

**Hong Kong Arts Development Council**  
**International Arts Leadership Roundtable 2022**  
**“RE-CREATE”**

**Conference Summary**

The Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) held its 4<sup>th</sup> International Arts Leadership Roundtable (the Roundtable) on 15 December 2022 in a hybrid mode for both online and physical participation.

The Roundtable, inaugurated in 2013, aims to bring together arts leaders from all over the world to share and develop new ideas to improve the arts ecology. HKADC is again invited by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region’s Government (HKSAR) to organise the Roundtable in conjunction with Asia Cultural Cooperation Forum to foster regional and international cultural cooperation of the cultural and arts industries, which is also one of the highlights of the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the HKSAR.

Under this year’s theme of “RE-CREATE”, 12 global arts leaders from Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Macao, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, Korea, Australia, United Kingdom, and Canada gathered and discussed how the arts ecology at large had changed since the pandemic and how we could navigate through these changes.

**Plenary 1: Reconnecting the Public**

To express and to connect are very core to the business of the arts. Yet, the physical distancing measures installed during the pandemic not only altered the modes of communication, but also brought a halt to the physical arts making process, and a pause in the distribution and economy of the arts. The sector's composition and operation may not be the same anymore. A hybrid mode of arts activities has been experimented but what is the appropriate balance? How artists reconnect with the audiences and communities, and how institutions reach out to the arts sector and the public at large, is instrumental in the post-pandemic era.

**A. Panel Presentation****(1) Panel presentation by****Mr ZENG Xiang-lai****Director General, Shenzhen Municipal Bureau of Culture, Sports, Tourism, Radio and Television****“Re-Creation and Opportunities of the Post-Pandemic Arts Development Model”**

- 1.1. Since February 2020, performing venues such as opera houses, concert halls and theatres around the world had delayed and cancelled performances, and suffered great losses as a result. On the other hand, arts practitioners, arts organisations and cultural sectors had been looking for ways to overcome these difficulties. With accelerated digitalisation development, the arts industry had created a new and diverse model in the post-pandemic era.
- 1.2. Mr Zeng stated that re-creation in the post-pandemic era meant the use of diverse and innovative technology to recreate, in terms of innovations in (i) the mode of creation, (ii) format and (iii) business model.
- 1.3. First, online collaborations pushed artists to explore the diverse boundaries of the arts, hence caused **“Innovation in the Mode of Creation”**. For example, in April 2020, Guangzhou Opera House collaborated with a Beijing-based director WANG Chong to launch their first online programme *Waiting for Godot*, with project planning, script reading, post-production, rehearsal and performances all conducted online. The two-day online drama had attracted 290,000 online audiences in the end.
- 1.4. Second, the pandemic encouraged the emerge of content creators with different creative talents. Content creators no longer needed to wait for the endorsements and invitations by producers and curators until they had reached certain qualifications. Online platforms created new opportunities for professionals, amateurs and arts enthusiasts to make arts and show their works to the public. It even helped creators to transform from amateurs

to professionals. For example, Shanghai International Musical Festival launched the “Chinese Original Musical Incubation Programme” in 2020, one of the qualifiers from 147 submissions of the programme is an online content creator called TU Youqin. She has made a creativity Chinese cover video of *Chicago: The Musical*, which helped the musical generate tenfold ticket sales overnight.

- 1.5. The third could be reflected in the cross-media production and collaboration of classic titles. *White Snake* was the first movie adaptation of the Cantonese Opera classic using 4K Dolby Atmos technology, inviting audiences across borders to watch the classic across different mediums during the pandemic.
- 1.6. About “**Innovation in Format**”, Culture-in-Cloud had become the latest trend in the performing arts industry. More and more performing arts projects explored cloud formats as a solution to the limitation of live performances during the pandemic, which resulted in different Performances-in-Cloud, and even Publications-in-Cloud, Lectures-in-Cloud and Exhibitions-in-Cloud in other aspects. These explorations were possible to develop into new norms in future.
- 1.7. On “**Innovation in Business Model**”, the pandemic had also stimulated online auctions and expanded the arts market. For example, *Awakening Lion* by Guangzhou Song and Dance Theater was streamed online as a semi-charitable performance for a ticket price of RMB 1 when it was forced to cancel by the pandemic in July 2022. The programme gained 3.4 million views at the end.
- 1.8. Mr Zeng also shared the plans of Shenzhen on arts development in the post-pandemic era, such as the building of Shenzhen Opera House, one of the “Top Ten Cultural Facilities in the New Era”, and the new positioning of the city in the Greater Bay Area by the Chinese Government. Shenzhen had already held various online performances with Hong Kong and Macao.

**(2) Panel presentation by  
Mr NODA Akihiko  
Director, The Japan Foundation, Beijing**

**“Restructuring of Online/Onsite Projects”**

- 2.1. The Japan Foundation is an incorporated administrative agency supervised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that implements international cultural exchange. The Foundation has 25 overseas offices in 24 countries. As the Director of the Foundation in Beijing, Mr Noda oversees China, Macao and Hong Kong’s cultural exchange.
- 2.2. In order to be the bridge between Japanese people and the rest of the world, the Foundation is looking after three fields, namely (i) arts and cultural exchange, (ii)

Japanese language education overseas, and (iii) Japanese studies and global partnerships programmes.

- 2.3. For arts and cultural exchanges, the Japan Foundation is overseeing four categories including visual arts, performing arts, publication, and film and broadcast.
- 2.4. Mr Noda shared some of the arts and cultural exchange programmes held by the Foundation. Examples included sending artists and arts works to international art exhibitions such as Venice Biennale, hosting Japanese Film Festival (JFF) to promote Japanese films to overseas market, and conducting travelling exhibitions to introduce Japanese arts and cultures to overseas audiences.
- 2.5. Due to the pandemic, arts projects and activities were postponed or cancelled, which enormously impacted on international exchange activities in Japan and other parts of the world. Mr Noda further shared how the Foundation maintained the connection of cultural exchange between Japan and the other part of the world during the pandemic with “[JF Digital Collection](#)”. It was a site providing online cultural presentations and initiating dialogues in three major areas.
- 2.6. One example of the “JF Digital Collection” was the “[Stage Beyond Borders](#)” project, with a selection of outstanding Japanese stage performances delivered and streamed online. Online audience could watch dance, traditional Japanese performing arts and theatre programmes online on this website or its [YouTube channel](#) for free. Another example was the “[JFF plus](#)” project, which introduced Japanese films to the rest of the world. Audience could read artists’ interviews, watch selections of some of Japan’s most acclaimed films, and review past and upcoming screening events’ schedules via this website.
- 2.7. The Foundation was also providing many different international creations in performing arts. It supported collaborative creations between Japanese and international artists. What was more, the Foundation introduced an “**Observer System**” for a third-party who was not directly involved with the collaborative creations. The third-party would be assigned as an observer to monitor and record the process of the production, and make the process visible through reports and sharing sessions, providing international exchange opportunities for artists as a foundation for future international exchanges. In 2022, five exchange projects were chosen to introduce such “Observer System”.
- 2.8. As the Foundation was commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the normalisation of diplomacy between Japan and China soon, it had held a travelling exhibition *The Japanese Spirit of Gifting: Giving Shape to One’s Thoughts and Emotions* in four different Chinese cities, and an exhibition project “Beyond the Borders: Architectures of Japan” in Shenzhen.

- 2.9. As some of the countries were taking down quarantine measures, the Foundation was resuming collaborations with other parts of the world, both online and on-site.

**(3) Panel presentation by**

**Dr WU Zhi-liang**

**President of the Board of Directors, Macao Foundation**

**“Generating Social Capital with the Arts”**

- 3.1. Dr Wu pointed out that material civilisation, morality of citizens and cultural accomplishment constitute the overall development of a civilisation. As arts activities are essential pathways to elevate the morality of citizens and cultural accomplishment, they will help to create and reinforce social capital, social harmony and civilisation development.
- 3.2. Dr Wu stated that as the third sector of society, associations were set up to mitigate the shortcomings of the public sector and the market, by providing services to increase community engagement, enhance mutual trust and public governance, and organising activities as public goods. All these could enhance social capital.
- 3.3. Arts and culture could enrich the cultural life of citizens and enhance their cultural cultivation. On the other hand, associations could increase mutual trust and promote cooperation among members, which in turn alleviating social conflicts, promoting social harmony and stability. Dr Wu shared that the existence of these associations could directly maintain common social norms and beliefs, and establish social values and a sense of belonging.
- 3.4. The Macao Foundation had been one of the principal entities in Macao in supporting all cultural activities, as well as integrating and elevating the professionalism of cultural activities. As the Foundation maintained common social values with the arts, it had organised three “100 plans” since 2011. The three “100 plans” included “Macao Literature Series” that published 100 volumes of Macao literature; “Macao Artists Promotion Project” that organised exhibitions for 100 local artists; and “Citizens’ Concert” that held more than 100 shows in different parts of the city through different associations. In 2019, the Foundation initiated “Macao Youth Artists Promotion Project” to cultivate young artists. The project organised exhibitions and workshops for 20 selected young artists and helped them publish their works.
- 3.5. These series of activities promoted interactions between the artists and the citizens, enriched the cultural life of the populations, enhanced the cultural atmosphere of the community, enhanced the capacity of the population in appreciating the arts and of the artists in improving their skills, and hence, shaped the cultural image of the city.

- 3.6. The pandemic had interrupted the interactions and direct contact between artists and the public, resulting in a loss of social capital. Reconnecting the public with arts in an innovative way was a subject for the arts industry to reconsider. In the early days of the pandemic, Macao artists organised charity sales to help cushion out the crisis. Many reached out to the community to reflect on their observations and pay tributes to frontline workers. During the pandemic, the arts industry in Macao held online workshops, exhibitions and performances to stay connected with the public. Dr Wu believed that the arts industry would revitalise again when preventive measures relaxed in future.

**(4) Panel presentation by  
Mr Stephen WAINWRIGHT  
Chief Executive, Creative New Zealand**

**“Recalibrating: New Priorities to Sustain the Arts Sector So That Arts, Culture, and Creativity Improve the Lives of All”**

- 4.1. Statutory purpose of Creative New Zealand is to encourage, promote, and support the arts in New Zealand for the benefit of all New Zealanders. The strategic plan of Creative New Zealand is a public value model that involves public investments through the Arts Council to the arts sector to generate public benefits through arts activities.
- 4.2. Mr Wainwright mentioned that as there was very little opportunity for the public to convene during the pandemic, the focus of the work of the Arts Council was to help the arts sector survive. The Arts Council identified three priorities of work in particular, including (i) developing a resilient and sustainable arts sector; (ii) ensuring its services and the arts were accessible to, inclusive of and equitable to all New Zealanders; and (iii) embedding a recognition of the role of the arts, culture and creativity in contributing to the wellbeing of New Zealanders. And out of these priorities, resilience was the most important issue of the Arts Council.
- 4.3. Mr Wainwright mentioned that New Zealand had got high levels of public participation in the arts, but there were no legislations to look after arts practitioners. Most of the focus in the legislation was around freedom of speech.
- 4.4. From “[A crisis of sustainable careers?](#)”, a report prepared in 2022 by the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA), artists and independent workers in the cultural and creative sectors were in precarious working conditions. Mr Wainwright thought that this was the case in New Zealand too. Though the Arts Council had always supported the arts, research had shown that the median income of creative professionals in the country was very low.
- 4.5. Mr Wainwright stated that the work of the Arts Council reflected different tiers of interest, including interest from the public, government, the Arts Council and the arts community.

He thought that leadership could happen top down or bottom up, but the key was that the desire of looking after the arts community to be established by the public world. There was a need for the artists to be valued by the public in the same way as nurses and hospitals were valued.

- 4.6. Mr Wainwright thought that the heart of the issue in New Zealand was that arts practitioners worked in the gig economy and they were not doing so well during the pandemic. Therefore, the Arts Council was interested in seeing how different countries looked after arts practitioners.
- 4.7. Mr Wainwright further took Waikato area of New Zealand as an example. A small pilot project of practitioners getting a stipend on 20 hours a week was taking place. While in Ireland, artists had a universal basic income for the arts and the first 50,000 Euros of income could be tax free.

## **B. Highlights of Panel Discussion of Plenary 1: “Reconnecting the Public”**

Moderator:

- **Mr Paul TAM**, Executive Director of Performing Arts, West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (Hong Kong)

Panellists:

- **Mr ZENG Xiang-lai**, Director General, Shenzhen Municipal Bureau of Culture, Sports, Tourism, Radio and Television
- **Mr NODA Akihiko**, Director, The Japan Foundation, Beijing
- **Mr Stephen WAINWRIGHT**, Chief Executive, Creative New Zealand

1. Ms Winsome CHOW, Chief Executive of Hong Kong Arts Development Council asked the three panellists how they viewed people exchange in the new normal and if there would be any changes, as the whole world was walking out of the pandemic.
2. Mr Stephen WAINWRIGHT mentioned that as culture was fundamentally about relationships and all of us were hungry to convene, people would find a way to get together digitally, through Zoom or Microsoft Teams, and so on, as it was fundamental to our industry.
3. Mr NODA Akihiko believed that organising events in a hybrid format was probably going to be mainstream. He also thought that making two-way communications was crucial in building relationships and friendships, and that we must shift towards a normal communication method, like face-to-face interactions, soon.

4. Mr Paul TAM shared his experience in attending an arts festival in Edinburgh in August after the pandemic. He went to the biggest orchestra, ballet and theatre performances and they were just 80% full. However, those shows were usually full house before the pandemic. Presenters and friends in the arts told him that there was a fundamental change in customers behaviour after the pandemic. Older generations who went to arts performances in the past were not travelling as much as they used to be. Therefore, Mr Paul TAM thought that we needed to think of a new business model to find new and young audiences to fill the remaining 20% of the house.
5. An audience member asked if the speakers had any plans to organise activities in Hong Kong in future.
6. Mr ZENG Xiang-lai said that his team were actively planning for post-pandemic cultural exchange activities among Shenzhen, Hong Kong and Macao. They were preparing for various activities at the moment, including a large-scale dance drama *Wing Chun*, which was going on a tour from December 2022 and Hong Kong would be one of the touring locations. Mr ZENG Xiang-lai added that they also had collaborative music projects with Hong Kong. He hoped that exchange activities, no matter at government or civil society level, would resume to the pre-pandemic level soon.
7. Mr Stephen WAINWRIGHT said that organising activities in Hong Kong was on the mind of his team but they still didn't know the time as they were not sure when the travel restrictions would be eased. Mr NODA Akihiko mentioned that the Japan Foundation had just started discussing projects for its upcoming fiscal year starting from April 2023 and he could not know exactly what the Foundation was going to do. He hoped that there would be opportunities to show Japanese films in Hong Kong soon.
8. Mr Benedikt FOHR, Chief Executive of Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra shared that Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra would start collaborations in the Greater Bay Area as soon as the boarder opened. He asked how Mr ZENG Xiang-lai reached out to audience for online activities, concerts and expositions in Mainland China.
9. Mr ZENG Xiang-lai replied that his organisation, apart from its traditional online channel, had various media channels like WeChat, TikTok, Bilibili, Xiaohongshu, and so on. These online media platforms were more diversified with higher dissemination speed and broader audience bases, serving as new forms of publicity of his organisation. They were now setting up a government service platform that grouped all arts and cultural event listings in Shenzhen in one place and audience could order tickets through this platform. This was an innovation being developed during the pandemic.
10. Mr Paul TAM stated one of the questions raised online that whether physical events would still be the mainstream at the market in the near future.
11. Mr NODA Akihiko mentioned that the Japan Foundation would like to reinforce and strengthen its digital platform and distribution at the headquarters, while cooperation in

the 25 local overseas offices still go on. Mr Noda thought that it would be a combination of physical and online cooperation events in the near future.

12. Mr Paul TAM asked Mr Stephen WAINWRIGHT about the strategies of the arts industry to recover in this economic downturn after the pandemic. He also said that government funding or private funding might be some ways out.
13. Mr Stephen WAINWRIGHT said that it depended on the situations of different countries. Some governments might be willing to spend public money for this purpose while some countries might need to depend on philanthropists or community organisations that had got a philanthropic aspiration.
14. Mr Paul TAM thanked the three panellists for their invaluable sharing and expert views. He believed that artists and arts organisations are extremely resilient. Given the right amount of support, they will bounce back and be even better than before.

– END OF PLENARY 1–

**Plenary 2: Rethinking the Age of Digital Transformation**

Due to venue closures, the arts sector was motivated to experiment with technology, creating works and reaching their audiences in new ways, while expediting digital transformation in the sector. How have they experimented with technology? Have they found a new way to enhance audience experience? At the same time, the whole world is exploring possibilities in virtual worlds with non-fungible tokens (NFTs), blockchain technology and the metaverse. What are the implications of these opportunities to the arts scene?

**A. Panel Presentation****(1) Panel presentation by****Mrs Rosa DANIEL****Chief Executive Officer, National Arts Council (Singapore)****“Rethinking Technology, Innovation, and the Arts”**

- 1.1 The National Arts Council (Singapore) had embarked on the journey to technology in the arts since 2018 in its five-year blueprint. It had put technology first among the strategic priorities that it should lead the arts industry to think in this way. The Council had encouraged applying technology to new ways of arts creation and expression, as well as audience engagement. The Council believed that technology was a good way to reach out to a fragmented individual community, to engage and keep them in touch with what was happening. The pandemic accelerated the development of its digitalisation journey.
- 1.2 During the pandemic, the Council had rolled out a relief package, equivalent to about HK\$380 million, of which at least HK\$150 million was eventually channelled to digitalisation, as much of the arts activities during the years 2020 and 2021 were done online. A considerable amount of supply of the arts that came on stream.
- 1.3 At the start of this digitalisation journey, the Council wanted whatever size and capability of arts groups to try, so then the Council was able to convince receptive arts groups that learning up-skills into new competencies was as important as digitalising the arts projects itself.
- 1.4 The Council believed that arts were driving three key pillars of Singapore: (i) building the multicultural city into a connected society; (ii) making the city distinctive; (iii) encouraging creativity among citizens and thus, developing the creative economy of the city. In its next five-year blueprint from 2023 to 2027, the Council would continue to develop technological innovation in the arts as it believed technology could drive artistic excellence and audience engagement.

- 1.5 On artistic excellence, the Council had seen artists grew new capabilities and became more multidisciplinary. Technology had made it possible that visual arts, performing arts, literary arts to come together. Mrs Daniel also mentioned that the Council had to help protect the intellectual property rights of the artists. As the artists had embarked on digital arts, the Council had to think a lot deeper about the knowledge and needs of the related legislation, and how the artists to be aware of such needs.
- 1.6 Regarding capability development for the growing gig workforce, the Council had been very purposeful in providing training courses and helping arts practitioners to get resources at their fingertips. Technology would be important for bringing all these. Mrs Daniel said that the arts sector of Singapore had begun working with technology partners for several years. Mrs Daniel continued that technology partners knew what to do while the arts sector knew what they did best, and the Council would like to match both of them through arts and tech lab.
- 1.7 On audience engagement, Mrs Daniel stated that Singapore had also experienced the changes in consumer behaviours, there was about a 20% to 30% drop of audiences as compared to pre-COVID times. In the first study of the regular digital consumption surveys that the Council had conducted, digital engagement and digital consumption had gone up since the pandemic. Mrs Daniel believed that if the digital and analogue dimensions of the arts came together, audience would have new experiences and it would be powerful to engage the young.
- 1.8 Digital and hybrid programming had become a norm at major arts festivals. The Council had been engaging the visual arts sector and engaging new buyers on digital online auctions on NFT, exhibitions, sales, etc. The way the Council had been engaging was different, and the arts ecosystem had been transforming. Mrs Daniel said that technology had new possibilities for us to understand our customer segments, allowed us to reach out to different segments of audiences, and helped us gather data to analyse how we could better serve our consumers and audiences.

**(2) Panel Presentation by**

**Ms LEE Yoon-hee**

**Director General, Business Innovation Division, Arts Council Korea**

**Redesigning Arts Policy in a Changing Creative Landscape**

- 2.1 Ms Lee shared the current situation in regard to the changes in the creative environment in Korea from two aspects, (i) the policy environment, and (ii) the arts and culture landscape.
- 2.2 Policy environment - the Korean Government set up the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution Committee in 2017 and established Korean New Deal policies in cooperation with

relevant departments in 2020, to boost digitalisation in all industrial sectors of Korea and disseminate the digitalisation to all sectors of industry.

- 2.3 Arts and culture landscape - during the pandemic, many Korean artists provided online contents and created art pieces online, utilising new technologies and interacting with the audiences in a new format.
- 2.4 There were changes in the support policies in Korea these years. In 2017, “cyber” and “integration” were the new keywords of Arts Council Korea (ARKO). It started to focus on stage technology and online-focused arts. In 2020, ARKO expanded the scope of integrated creative endeavours across various disciplines of arts to cope with the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution. In 2022, ARKO implemented policies to support for metaverse art with a budget of KRW 1,700 million (approx. USD 1.32 million) set for these related projects.
- 2.5 Ms Lee stated that when ARKO was planning its support policies, it realised the limitations between technology and art convergence, such as lacking a sense of presence, realism and direct communication.
- 2.6 Ms Lee went on that many artists were interested in technology and arts convergence, but their works relied on the responses of the audience. ARKO came up with three purposes to tackle such limitations: (i) expanding the scope and value of arts using technology; (ii) finding ways to integrate arts and technology; and (iii) drawing new audiences and proposing new ways to communicate with them.
- 2.7 ARKO also realised the need to diversify its support schemes. To tackle technological barriers, ARKO was supporting and embracing all forms of technology integration from high-tech to low-tech, and providing workshops and training for the arts sector. For the barriers in the data service fields, ARKO would choose stable and proven businesses to provide voucher-style support for arts organisations. At the same time, ARKO supported arts projects from the initial stage to lower the burden of artists and arts organisations on the initial investment in relevant technology.
- 2.8 Regarding the information about integration of arts and technology, ARKO provided information about technology and art convergence, as well as matters of copyrights to artists. It also shared open-source archives to artists for research, criticism and reference etc.
- 2.9 Ms Lee said that it was too early for ARKO to talk about results of such support policies, but it is encouraging to witness many experiments from the artists. It realised that the boundaries between media were blurring, and the interaction with the audience had increased. In the early days, simple video versions of live activities and performances were seen, but then, new artistic models fully utilising the online medium emerged. And at the moment, ARKO was seeing artists using various technologies for their artistic creations.

- 2.10 ARKO set up a department dedicated to supporting technology integrated arts. It supported artistic creations in different stages of production.
- 2.11 As artists and technicians think and speak differently, ARKO also came up with a workshop programme called “APE”, a platform for artists and technicians to meet and understand each other better.

**(3) Panel Presentation by**

**Mr Adrian COLLETTE**

**Chief Executive Officer, Australia Council for the Arts**

**“Regenerating Arts and Culture – How Do We Build Back Stronger?”**

- 3.1 Arts and culture became an urgent necessity for audiences in Australia and across the world to stay connected in the early stage of the pandemic. The arts were more accessible than ever in the digital age. Creative workers and arts institutions turned to live streaming and digital broadcasts to continue to present artistic contents to online audiences who were “live” like in-person audiences.
- 3.2 Mr Collette shared the preliminary findings from The National Arts Participation Survey 2022 by Australia Council for the Arts that arts and creative experiences played several roles during the COVID-19 restrictions and they were a way to maintain social connection for people to relieve stress and do something meaningful.
- 3.3 The recent research by the Council tracking behaviours and attitudes of audiences since the early stage of the pandemic showed that digital offerings made arts accessible to new audiences, including those with disabilities, immunocompromised, and without access for geographic or financial reasons. And the arts sector was able to innovate and expand their digital capabilities and find new ways to engage with audiences both locally and globally.
- 3.4 Mr Collette mentioned that digital adaptation led to new ways of producing and experiencing arts, including digital arts offerings directly supporting the health and well-being of our communities. For example, the Sydney Dance Company offered accessible [online dance classes](#) in its virtual studio.
- 3.5 Mr Collette also mentioned that some in the arts had developed new business model during the pandemic. He took [Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair 2022](#) as an example. It generated over AUD 4 million (approx. USD 2.6 million) in direct sales of artworks and the profits went directly to art centres and communities, and some were in the remote parts of Australia. And the online ticketed concert series launched in March 2020 by the [Melbourne Digital Concert Hall](#) raised AUD 1.25 million (approx. USD 820,000) for

professional musicians to continue their craft. Such programme had gone international and helped musicians and workers in the arts industry to earn over AUD 3 million (approx. USD 2 million) for the last year.

- 3.6 The Council had seen that digital technologies affected the way audiences consumed and interacted with arts and culture. It was difficult to separate online and offline activities after the pandemic. However, it enabled the arts sector to develop new business models of engaging audiences and inspired artistic experimentation. Participation and interaction with the arts was made possible through smartphones and social media, and was no longer limited to the well-connected or affluent people.
- 3.7 Besides democratisation of access of the arts, democratisation of production was also possible. With easier access to digital technology, more people could make and distribute creative works by themselves.
- 3.8 Mr Collette addressed two challenges the Council had been facing. One challenge was to create sustainable business models for artists and arts organisations in the digital landscape. As many people still thought that online meant free or low cost, artists still struggled to receive adequate compensation for their creative works. Therefore, there was a need to ensure policy and regulatory settings to be compatible with the rapid advance of digital democratisation.
- 3.9 Another challenge was about digital inclusion. The Council had to ensure equity and access for people with different backgrounds and abilities. For example, digital technology had enabled people with disabilities to engage with the arts, but we must ensure our audiences would support investment in delivering accessible cultural contents and experiences. And there was also a need to improve digital literacy to ensure everyone was able to access and benefit from creative participation online.
- 3.10 Although arts were more easily accessible in the digital age, the tools and infrastructure behind digital media were increasingly under the control of large multinational technological companies. Therefore, different governments should ensure local content to be discoverable by regulatory means.
- 3.11 Investment in digital skills training and targeted professional development initiatives were also needed for cultural organisations to maximise opportunities in the new digital landscape.
- 3.12 The Council was harnessing and supporting the arts sector by providing an environment for digital acceleration. It was keeping up to date with audience behaviours, attitudes, motivations, and barriers to digital creative engagement. It was also developing digital capabilities and digital literacy within the arts and cultural sector through programmes such as [Digital Strategist-in-Residence](#), [CEO Digital Mentoring Programme](#) and [Digital Fellowship Programme](#) in partnership with Creative New Zealand.

## **B. Highlights of Panel Discussion of Plenary 2: “Rethinking the Age of Digital Transformation”**

Moderator:

- **Mr Kingsley NG**, Associate Professor, School of Creative Arts, Hong Kong Baptist University

Panellists:

- **Mrs Rosa DANIEL**, Chief Executive Officer, National Arts Council (Singapore)
- **Ms LEE Yoon-hee**, Director General, Business Innovation Division, Arts Council Korea
- **Mr Adrian COLLETTE**, Chief Executive Officer, Australia Council for the Arts

1. Mr Kingsley NG asked Ms LEE Yoon-hee to share some projects from Korea where artistic expressions were not bounded by the aesthetics of the emerging technologies, as artists all over the world were using the similar tools in creating arts with technology.
2. Ms LEE Yoon-hee showed excerpts from [\*Body Go Round: Round 1\*](#), a dance performance choreographed by contemporary dance artist Ms CHA Jin-yeop (차진엽) in 2021. Ms Cha was the director of an artificial intelligence related art group and she was utilising video-mapping and kinetic art technology in this dance piece.
3. Ms LEE Yoon-hee further shared Ms Cha’s thought on visualising the aesthetics of human bodies on the stage with the use of technology. She also stated that when Arts Council Korea support an art-technology project, it didn’t require artists to use any specific kind of technology and the most important thing for artists was to think clearly why they had to use these technologies in their works.
4. Mr Adrian COLLETTE quoted the phrase “*The medium is the message*” by Canadian communication theorist Marshall McLuhan and agreed with what Ms LEE Yoon-hee said. He thought that what Ms LEE Yoon-hee showed was an emerging art form combining physical theatre and digital theatre. It had already gone beyond hybrid. He believed that there would be more sophisticated digital art forms interacting with traditional live art forms in future.
5. Mr Kingsley NG asked if Mrs Rosa DANIEL and Mr Adrian COLLETTE could share some cases of new and sustainable business models emerged in the pandemic about arts and technology.
6. Mrs Rosa DANIEL thought that artistic input could enrich other types of creative sectors like design, engineering and architecture, and there would be more possibilities for livelihoods and monetising. She also mentioned the arts sector must think about cost

cutting and sustainable resourcing through technology. What was more, she said that technology encouraged us to break down barriers between different arts forms and cross-disciplinary arts were made possible.

7. Mr Adrian COLLETTE agreed with what Mrs Rosa DANIEL said. Then he raised his concern over the exploitation of intellectual properties when everything went digital. He quoted an example of a successful contemporary musician who had released an album every year and lived off his royalties for the past decade. However, when his whole catalogue was on Spotify, his business model was crawled. He then had to go back to touring to make a living. Mr COLLETTE commented that this example showed that going digital was more complicated than what we thought and it would take a long time to solve this problem.
8. Mr Kingsley NG stated a question raised online about how the Art Councils allocated funding to balance the growth of both traditional and digital arts.
9. Ms LEE Yoon-hee replied that Arts Council Korea was providing continuous support to tradition forms of arts, such as contemporary theatre and dance while supporting technology in the arts. The Council also supported artists and arts organisations on the initial costs in experimenting the convergence of arts and technology.
10. Mrs Rosa DANIEL mentioned that National Arts Council (Singapore) supported both forms of arts, but when it saw a proposal with possibility for digital offerings, it would ask the artists whether they would like to do more if the Council would support a delta funding. The Council hoped that artists and art organisations could activate the technological community to support later stages and bring the arts to the market.
11. Mr Adrian COLLETTE added that Australia Council for the Arts saw arts as fundamental to the investment in a broader creative sector. He believed that arts and culture was like research and development in the broader creative industries. In the digital environment, artists had extraordinarily dynamic skills to bring to the broader design sector.
12. An audience member asked how the policy support from Art Councils encouraged more private partnerships, as private sector and technological innovation always moved faster than policy. The member also asked how Art Councils made sure there would be commercial success when they had passed the projects to the private sector to develop.
13. Mrs Rosa DANIEL replied that Arts Councils did not have all the answers, but in Singapore, National Arts Council had other agencies and partners that are good at working with the private sector, for example, intellectual property rights office, economic enterprises, land and infrastructure agencies. Talking about sustainability, Mrs DANIEL suggested that corporate social responsibility of the private sector was a track for the arts sector, and the whole industry had to think of how we could motivate investments from the financial sector.

14. Ms LEE Yoon-hee mentioned that many businesses in Korea created foundations to support the collaboration between arts and technology, and supported shows and arts exhibitions. Examples include Hyundai Motor and SK Innovation. Moreover, recently, the private sector was interested to collaborate with the arts sector in content creation in the metaverse. Ms LEE also added that some public corporations and entertainment companies would like to collaborate with the arts sector on different digital means.
15. Mr Adrian COLLETTE would like to respond to the question mainly from the perspective of intellectual property issue. He thought that the private sector had always been ahead of the public sector in exploitation of artistic values, as commercial enterprises wanted to make profit while the arts sector wanted to create values. He stated that Australia Council for the Arts believed in creating public money for public values, therefore, it tried hard to regulate the market. Taking monopolised digital distribution channels as an example, the Council would try to ensure Australian artists and Australian content were readily discoverable in the big distribution systems driven by algorithm.

– END OF PLENARY 2–

**Plenary 3: Let's Re-Create**

The world is never the same again; it's time to re-create. Leaders are invited to share their own experiences, views and strategies in re-creating a suitable environment for the arts industry in this post-pandemic era.

**A. Panel Presentation****(1) Panel presentation by****Mr Benny HIGGINS****Chair, Edinburgh Festival Fringe****"Wellbeing and Sustainability"**

- 1.1 Mr Higgins stated the importance of culture and wellbeing during when facing difficulties by quoting the French philosopher and writer Albert Camus's saying, *"Without culture, and the relative freedom it implies, society, even when perfect, is but a jungle. This is why any authentic creation is a gift to the future."*
- 1.2 Mr Higgins shared his views on the kind of economy we should be seeking to create in the aftermath of the pandemic that a robust of economy and resilience were needed, but most importantly, we had to create a wellbeing economy.
- 1.3 He thought that inclusion for culture is important for us and having a hinterland, a word being used as reference to what people would have in life beyond what they do for a job day to day, that is, an interest in arts and culture, was crucial to our own wellbeing and how we identify as a country. He mentioned that Scotland's reputation at home and abroad was characterised partly by its rich cultural heritage, and what could be achieved by culture was quite extraordinary.
- 1.4 Mr Higgins introduced [Sistema Scotland](#), an independent body that takes orchestral music to disadvantaged children in Scotland, and the [National Galleries of Scotland](#), completing a new wing to exhibit Scottish collection that focuses more on inclusion and accessibility for the Scots and international visitors.
- 1.5 Mr Higgins mentioned that the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2021 was reduced but it managed to hold a full-scale physical Fringe in 2022. The Fringe talked to stakeholders, venues, artists, local authorities, government, audiences, et cetera and asked them about the role of the Fringe from their perspective. Though the Fringe convened the event, many people thought it control the event. It was one of the insights for Mr Higgins when he thought of the challenges the Fringe faced.

- 1.6 Another challenge for the Fringe was the high cost of accommodation for artists in Edinburgh, posing a significant threat to the festival. He thought that there was a great financial pressure on the cultural sector in the United Kingdom and specifically in Scotland. Mr Higgins thought that politicians could see the benefits of a thriving cultural sector, but when it came to the crunch, arts and culture got deprioritised. He was fearful that there would be a lack of financial support. Indeed, arts and cultural were looking for other innovative ways to serve the Scots and international visitors.
- 1.7 Mr Higgins believed that, in time of crisis, arts and cultural organisations should focus on their sense of purpose and stick with their values. And it was the most important time to hold strong and maintain ambition.
- 1.8 He was optimistic about the Fringe in the coming year. The Fringe has appointed Eddie Izzard, a well-known performer in the United Kingdom who was a street performer 20 years ago at the Fringe, as the first alumni Patron. He reiterated that the purpose of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe was to give anyone a stage and everyone a seat.
- 1.9 To conclude his presentation, Mr Higgins quoted the words of John F. Kennedy, the former president of the United States, saying *“If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him.”*

**(2) Panel presentation by**

**Ms Michelle CHAWLA**

**Director General of the Strategy, Public Affairs, and Arts Engagement Division,  
Canada Council for the Arts**

**“Strengthening the Arts Sector, Amplifying its Benefits for Society”**

- 2.1 Ms Chawla thought that the pandemic had changed things and made the Canada Council for the Arts to realise that the arts sector, similar to the wider world, was unsustainable. And she added that inequalities in the society became more clearly seen in the pandemic. She thought that the goals and structures of the arts sector in Canada were reproducing a Eurocentric vision of the arts with a hierarchy favouring classical over customary or more deeply rooted cultural expressions. And injustices were experienced by the racialised and indigenous people.
- 2.2 The pandemic had also made the Council see more clearly that artists and arts workers were precarious and poorly remunerated, causing many arts workers to leave the sector. Often, the very privileged people remained in the industry and continued to perpetuate many inequities.

- 2.3 However, the Council had seen a big citizens' movement in Canada that would not tolerate the status quo. Citizens were more socially conscious and they wanted their arts experiences to reflect this.
- 2.4 As the world remained vulnerable to conflicts, wars, climate crisis, and so on, immediately affecting the most vulnerable peoples in the world, the Council, as an arts funder, would like to help to create a more sustainable arts sector and ultimately influence a more sustainable world.
- 2.5 She further shared four major paradigm shifts of the role of arts funders. The first one was the redistribution of attention, efforts and financial resources to reach marginalised and underserved communities and address inequities of the past. The Council had to think about how it can redistribute its funding to the greatest impact possible. Besides funding, the Council was also thinking about redistributing in other ways. Such as give more power to the marginalised communities in policy making, or redistributing its attention to build relationships with communities that the Council had not come across with.
- 2.6 The second paradigm shift was getting involved in policy decisions that were made in the world, climate change, social security, mental wellbeing, social isolation, public health, etc., as arts funders were uniquely connected to the arts, the government and its different spheres of public life. What's more, Council leaders could discuss with their counterparts in the globe to respond to the crisis.
- 2.7 The third paradigm shift was building consensus with other arts funders in other regions to collaborate for an improved and more sustainable sector. Ms Chawla added that some artists and arts organisations might think themselves as winners or losers of public funding, but arts funders should try to change this way of thinking so that everyone saw himself or herself as a winner.
- 2.8 The fourth paradigm shift was rethinking what and how art funders funded. Support from the arts funder could be more inclusive to different arts practices and the innovation addressing systemic problems in the sector. At the same time, arts funders had to find ways to be as accessible as possible, no matter in language, platform, application process, et cetera.
- 2.9 Ms Chawla added a remark for arts funders about making funding decisions in different ways and peer assessment was a good way. And our understanding of peers could include those who might be on the margins, who were outside of some of the usual clients but shared the art sector's desire to create a more sustainable world.

- 2.10 Ms Chawla suggested audience to check out the strategic plan “[Arts, now more than ever](#)” written by the Council during the pandemic, which might inspire art funders and arts organisations about the Council’s directions as it undertook many of these paradigm shifts.

## **B. Highlights of Panel Discussion of Plenary 3: “Let’s Re-Create”**

Moderator:

- **Ms Lynn YAU**, Chief Executive Officer, The Absolutely Fabulous Theatre Connection (Hong Kong)

Panellists:

- **Mr Benny HIGGINS**, Chair, Edinburgh Festival Fringe
- **Ms Michelle CHAWLA**, Director General of the Strategy, Public Affairs, and Arts Engagement Division, Canada Council for the Arts

1. Ms Lynn YAU started the discussion by reading a few lines from “[Arts, now more than ever](#)”, the five-year strategic plan from the Canada Council for the Arts, which was about the importance of arts to humanity and in time of crisis. Then she asked both panellists about how we could achieve accessibility and inclusion in a time of post-pandemic or economic downturn.
2. Mr Benny HIGGINS thought that we needed to make what we already did more accessible, in terms of cost and the way of communication with different groups of people. He also thought that education was an important part. The Edinburgh Festival Fringe had to make sure to be accessible and available to more people, so fund raising was important. Mr Benny HIGGINS mentioned that he put inclusion and accessibility at the very top of his agenda, as arts could make a difference in people’s lives.
3. Ms Michelle CHAWLA agreed that inclusion and accessibility should be at the top of mind to arts organisations and arts funders. Ms Michelle CHAWLA shared the example of how the Canada Council for the Arts funded indigenous arts. The Council had taken a new approach of giving power for organisations to make decisions together. It created a programme that was developed, managed and assessed by indigenous people, using their own criteria and language to assess funding to indigenous arts.
4. Ms Lynn YAU mentioned that the arts sector had the ability to bridge across sectors. Then she asked both panellists how they played this strength of the arts to reach out to other sectors for public and private partnerships.

5. Mr Benny HIGGINS said that the art was powerful to talk about the challenges we were facing in the world and that was what funders were looking for. Also, he thought that the arts sector should recognise our convening power that we could initiate the discussion between artists, audiences and funders about subjects that matter, e.g. climate change, inequality, and so on.
6. Ms Michelle CHAWLA agreed that the arts had the power to convene, influence and enhance the well-being of people. Regarding reaching out to other sectors, she took the [Arctic Arts Summit](#) recently held by the Canadian Council as an example. Though it was an arts summit, the topics and issues were about climate crisis, economy, health and wellbeing, et cetera, so as to attract people who had an interest in the circumpolar region. There were some fascinating and interesting conversations between musicians and scientists, and between visual artists and economists. That was how the Council used the art and its connections to influence a bigger conversation around the sustainability of the sector. Ms Michelle CHAWLA added that as indigenous communities and northern communities in Canada were interconnected, the arts sector had a tremendous capacity to influence and connect.
7. Ms Lynn YAU asked both panellists about how they helped artists to enhance their livelihood, given the economic situation after the pandemic.
8. Mr Benny HIGGINS said that the Fringe was looking at ways and some radical ideas to help performers to tackle with the issue of the accommodation cost. One solution might be short-term accommodations for artists and the Fringe had been lobbying the Scottish Government on some changes to short-term rules recently.
9. Mr Benny HIGGINS added that the arts sector had to enable the livelihood of artists and their production teams as well, as some people could not maintain the occupation in the culture field. Therefore, the arts sector had to be very radical, innovative and focused to tackle this issue.
10. Ms Michelle CHAWLA stated that the pandemic had revealed the precarity of artists who did not have a stable income. Firstly, the Canadian Council directly funded artists during the pandemic. Secondly, the Council was working with the government about the social security benefit programmes to help artists who worked in this atypical employment situation that they did not have the same access to pensions, collective bargaining rights, social security, and unemployment benefits as many other employed people did. Moreover, the Council was also talking with the Canadian Revenue Agency about taxation issues and the situation of independent cultural workers, so that the Agency could advise artists on what was accessible to them.
11. Ms Lynn YAU stated a question raised online to Ms Michelle CHAWLA about how the arts funders and artists could help to raise more awareness of the industry in society during the economic recovery in the post-pandemic era.

12. Ms Michelle CHAWLA mentioned that the arts sector in Canada received emergency funding from the government but different governments across the world had been working on the deficits after the pandemic. Arts councils in the world were all challenged at lobbying to keep the funding they originally had, and in the Canadian case, the Council would like to convince the government to increase its funding. Its strategies involved data.
13. Ms Michelle CHAWLA went on that the Council had been working for at least five years to demonstrate concretely with financial data the impact of arts funding through very robust data analytics, trying to make linkages between investing in certain regions and the economic benefits around employment, audiences, and so on. As the arts sector was competing with other sectors in society for funding, it had to show numbers to the government that the arts were worth investing, accompanied with many social and other benefits.

– END OF PLENARY 3–