up initiative led by cultural policy researchers and arts workers worked with government and engaged the public nationwide to bring together an open and inclusive National Cultural Congress to create a Cultural White Paper focusing on "five core values" – cultural citizenship, public participation, diversity and equality, deliberative thinking and collaborative governance.

Is it possible, in Malaysia, for a diverse, disconnected artists' community to galvanise and work in tandem with existing support systems and government to shape a dynamic and nurturing ecosystem that brings art closer to its public?

09

About the People Who Made This Happen

MEJA BULAT: SIDANG SUARA SENI

10 November 2018

Surise Innovation Lab, Publika

A project commissioned by CENDANA and co-organised by RogueArt.

Venue partner: Publika

Working committee: Azzad Diah, Bibi Chew, Fuad Arif, Intan Rafiza, Zainol Abidin Ahmad Shariff, Smek Almohdzar, RogueArt (Rachel Ng & Beverly Yong)

Moderators: Ahmad Fuad Rahmat, Nadira Ilana, Nur Hanim Khairuddin, Simon Soon, Yap Sau Bin

Secretariat: RogueArt

Project Assistant: Chiang Xi Ning

Rapporteurs: Amar Shahid, Sharifah Nur Syafiqah

Event Assistants: Chye Pui Mun, Tan Bon Peng

CENDANA Team: Izan Satrina, Sabrina Rosli, Nurdeena Anuar, Hwei and Smek Almohdzar

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

Ahmad Fuad Osman is a multidisciplinary artist, now living and working in between Kuala Lumpur and Bali.

Ajim Juxta is a KL-based artist, and co-founder of the collective Titikmerah.

Ameruddin Ahmad is Deputy Director of Operations at the National Art Gallery.

Angela Hijjas is a co-founder of Rimbun Dahan, a centre for developing traditional and contemporary art forms which has hosted artists' residencies since 1994.

Baharudin Arus, Ph.D, is president of Sabah Visual Art Society, and senior lecturer, Faculty of Humanities, Art & Heritage, Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

Bayu Utomo Radjikin is an artist; he runs HOM Art Trans, an independent art space.

Bingley Sim is a founder member of the Malaysian Art Friends; his collection of contemporary Malaysian art (begun in 2004) focuses on emerging painters and sculptors.

Carmen Nge is a lecturer at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman and also writes on Malaysian art.

chi too is an artist, filmmaker, and art worker.

Fakhrul Zaman has been the curator of UTM Gallery Museum for 16 years, he is also President of Johor Serupa2 and committee member of Gabungan Persatuan Pelukis SeMalaysia (GAPS).

Hamidon Ahmed is Vice President, GAPS, and a board member of the Perak Museum; his practice includes graphic design, portraiture, caricature, and contemporary art.

Haryany Mohamad is Director and Senior Curator of Penang State Museum & Art Gallery.

Hassan Ghazali is the President of Angkatan Pelukis SeMalaysia, and a lecturer at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris.

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Jalaini Abu Hassan, or "Jai", is an artist and educator; he is associate professor at the Faculty of Art & Design, UiTM.

Janet Pillai represents ReformARTsi – a coalition of the performing arts, looking at reforms for the performing arts in the areas of education, access to funding and enlarging creative expression.

Jennifer Linggi is Curator of the Sabah Art Gallery.

Joshua Lim is founder and director of A+ Works of Art, an art gallery in Kuala Lumpur.

June Tan is from Five Arts Centre – an arts collective whose work reflects on Malaysian contemporary issues via performances, exhibitions, seminars, discussions and workshops.

Khairul Anuar is an entertainment lawyer and a writer, and co-founder of PUDGi, a 10-acre art haven near KLIA.

Khing Chuah is part of the team who started Hin Bus Depot Artspace in Penang, and is now its Content Curator.

Kim Ng is a practicing artist, and is Head of Fine Art at Dasein Academy of Art.

Lee Cheah Ni is an independent curator and cultural researcher based in Penang.

Lim Kok Yoong is a media artist, and senior lecturer, Faculty of Creative Multimedia, Multimedia University.

Liza Ho is co-founder of OUR ArtProjects, an art gallery, and of The Zhongshan Building, a creative arts hub in Kampung Attap, KL.

Long Thien Shih was part of the Wednesday Art Group in 1960, going on to study art in Paris and London; in 1984 he formed the Klang Artists Association.

Mahen Bala is a documentarian and visual artist.

Mohd Nasir Baharuddin is an artist, and senior lecturer at the Faculty of Design, Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Mohd Suhaimi Ahmad is a consultant and has been an art collector for over 20 years; he also plays an advisory role regarding Khazanah Nasional's art collection.

Muhammad Amir Amin is a Perak-born artist and co-founder of ARTO Movement, a multidisciplinary art collective.

Munawati Yaacob is Deputy Under Secretary, Culture Policy Division, Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture.

Prof. Dato' Dr. Najib Ahmad Dawa is Director General of the National Art Gallery.

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Noor Azizan Paiman is a Melaka-born artist based in Perak.

Noreen Zulkepli is Deputy Director of Bank Negara Museum & Art Gallery.

Rahel Joseph is Gallery Director of ILHAM Gallery KL.

Rizo Leong is a woodcut artist from Ranau, Sabah and co-founder of Pangrok Sulap, a collective involved in art and social activism.

Rohana Mohd Yusof has been working with the National Art Gallery since 1997, and is currently Head of its Exhibition Management, Collection & Conservation Department.

Saiful Razman is a KL-based artist; he co-organised notthatbalai festival in 2004.

Samsudin Wahab is a multi-disciplinary artist based in Shah Alam; founder of Chetak 12, a printmaking studio, he is also active in community projects with Sebijipadi and Studio Tikus.

Sarena Abdullah, Ph.D, is Deputy Dean (Research, Networking and Linkages) at the School of the Arts, and a Research Fellow at CENPRIS, at Universiti Sains Malaysia.

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Sunitha Janamohanam has been an arts manager, curator, venue manager and heritage manager in Malaysia. She teaches arts management at LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore.

Syed Rusydie is the Co-Founder of HAUS KCH, a creative community hub in Kuching.

Sylvia Lee Goh is a self-taught artist who has been practising for over 40 years, participating in more than 70 exhibitions at home and abroad.

Tan Zi Hao is a conceptual artist based in Kuala Lumpur, currently completing his Ph.D in Southeast Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore.

Thangarajoo is an artist, art educator and children's book illustrator.

Wairah Marzuki worked with the National Art Gallery for 30 years, including serving as its director general; she is currently a social activist with special needs communities.

Yakup Mohd Rafee is a Senior Lecturer and Deputy Dean of Student Affairs and Alumni in the Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

Yeoh Lian Heng is a founder of Lostgens' contemporary artspace, whose projects explore artists' role in society and building up meaningful relationships with local communities.

Zubaidah Mukhtar is Senior Principal Assistant Secretary, Culture Policy Division, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture.

ONLINE CONTRIBUTORS

Christianne Goonting is an artist, gallerist and advisor to Persatuan Pelukis Seni Visual KK Sabah.

Daniel Chong is a visual cultures lecturer and Wikimedia Community User Group Malaysia committee member.

Goh You Ping works in the performing arts.

Lam Shun Hui is a creative worker.

Tan Hui Koon is a curator.

ABOUT THE MODERATORS

Nur Hanim Khairuddin is a curator, writer and artist based in Perak.

Ahmad Fuad Rahmat lectures at the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus and is the host for Night School on BFM Radio.

Simon Soon, Ph.D, is a senior lecturer in Southeast Asian art history at the Visual Arts Program, Cultural Centre, University of Malaya, and also a team member of Malaysia Design Archive.

Nadira Ilana is a filmmaker from Kota Kinabalu.

Yap Sau Bin is an artist, and teaches at the Faculty of Creative Multimedia, Multimedia University.

ABOUT THE WORKING COMMITTEE

Azzad Diah is assistant curator at Ilham Gallery.

Bibi Chew is an art educator and multi-disciplinary artist, who began her career in the mid-'90s; she currently lectures at the Malaysian Institute of Art.

Fuad Arif, Ph.D, is an artist and senior lecturer in the Fine Arts Department, UiTM.

Intan Rafiza has been active as a performance artist since 2004; a founding member of T.I.G.A, she is also a curator, and was part of the curatorial team for the recent KL Biennale.

Zabas (Zainol Abidin Ahmad Shariff) is an artist, curator and writer.

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Rachel Ng & Beverly Yong are founders and directors of RogueArt.



ABOUT THE ORGANISERS

CENDANA (CULTURAL ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY) WAS OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED ON 6 SEPTEMBER 2017 TO SHAPE A VIBRANT, SUSTAINABLE AND AMBITIOUS CULTURAL ECONOMY FOR MALAYSIA, FURTHER RAISING THE PROFILE OF MALAYSIAN ARTS AND CULTURE TO HELP FORM THE IDENTITY OF MALAYSIA AS AN ARTS DESTINATION AND STRATEGICALLY PLACE MALAYSIA ON THE GLOBAL STAGE. IT IS SUPPORTED BY THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT THROUGH MYCREATIVE VENTURES SDN. BHD. (A WHOLLY OWNED COMPANY OF MINISTER OF FINANCE INCORPORATED) AND REPORTS TO MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MULTIMEDIA

WWW.CENDANA.COM.MY

ROGUEART ARE CONTEMPORARY SOUTHEAST ASIAN ART SPECIALISTS, FOCUSING ON THE CREATIVE, STRATEGIC AND ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF ART AND CULTURAL PROJECTS, EXHIBITIONS, COLLECTIONS AND PUBLICATIONS. FOUNDED IN 2008 AND BASED IN KL, ROGUEART HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN ORGANISING A NUMBER OF FORUMS AND DISCUSSIONS RELATING TO VISUAL ARTS IN MALAYSIA.

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