

Faculty of Humanities

Department of Design

**Arts in a Knowledge-based Economy: Activist Strategies in
Singapore's Renaissance**

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

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Abstract

The topic of this thesis is the response by the Singaporean arts community to sudden and dramatic changes in government planning policy, in particular, the Renaissance City Plan (RCP), introduced in 2000. This plan provided the vision to transform Singapore into a vibrant global city of the arts as part of a move towards a Knowledge-based Economy. Although providing increased funding for the arts in Singapore, the policy changes appeared to some aspects of the arts community to be purely economically driven. This thesis argues that community-led cultural development are important for building a vibrant art scene and cultural development should not be left entirely up to government cultural planners.

To allow an understanding of the different motivations that drive government-led and community-led cultural initiatives, this thesis establishes an economic, political and social history of Singapore, and its relationship to the arts. This thesis adopts the term 'artist/cultural activist' to describe those artists who develop community-led art practices, undirected by government policy.

Case studies are presented of the collectives The Artists Village and Post-Museum, as well as the work of artist Koh Nguang How. Further, the author uses his own art practice as a means to reflect on the process and experiences of those whose cultural activist motivations give a 'community-led cultural development' character to their practice. Both to archive this work, and to demonstrate collective, ephemeral art practice, the author has included a digital artwork titled 'Server Foundation: Indexes'.

The thesis adopts Bourriaud's notion of 'everyday micro-utopias' to describe the practice of artists that uses social relations as both the form and content of their artworks (Bourriaud 1998, 27), and contextualises this practice in the context of Singapore's Renaissance, showing cultural activism as a form of art practice which is making significant contributions to art practice and history in Singapore. It finds that a non-government, cultural activist-initiated contribution is critical to achieve a healthy progression of Singapore's Renaissance.

This thesis concludes with the proposition that practices and artistic strategies of the artist/cultural activist should not be seen simplistically as a 'position of resistance', but as providing a valuable, even critical, contribution towards Singapore's Renaissance.

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Definitions

This thesis focuses on the strategies of fine artists within Singapore's move towards a Knowledge-based Economy. As shown in the methodology, the thesis draws from various fields of study. Therefore, I will define the key terms used in this research.

Arts and culture – This refers to the broad definition of disciplines relating to the field of arts and culture. This would include fine art, film, music, dance, theatre, literature, creative arts and heritage.

Arts community – This refers to the community of people engaged in the field of arts. This would include everyone who is engaged with fine art, film, music, dance, theatre, literature, creative arts and heritage.

Artist/cultural activist – This refers to artists who engage in organising, curating, art administration and art writing in their art practice. These activities would contribute towards creating opportunities and situations to further the development of art in some way. In this way, I consider these activities a form of cultural activism as they are working towards the cause of creating a more conducive environment for art and a flourishing art scene.

Community-led cultural development – This refers to initiatives to develop arts and culture which are initiated by the arts community based on their own resources and managed independently of the government.

Fine artist – This refers to the artist in the fine art field who engages in the art practice and creative production of artworks. In this sense, the artist/cultural activist is a fine artist even though their activity may not be easily defined within the traditional notion of the art object like painting, sculpting and drawing.

Fine art community – This refers to the sub-category of people who are engaged with the field of fine art. This would include artists, art administrators, art educators, art historians, art critics and curators. Although, some members from this community could be working for government cultural agency, their involvement in this community is based on their own personal capacity.

Government-led cultural development – This refers to initiatives to develop arts and

culture which are initiated by the government and managed by Statuary boards or State-funded agencies.

Information Economy – This term refers to an economy with an increased emphasis on informational activities and information industry. It is characterized by the convergence and integration of communication, data processing technologies into Information Communication Technology (ICT) resulting on the pervasive influence of ICT on economic activity. In Singapore's Information Economy, ICT manufacturing and Infrastructure developments are the main industries and creativity is not the core of this economy..

Singapore's Renaissance – This is identified as a period of rapid cultural development and liberalisation introduced through new cultural and social policies by the Singapore government. The RCP master plan most clearly articulates the government's commitment to this change and how it is motivated by Singapore's move towards a Knowledge-based economy.

Knowledge-based Economy – This term is used by the Singapore government in describing the new economy. However, there is no clear definition to what Knowledge-based Economy is and hence, explains why the Singapore government have at times also used Knowledge Economy to describe the new economic directive. Both these terms are different essentially, in Knowledge Economy, knowledge is a product, while in a Knowledge-based Economy, knowledge is a tool for growth, wealth creation and employment across all industries. From the social and cultural policies of Singapore's Renaissance, I chose Knowledge-based Economy as it sees the Singapore government valuing innovation and creativity.

Multinational Corporation (MNC) – This is a corporation that manages production or delivers services in more than one country. It can also be referred to as an international corporation. Due to their enormous size, multinational corporations can have a powerful influence in local economies, and even the world economy, and play an important role in international relations and globalization.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and Motivation

Drawing from my experience as an artist/curator based in Singapore, I have observed that some artists (including myself) have devoted a lot of time to organising and curating exhibitions or art administration and art writing. These 'extra activities' which the artists engage in have created opportunities and situations which would not have come about unless the artists 'volunteered'/'sacrificed' their art making time. I would consider this kind of 'extra activities' a form of cultural activism as these activities are responding to the need to create an environment conducive for art and towards the creation of a flourishing art scene.

Globally, cultural activism could be defined broadly as using the knowledge of culture to the betterment of society which sees cultural activists take action against war, ecological destruction, injustice and capitalism (Verson 2007). Civil society in Singapore could be understood by the historical context where the People's Action Party (PAP) government progressively reduced the power of civil society initiatives since the 1960s (Chua 1995a, 19; Tamney 1995, 58-63). Within the context of Singapore, activism is discouraged and its actions limited. In this thesis, I defined cultural activism in Singapore as the art community taking action within the field of art and culture where such actions are not seen as subversive. In that sense, these acts of cultural activism constitute a form of ground-up community-led cultural development. For these artists, these cultural activist motivations give a unique character to their practice, and for some artists, they have been strategically worked into their artwork. Therefore, I would identify these kinds of artists as artists/cultural activists. However, I will also discuss the work of Post-Museum as a co-constitutional space for art, research and civil society where cultural activism is redefined through a broader notion of culture which would include actions outside of the field of art and culture.

Singapore has been called an 'economic miracle' as it has achieved a massive increase in wealth within a short period of time since gaining independence in 1965. The country's economic success has often been claimed by PAP, the ruling party that has been governing Singapore since its independence. PAP has often claimed that its pragmatic and no-nonsense style of governance, where the party would have made hard and unpopular choices for Singapore, is what brought Singapore from a third world country to a first world nation. Singapore Sociologist Chua Beng Huat pointed out that PAP's ideological leadership took shape within the historical context of Singapore's difficult and turbulent period (1950–60s),

when the party proposed economic development to counter both external and internal threats facing the country. PAP, in the very early period, translated the historical conditions into an 'ideology of pragmatism' which rationalised economic and social policies for Singapore. In that sense, economic stability and the survival of Singapore are essentially part of PAP's legitimacy to power in Singapore since 1965.

In 2000, the Singapore government introduced the master plan Renaissance City Plan (RCP), which was introduced with the Renaissance City Report in 2000. The State continued to calibrate its plans and released improved versions of the RCP. It released Renaissance City 2.0 (ERC-CI 2002, chap.2), and subsequently, Renaissance City Plan III (MICA 2008; NAC 2008; NHB 2008) was launched in 2008. Under RCP, arts and culture aids in nation building efforts and play an important role towards the economic success in Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy. RCP articulates most clearly Singapore's vision for its move towards the Knowledge-based Economy with its aim to make Singapore into a vibrant global city of the arts, and in turn, Singaporeans into Renaissance Singaporeans and Singapore into a Renaissance Nation where culture is woven into the people's lives. Therefore RCP represents a shift of the fine art community under the broader umbrella of the arts and culture to play an active and important role in economic development in Singapore. In this sense, the fine art community, under the umbrella of the arts and culture, is included in PAP's ideology of 'pragmatism'. My research is focused on the effects of the new economic directive on the fine art community. Under this context, I pose the first research question: How has the role of artists changed in the era of the Knowledge-based Economy in Singapore?

Before the end of the 1990s, Singapore was known to be a clean, bland, organised, boring city ruled by a strict and authoritarian government (Gibson 1993). However, with Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy, the Singapore government aimed to transform Singapore into a vibrant city of the arts. The government has shown serious commitment to the development of the arts and culture through increased arts funding and the building of infrastructure and institutions. In that way, the government has become more entrenched in cultural development. While at the same time, as a result of the cultural and social policies introduced from 2000, Singapore has shown signs of opening up and becoming more liberal as the government loosened up the laws and allowed more freedom of expression. I define this period of transformation to be Singapore's Renaissance. Hence, Singapore's Renaissance proposed a change in the fundamental values and ideology of Singapore and the increase of government-led cultural development initiatives under RCP

has changed the cultural conditions for the fine artist. Through these changes, what are the implications for the artists within Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy? Do the artists now work more closely with the State; or are they now subjugated within the directive of RCP? In considering this, I posed the second research question: How has the cultural context changed because of Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy?

Singapore's Renaissance saw many government-led cultural development initiatives where there are more exhibition venues and increased funding for the fine art community. Under these 'improved conditions', the artist/cultural activist continue to engage in different forms of community-led cultural development initiatives. Singapore's Renaissance saw a point in time when the State and the artist/cultural activist share the common goal of creating an environment conducive for art and a vibrant art scene. In 2008, I co-curated and participated in an exhibition of artist group The Artists Village that was presented at the Singapore Art Museum. The Artists Village is an art group which I identify as a collective and engages in cultural activism. I found the exhibition problematic as it focused on the artworks and sidelined the cultural activist dimension and the collective entity of the group. This led me to examine its context further by observing my own practice as an artist/cultural activist. I then noticed that the role of the artist/cultural activist has not been discussed in Singapore art as there was a lack of resources and research on this kind of artistic practice. In that sense, with the vision of Singapore's Renaissance, there is no ideological space which accommodates community-led cultural development efforts, and with it, the practice of the artist/cultural activist with this realisation, I asked what are the different ideologies and visions of government-led and community-led cultural developments? How do we understand the position and role of the artist/cultural activist within Singapore's Renaissance? How relevant is the artist/cultural activist within Singapore's Renaissance? Therefore, this brings me to raise the third research question: What are the strategies that artists/cultural activists employ in Singapore's Renaissance?

Contributions of this Research

In this chapter, I have discussed the background and motivation for my research. For this DCA research, I will address the research questions through a written thesis and practical work.

Therefore, my contributions include the following:

- An understanding of how the artist's role and position is changed as a result of Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy.
- An understanding of how the cultural context has changed for the artist as a result of Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy.
- An analysis of the ideologies behind government-led and community-led cultural development within the context of Singapore's Renaissance. Providing these different ideological positions adds to the existing knowledge on the study of 'state-society relations' in Singapore.
- A framework for understanding the practices and strategies of the artist/cultural activist. From this, we can understand the aesthetic value and cultural impact of their work in relation to the development of art in Singapore. As pointed out earlier, as there is a lack of research in the work of artist/cultural activists in Singapore, the thesis and practical investigation offers a much-needed insight on such practices and artistic strategies.
- Documentation of the work of artist/cultural activists and a presentation of the practical work, *Server Foundation: Indexes* (2011), which offers a new way of art making in relation to working within the mode of art and cultural activism.

The body of knowledge developed from my DCA research is useful for other artists and researchers working in the field of contemporary art both in Singapore and internationally. The research is an important contribution to the area of art history and art criticism which is lacking in Singapore. The study of government-led and community-led cultural development and Post-Museum as a form of co-constitutional space for art, research and civil society offer a valuable resource in the field of cultural and urban planning in Singapore and internationally. In this way, the thesis and practical work provides an important resource in the field of cultural and urban planning.

Methodology

My research aims to understand the work of the artist/cultural activist within Singapore's Renaissance. By analysing the work of the artist/cultural activist, I provide an understanding of their motivations and strategies within the cultural context of Singapore and how it relates to art theory. This shows the value of their work and contribution to contemporary art in Singapore and internationally.

This DCA research comprises a theoretical investigation in the form of a written thesis and a practical investigation in the form of a creative work, *Server Foundation: Indexes* where I have indexed the activities of Post-Museum. Both these investigations inform and dialogue with the other. The thesis links both the theoretical and practical investigation with a reflexive methodology where the process of practice, research, and writing are propelled forward through engagement with each other. It is also important to clarify that although the thesis and creative work are linked and share the same research questions, there is no need to 'read' them in any order as they are produced as two separate works.

An important aspect of the methods of this research is my own position as an artist/cultural activist who has been active in my art practice in Singapore and internationally since 2001. This experience informs my research and has given me a first-hand perspective of working in Singapore's Renaissance where I have observed that there are often conflicting visions between government-led and community-led cultural development. From the lack of resources in community-led cultural development, my experience working in the field allows me to draw out the work and strategies of the artist/cultural activist. In this thesis, I will be analysing the work of The Artists Village, Koh Nguang How and Post-Museum¹ through providing a theoretical reading of their work and strategies in Singapore's Renaissance.

¹ For the 3 artist/collectives featured in this thesis, I have been involved with their developments over a number of years. I have been a member of The Artists Village from 2000 and have been actively involved from 2001-2008; I have known Koh Nguang How since 2000 and have been following the development of his work; and for Post-Museum, I am a co-founder, and with curator Jennifer Teo, have been managing the space since 2007.

Thus, my thesis approach is:

- Develop a understanding of the cultural context of Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy. The data collection will come from analysing government policies and documents, specifically the Renaissance City Plan. This will also be supported from the area of Singapore Studies which consists of research by existing scholars from the field of Cultural Studies, Economics, Geography, Political Science, and Sociology.
- Provide a structure to understand the work and strategies of artists/cultural activists in Singapore's Renaissance through analysing the work of The Artists Village, Koh Nguang How and Post-Museum. I will be drawing from a blend of existing art theory, specifically from Nicolas Bourriand's theory of Relational Aesthetics and Postproduction, and Singapore Studies. At the same time, I will also draw comparisons to other international artists/collectives who have similarities in their approaches in art practice.

The practical investigation will feature a creative work, *Server Foundation: Indexes*, which indexes Post-Museum. Post-Museum is a 'networked collective', it occupies a physical and ideological space and it also works on projects which does not take place in its current premises. For the creative work, it is important to point out that I will be authoring the work by taking the position of co-creator, collaborator and participant within the 'networked collective' model of Post-Museum. Hence, I do not claim authorship for all the activities presented in the creative work. Instead, the creative work is the activity of 'indexing' which 'frames' my artwork's ephemeral nature formed by the interactions and negotiations within the activities and people in the 'networked collective' of Post-Museum. Therefore, the creative work will re-materialise the ephemeral nature of my art practice, showing the cultural activist motivations and strategies within Singapore's Renaissance. Lastly, the creative work will present a creative strategy within Singapore's Renaissance and through this will address the research question: What are the strategies that artists/cultural activists employ in Singapore's Renaissance? The work will be presented through a website and social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook.

My creative work approach is:

- Select from the 'traces' I collected from Post-Museum and its community, these

include photographs, videos, writings, audio interviews, documents, web archives and artworks which are linked to Post-Museum and its community.

- Develop a structure to present the complex range of activities, strategies and ideology of Post-Museum. This will be done through creating indexes from the 'traces' linked to Post-Museum and its community. I will be presenting the indexes through a website and social media platform where the viewer can see the indexes individually or as a group. It is important to note that though the creative work will not attempt to show every detail of Post-Museum, it will be the most comprehensive model of representation currently available.
- Include a caption and a short text in each index. The caption will provide details of the index while the text will analyse the index. This will re-materialise the ephemeral nature of my art practice with Post-Museum as it will make visible how these traces are linked to my art practice.
- For the process of indexing, I will be engaging in a reflexive method where I will combine the knowledge from the thesis, experience working on Post-Museum and critical analysis relating to the cultural context of Singapore's Renaissance. This will provide an engaging analysis of Post-Museum's activity and ideology, resulting in an 'off-site' experience of Post-Museum.
- *Server Foundation: Indexes* will be presented through Post-Museum's virtual network through social media Facebook and Twitter. In addition, *Server Foundation: Indexes* will be presented online through a website. The existing network of Post-Museum will be used to disseminate the work to an audience which is both in Singapore and international.

Structure of Thesis and Creative Work

Chapter 1 introduces the topic of the study, its motivations, methodology and objectives. The primary objective is to record the relationship of the Singaporean arts community to government-initiated changes in Singapore, and to present the view that a non-government,

cultural activist-initiated contribution is critical to the achievement of a healthy Singapore's Renaissance.

Chapter 2: The Knowledge-based Economy and Singapore, provides an overview of the economic and social history of Singapore since the 1960s that has created a particular context for the local arts community. It describes how the policies of Singapore's ruling party have driven Singapore's extraordinary growth from independence in 1965 to the present day, but at the cost of encouraging conformity in Singaporeans in order to create political and economic stability.

However, in the 1990s, manufacturing industry began relocating to lower-production-cost countries in the region. The Singaporean government realized Singapore would no longer be able to compete on cost (Goh 2005). Therefore, Singapore began a move towards a Knowledge-based Economy, essential for Singapore's economic survival (Chua 1995a).

With this move to a Knowledge-based Economy, the Singapore government faced the challenge of transforming Singapore from a sterile authoritarian state into a vibrant city of the arts via a 'Renaissance'. Hence, the Singaporean government has a strong economic and political interest in the development of the arts and culture.

Chapter 3: The Knowledge-based Economy and the Arts, explores Singapore's Renaissance, a period of government-led, rapid cultural development and liberalisation of Singapore. While Singapore appears more liberal, these steps can seem merely 'gestural' as the government remains cautious of 'disruptive' works, and through the National Art Council and Media Development Authority, has exercised control over the outcome of art works and programs.

This chapter also highlight the issues that have impacted the fine art community and have translated into community-led cultural development. These ground-up, limited resources responses have historical precedents from the 1960-1980s, such as the artists/art groups Liu Kang, Ho Ho Ying and The Artists Village (Ho 2005; Kwok 1996; Liu 2005). In this way, this chapter provides allows a definition of cultural activism as community-led cultural development in response to government-led cultural development.

Chapter 4: Recent Gestures: Cultural Activism, Art and Artistic Practice, first establishes that cultural activism is often sidelined or ignored within Singaporean art practice. This is reflected in the focus on artworks and exhibitions while not emphasising other areas of fine art such as art history and art criticism (*Art vs art: conflict & convergence* 1993). In addition, there is also the tendency that art is often self-depoliticised and self-censored.

This chapter then explores the works and artistic practices of The Artists Village, an artist group formed in 1988, and artist Koh Nguang How, both of whom show a dimension of cultural activism in their art practices working within Singapore's Renaissance. To highlight cultural activism as part of these artists' work, this chapter also examines the works of international artists, such as *the land* and *Long March Project* and *Art and Language*, which have similar motivations.

This chapter also introduces Bourriaud's concept of 'micro-utopias', a way in which artists respond to the loss of the revolutionary project of art of the 1970s and accept the pervasive reach of global capitalism. Their 'micro-utopias' embody the different ideologies between government-led and community-led cultural development efforts within Singapore's Renaissance.

In Chapter 5: Post-Museum and Server Foundation, I discuss my own art practice as strategies responding to Singapore's Renaissance. This will include works produced with Post-Museum (a cultural space which I co-founded in 2007).

I will examine two projects in particular, where I was directly involved as a 'co-creator', collaborator and participant, The *Really Really Free Market* (2009-2011) series and *All Together Now* (2010). These examples will focus on the strategies of collectivity in my own art practice, showing that I adopt a strategist position where I am interested to see a more 'liberal and open' Singapore in relation to the Singapore's Renaissance vision.

The chapter also introduces *Server Foundation: Indexes*, the practical component of work that accompanies this thesis. A summary of *Server Foundation: Indexes* is presented in this Introduction in the following section titled 'Server Foundation: Indexes'.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion of the thesis. It summarizes each chapter, and then re-iterates my main point, that artists/cultural activists in Singapore's Renaissance should not be seen simplistically as resistance to change. I argue that the government's vision of Singapore's Renaissance should be broadened as the successful development of art does not lie solely with the government but with all the stakeholders.

This thesis has strived to present an understanding of the different motivations behind government-led and community-led cultural development initiatives, and how they interact. In this way, I hope my thesis and practical work provides a resource in the field of cultural and urban planning in Singapore, and internationally.

Server Foundation: Indexes

In addition to the thesis research, I will present *Server Foundation: Indexes*, a creative work and practical investigation looking at the strategies employed by Post-Museum within Singapore's Renaissance. In this work, I will 'index' Post-Museum's activities and engage in a reflexive process which examines the connections between 'ideology' and 'activity'. Hence, the project will produce a 'compression' of these connections in Post-Museum's work and will reflect my art practice which works in the mode of collectivity and cultural activism. This creative project will take physical and virtual formats which are presented as artwork while functioning as documentary and storage. The project will show an integrated practice of concepts of a 'community-led cultural development' aka cultural activism and art production and provide an understanding of collective work and ephemeral art practices. In addition, the project will study the dynamics of an independent co-constitutional space for artists, researchers and civic actors in Singapore's Renaissance. It will also highlight the cultural activism of Post-Museum's practice which aspires towards art's potential in creating an interstice in Singapore's Renaissance in the hope to create an open and liberal Singapore. Therefore, *Server Foundation: Indexes* is itself an artistic strategy of working in Singapore's Renaissance.

'Indexing' is proposed as a structure to draw the diverse range of activities together and show how they connect to Post-Museum's ideology. However, it should be understood that the 'indexes' cannot show every detail and every connection but it is the most comprehensive model of representation. In *Server Foundation: Indexes*, I will be presenting the work in the role of 'co-creator', collaborator and participant within the 'networked collective' model of

Post-Museum, by working through materials gathered since the forming of Post-Museum and my interactions with these activities and the Post-Museum practice. Hence, I do not claim authorship for all the activities that Post-Museum has presented since its inception. My artworks are the interactions with these activities and people within the 'networked collective' model of Post-Museum. In this way, *Server Foundation: Indexes* 'frames' these activities and negotiations which I have managed on a day-to-day basis in the operations of Post-Museum.

The project will index the following:

- 'Traces' that are derived directly and indirectly relating to Post-Museum and its community in the form of photographs, videos, writings, audio interviews, documents, media reports, relics, web archives and artworks, from 2007-2011.
- Artworks made through Post-Museum in the form of sculptures, paintings, drawings and videos. The works come from the result of the re-materialisation of the ephemeral process in collective work.
- The *Really Really Free Market* series where the process, social interactions and the instalments of the markets are indexed. By relating all these components of the *Really Really Free Market* series, the viewer will gain a more comprehensive view of the project.
- *All Together Now* where the process, social interactions and materials on civil society and the artworks are indexed. Drawing these components together, the viewer will gain a holistic view of the project.

In using these materials mentioned above to create this project, I borrow Bourriaud's notion of Postproduction to describe the mode of production which my practical investigation engages in where the use of Minimalist art vocabularies are recoded to suit my own aesthetic and political pre-occupations. In this work, I will combine the complexity of Post-Museum's cultural practice and establish a space for discourse for such practices. At the same time, I will bring together my interests in ephemeral art practices and investigate how the 're-materialisation' of such practices can give visibility and longevity in the context of Singapore's Renaissance. Lastly, *Server Foundation: Indexes* will be presented online

through Facebook, Twitter and a website. The project will respond to the cultural context in Singapore where there is no facility to record or store the study of a co-constitution of art and civil society while at the same time its virtual presence will allow the work of Post-Museum to be disseminated globally. Disseminating the work through social media will allow the work to tap into Post-Museum's vast social media network and at the same time will allow the same audience who are familiar with Post-Museum to experience it from another different perspective.

Chapter 2: The Knowledge-based Economy and Singapore

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview and context of how Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy is a significant development for the arts and culture in Singapore.

Singapore has been labeled an 'economic miracle' as it has achieved a massive increase in wealth within a short period of time since gaining independence in 1965. Singapore's economic success has often been claimed by the People's Action Party (PAP), which has been governing Singapore since its independence and is its ruling party. PAP has often claimed that its pragmatic and no-nonsense style of governance, where it will have to make hard and unpopular choices for Singapore, is what brought Singapore from a third world country to a first world nation. Therefore economic stability and the survival of Singapore are essentially part of PAP's legitimacy to power in Singapore. Thus, the move towards the Knowledge-based Economy and master plan Renaissance City Plan (RCP) is an important development for Singapore's continued economic success and for PAP's interest in maintaining its power.

Before examining the issues of Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy, it is necessary to consider the history of Singapore's economic development from its independence in the 1960s to the late 1990s when Singapore moved towards developing the Knowledge-based Economy and introduced the RCP. A survey of Singapore's industrialisation shows how the government introduced policies to facilitate and catalyse the industries that Singapore needed at different times to ensure its survival in the world. Charting these developments will show that the move towards the Knowledge-based Economy is a pragmatic decision to ensure Singapore's economic success.

Before the end of the 1990s, the Singapore government was known to be strict and authoritarian in order to create political stability to attract foreign MNC investments in Singapore. During this time, innovation and creativity were looked upon with scepticism. With the move into the Knowledge-based Economy, the government is attempting to re-invent Singapore to embrace innovation and creativity as important qualities for success in the new economy.

Finally, in this chapter, I will highlight the issues at hand of what the new economic shift

means to Singapore and discuss the issues involved for the citizens. This will give an understanding of the cultural context within which my research is based. This also provides the background for my creative work, *Server Foundation: Indexes*, which shows that within the context of Singapore's history, the economic is privileged over the cultural. Hence, 'indexing' the work of Post-Museum highlights a different vision of cultural development from the RCP vision for Singapore.

The Singapore Economy and Power

Singapore was a British colony which achieved self-government status in 1954, and for a brief period had a merger with Malaysia in 1963. After two years, Singapore was separated from Malaysia due to growing racial tension between the two. In addition, the external political situation was also tense as Singapore was targeted in Konfrontasi, an Indonesian policy of confrontation against the formation of Malaysia where Indonesia initiated military and other actions against the new nation (Vijayan 1997). The British troops which remained in Singapore after its independence withdrew in 1971, resulting in massive loss of employment. A communist insurgence in Singapore during this period added to instability in the country.

Despite this difficult and turbulent period, Singapore transformed itself from a small port-city into a competitive first world economy in less than four decades, and due to this, came to be labeled an 'economic miracle'. This economic success is claimed and often attributed to the leadership of People's Action Party (PAP) and then-Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. PAP is the single dominant party in Singapore which has been in power since the general elections in 1963². In many ways, Singapore's economic success is also PAP's legitimacy to power in Singapore.

Within this historical context of Singapore's difficult and turbulent period, PAP found full expression beyond anti-colonialism in its ideological leadership. Faced with external and

² Since 1959, Singaporean politics has been dominated by PAP. Although PAP's dominance in politics has been largely attributed to Singapore's economic growth, the party has often suppressed opposition – notably through the Internal Security Act that has been used to detain political dissidents indefinitely without trial (Hong and Huang 2008, 18-21; Singapore 2011 ; Tamney 1995, 3-6).

internal threats, PAP has promoted the idea that Singapore needed economic development in order to counter these threats. PAP in the very early period translated the historical conditions conceptually and thematised them into an 'ideology of pragmatism' which rationalised economic and social policies for Singapore. PAP argued that for Singapore to survive, Singapore's population had to be tightly organised and highly disciplined, sacrificing the self in national interest and moving forward in the same direction set by the government (Chan 1971).

While economic development is necessary for political stability, political stability is in turn necessary for economic development. These paired necessities form the second feature of PAP ideology (Chua 1995a). The Singapore government saw that it was necessary to pull Singaporeans together for the survival of the nation and efforts were made in a 'disciplining process' where possible bases for organised sectional interests had to be controlled. The most significant of these was the subordination of the trade unions to the government in an unequal 'symbiotic relationship'.

In Aug 1966, one year after independence, the Trade Union introduced changes in the laws to make strikes illegal without a majority vote within the unions and working hours were extended. The changes were rationalised as the individual worker's rights and needs had to be sacrificed to achieve the larger national interest (Ibid., 18). According to Lee Kuan Yew, 'higher wages as productivity increases, and workers being educated by their own leaders in the realities of our economic position will... by the 1980s produce a solid and secure situation which the communists cannot exploit'³. Therefore the sectional interest of labour was to be subjugated to the larger interest of national survival, which was based on the strategy of attracting MNCs to invest in Singapore and provide the people with much-needed jobs. The Singapore government worked together with unions to find practical solutions to the problems posed by the 'new and harsh economic realities' as stated by the then-Minister of Labour (Rajaratnam 1987, 269-271).

This comment is indicative of PAP's rhetoric: The necessity of economic growth was the 'only reality' and therefore any process that contributed to economic growth was 'pragmatic' for the survival of the nation. Thus, the ideology of pragmatism was used to gloss over economic instrumental rationality (Chua 1995a, chp.3). 'Survival' and 'pragmatism' became two inextricably tied terms during the formative years of nation building between 1968 and

³ Quoted in Ibid., 49.

1984. 'Survival' was repeatedly thematised by the leaders and often by the led, thus providing the rationale for a 'crisis mentality' in the Singapore government. This led to over-anxious and pre-emptive 'pragmatic' measures to avoid any foreseeable problems which may themselves be the unintended consequences of earlier policies. In dealing with these 'crisis of survival', PAP rationalised its action of repressive interventions (Devan and Heng, 1992).

Historically, the inactivity of a colonial regime led to a rich network of voluntary organisations, which resulted in a healthy growth of a strong civil society carrying out many of its social welfare activities. However, with the rise of the PAP government, voluntary organisations and initiatives had their power progressively reduced. Therefore the civil society movement in Singapore has been less active (Chua 1995a, 19). This is another example of an interventionist strategy adopted by the government which reduced the power of civil society thus reducing the people's power to bargain for their rights as extensive political and social administration has been handed over to the government in exchange for the political stability which was necessary for the people's improved material life (Tamney 1995, 58-63)⁴.

Therefore the ideology of pragmatism is the rationale which is being repeatedly organised into the Singapore government's daily operations of governing the nation. Over the years, the government has thoroughly penetrated and controlled society in the name of ensuring economic growth. Schools which were once financed and run by ethnic and local communities were nationalised and transformed into a system of stratified occupational training. The Housing Development Board (HDB) introduced the Public Housing programme which benefited many citizens (80% of Singaporeans live in HDB flats) but made them dependent on the State. Community organising in the form of grassroots is

⁴ This early industrialisation phases, where individual freedom was traded for material wealth within the National Ideology in Singapore, provides a historical context for civil society in Singapore. After a loss of 13 percent of popular vote away from PAP, the then-First Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in 1987 recognised that the citizens did not want the state to force decisions on them. When Goh became the Prime Minister in 1990, the 'new guard' PAP leadership introduced a more 'compassionate and consultative' government. In 1991, Minister George Yeo made the landmark speech where he announced that the government wished to 'trim back the banyan tree' of state action to allow 'civic society' to take root and play a larger role in education and social development (Heng 1996; Koh and Ooi 2004). In Chapter 5, I will discuss the work of Post-Museum as a co-constitutional space for art, research and civil society.

carried out by People's Association⁵ which have built community centres around Singapore. In that sense, the formative years of nation building which focused on economic survival of the nation saw an underdeveloped state of the Arts. It was only in 1989 when the Advisory Council on Art and Culture completed its extended study that the government increased its development of the Arts (1989 Report 1989; *Art vs art: conflict & convergence* 1995). This would suggest that the development of the arts in Singapore from its independence to 1989 were largely community-led efforts from arts practitioners and the people⁶.

Singapore's 'Economic Miracle': Moving Towards a New Economy

Singapore is a small Southeast Asian island city-state off the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula with a multiracial population of 5.08 million. Since gaining sovereignty as the Republic of Singapore in 1965, it has achieved massive increase in wealth and is one of the Four Asian Tigers (Asia 2011; Singapore 2011). Singapore has been labeled an 'economic miracle' because of how much it has achieved in a short span of time with its limited natural resources of a strategic entrepôt location, a hardworking population and visionary leadership in post-Independence 1960s. Despite these odds, Singapore has since built up foreign reserves of S\$225,754.2 million (Economy and Trade 2010).

⁵ The People's Association (PA) is a statutory board which manages community centres, resident committees and community development councils. Historically, PA was formed in 1960 by PAP during the turbulent times of racial riots and political strife. In that sense, the PA was tasked to bring together a divided society by providing an activity space for the community on a grassroots level. The PA is linked to the PAP as its community building and bonding efforts are the PAP's way of reaching out to the people. For more info about People's Association, see <http://www.pa.gov.sg/about-us.html>

⁶ This trend is reflected in the founding of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. The school was initiated by artist Lim Hak Tai while it was supported and funded by Chinese businessmen (Lau 2009).

The *Evolutionary Analysis of Singapore's Industrialisation Chart* is unable to be reproduced here due to copyright restrictions.

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Figure 1: Andrew Goh, *Evolutionary Analysis of Singapore's Industrialisation*, 2005, Chart. In Goh, A. L. S. 2005. TOWARDS AN INNOVATION-DRIVEN ECONOMY THROUGH INDUSTRIAL POLICY-MAKING: AN EVOLUTIONARY ANALYSIS OF SINGAPORE. *The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal* 10 (Issue 3): article 34. pg. 12 figure 3.

I will continue to present a brief survey of Singapore's economic development from the 1960s–2000s where the government introduced policies to facilitate and catalyse the industries that Singapore needed for economic success. This will show the shift in the qualities needed in the people and country to engineer economic success since the 1960.

Singapore was dependent on entrepôt trade before it began its industrialisation in the 1960s. Singapore's first phase of industrialisation was the *Labour-Intensive Industrialisation* as the focus of this period of industrialisation saw the government making industrial policies which dealt extensively with labour-related issues to protect employment. This reflected the crisis of massive unemployment facing Singapore during this time, and in order to prevent social unrest and political upheaval, the government needed to create industrialisation programmes which maximised employment (Tan 1995; Wong 1995).

The objective for Singapore during this time was to survive economically and politically as a new nation. Hence, in order to provide much needed jobs for the people, the Singapore government opened its gates to attract foreign investments to come to Singapore to set up factories and boost employment.

In the 1970s, Singapore moved into the *Export-Oriented Industrialisation* phase. In order to attain rapid economic growth, Singapore needed to export overseas as it is a small nation and could not rely on its domestic market (Choy 1983). However, Singapore had no local firms

capable of producing exports and the government decided to import this productive capability through attracting an inflow of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) which would lead to the achievement of trade surpluses.

Therefore, industrial policies during the *Export-Oriented Industrialisation* phase were aimed at attracting MNCs to Singapore as a choice location compared to neighbouring countries. During this time, Singapore was marketed as an ideal business location by its strategic trading location, harmonious industrial relations climate, well-equipped physical infrastructure, a relatively skilled workforce and political stability. This phase succeeded in producing double-digit economic growth rates almost every year in the 1970s and created in Singapore a vibrant manufacturing sector which included new ones which were more technology-based and higher in value-added output.

By the 1980s, Singapore had also solved its massive unemployment problem from the 1960s and this was no longer a pressing social concern. Singapore's industrialisation was firmly established in several sectors such as electronic parts manufacturing, construction and building engineering, logistics, and banking and finance. However, in 1985, the country went through a period of economic recession and this was attributed to the erosion of Singapore's cost-competitiveness which led to many foreign firms moving their business operations to other surrounding low-cost locations. Singapore's over-reliance on MNCs for foreign capital, investments and trade meant that it was paramount for it to maintain competitiveness. This marked Singapore's entry into the *Cost-Competitive Industrialisation* phase where the government introduced cost-cutting measures.

One such scheme introduced during this period was the Flexi-wage scheme. This scheme avoided the implementation of minimum wage and tags wages to bonuses according to productivity levels. The implementation of this scheme was possible with the decrease of the number of unions during this period, and this and other similar policies helped to convince MNCs to stay on in the stable environment provided by Singapore instead of moving to cheaper countries in the region (Goh 2005). The government through its 'disciplining process' has produced a conforming society to make Singapore attractive to MNCs. To this, the PAP rationalised that an authoritarian but efficient government was necessary for Singapore's economic success (Tan 1992; Chua 1995a).

By the 1990s, the government found that they could no longer compete based on cost-competitiveness. MNCs were increasingly drawn to neighbouring countries such as China,

India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam as they were better able to keep their costs competitive due to their abundant manpower, industrial land and natural resources. Hence, Singapore entered the phase of *Enterprise Development Industrialisation* where the government actively promoted entrepreneurship through government investments in the public sector and incentives for spending in the private sector, while, Singapore's firms and businesses were encouraged to be more entrepreneurial in the global economy.

To address the small domestic market, the Singapore government launched programmes to encourage Singapore's firms to venture abroad. Government agencies mounted a regionalisation drive to export the products and services of Singapore's firms to other parts of Asia. This materialised in the government's efforts to work with local authorities in China, India, Indonesia and Vietnam to develop Singapore-modelled industrial parks. As regional economies had begun to adopt open-door economic policies, these efforts were timely and successful. The *Enterprise Development Industrialisation* phase sought to create new opportunities for Singapore's firms to increase their industrial growth potential, and by the late 1990s, Singapore's real per capita income level had increased to match that of most EU countries.

The *Enterprise Development Industrialisation* phase was a critical and significant shift in economic ideology. The development of the entrepreneurial spirit would invoke the qualities of risk-taking, innovation and 'thinking differently' which was different from previous economic directives that called for a conformist society. During the *Labour-Intensive Industrialisation* phase, the trade unionists were sceptical of National Innovation programmes, as they believed that they would lead to job losses. Hence, innovation was not welcomed as an important building block for Singapore's economy as early as 1960s (Goh 2005, 13). This reflection will be raised again in Chapter 3 when I will discuss that, despite efforts by the Singapore government to promote the arts and culture with Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy, there is still a long way to go as the economic hegemony has a social historical context in Singapore and the society still considers the arts and culture to be of a relatively low position (Bereson 2003; Kong 2000; Ooi 2011).

With the *Enterprise Development Industrialisation* phase in the 1990s, the Singapore government began moving towards the Knowledge-based Economy model as a result of the MNCs moving out of Singapore to cheaper locations. In order for Singapore to survive economically, the government had to transform Singapore into an environment that would encourage innovation, risk-taking and 'thinking differently' to encourage entrepreneurship.

Likewise, the subsequent master plan RCP was introduced in 2000 and envisions Singapore as a vibrant global city of the arts, is economically driven. As such, the rhetoric of transforming Singapore to be more innovative and creative for the Knowledge-based Economy is no different from the social 'disciplining' for a more conformist society to serve the economic directives since the 1960s.

Desiring Innovation and Creativity for the Knowledge-based Economy

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The Singapore Innovation Manifesto can instead be accessed via Goh, A. L. S. 2005. TOWARDS AN INNOVATION-DRIVEN ECONOMY THROUGH INDUSTRIAL POLICY-MAKING: AN EVOLUTIONARY ANALYSIS OF SINGAPORE. The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal 10 (Issue 3): article 34. pg. 22 figure 6. http://innovation.cc/volumes-issues/goh_innov_driven_econo2a.pdf (accessed March 2008).

Figure 2: Singapore's Public Service, *Singapore Innovation Manifesto*, 2005, Document. In Goh, A. L. S. 2005. TOWARDS AN INNOVATION-DRIVEN ECONOMY THROUGH INDUSTRIAL POLICY-MAKING: AN EVOLUTIONARY ANALYSIS OF SINGAPORE. *The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal* 10 (Issue 3): article 34. pg. 22 figure 6.

The Singapore Public Service Innovation Manifesto (Figure 2) shows the deliberate shift of industrial policy towards innovation. It was part of a larger blueprint document called eXCELERATE 21 which was a document for the people working in the public service. The manifesto stated a six-point declaration of future industrial policy-making and its implementation should be approached with like-minded ideology. The eXCELERATE 21 document encouraged the public sector in 'New Value Creation' and aspired towards an effective implementation of innovation (Goh 2005; Lim 2000). The eXCELERATE 21

document is not the only example of the Singapore government's conscious efforts to encourage innovation but one of many initiatives. The master plan RCP is one such initiative affecting the arts community in Singapore as the government provided the vision and roadmap to transforming Singapore into a vibrant global city of the arts. I argue that all these initiatives are aligned with the Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy and are part of a social 'disciplining' process introduced since the 1990s. The economy in Singapore provides political legitimacy for PAP, and with the Knowledge-based Economy, innovation, creativity and the arts are now politicised through this social 'disciplining' process.

The Knowledge-based Economy refers to an economy where knowledge is a tool for economic growth, wealth creation and employment for all industries (OCED 1996). Within the Knowledge-based Economy, creativity and innovation is considered important factors in generating new knowledge.

Towards the late 1990s, Singapore attempted to transform itself into the Knowledge-based Economy that could build upon its own innovation rather than rely on the import of ready-made innovations from MNCs. The measures implemented include the strengthening of its information technology (IT) capabilities, active promotion of entrepreneurship and changes to the education system to encourage creativity and innovation, encouraging its workforce to retrain and re-skill so as to create a life-long learning environment, and attracting foreign talents to Singapore (Overview of the Singapore Economy). Among the measures implemented within the Knowledge-based Economy in Singapore, the adoption of the Creative Industry model from the UK has the greatest impact on the arts in Singapore.

The Creative Industry model was part of the UK's previous Labour government's economic revitalization strategy and has been defined in the UK as 'those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property' (DCMS 1998). Creative Industry draws together a set of disparate businesses (movie, architecture, museums, art auction), products (paintings, designer furniture, computer games, advertisements), occupations (interior designers, artists, sculptors, video editors) and creative processes (experimental performances, creative writing, fashion creation) through defining that they are fundamentally driven by creativity (Caves 2000; Florida 2003; Hartley 2005; Markusen et al. 2008; Trüby, Rammer, and Müller 2008; Neelands & Choe 2010).

The success of the UK's Creative Industry model prompted many nations like Norway, Denmark, South Africa, Taiwan, South Korea and China to pursue similar strategies (Hesmondhalgh and Pratt 2005; Bayliss 2007). Similarly, the Singapore government adopted the Creative Industry label under the Renaissance City 2.0, believing that the development of a creative cluster, a creative network comprising of the arts and culture, would propel Singapore's new innovation-driven economy by encouraging risk-taking, entrepreneurship and attracting creative talents into Singapore (ERC-CI 2002, chp.2). With more countries adopting and pursuing the Creative Industries model, there is a trend for cultural policies to be more economically driven and the positioning of fine art under the umbrella of Creative Industry proposed a more direct connection to economic development. In that sense, Creative Industry as a global economic trend affects the field of the arts and culture globally (Tay and Coca-Stefaniak 2010). This thesis studies how these economic-driven cultural policies impact the artists in Singapore but this is not limited to Singapore as it is part of a growing trend as more countries and cities are adopting the Creative Industry model. In Chapter 3, I will further discuss the implications of placing fine art under the umbrella of creative industries and how it limits the growth of artists in Singapore.

Urban studies theorist Richard Florida came up with the concept of the 'creative class' and he proposed the theory that creativity is a major driver of economic development (Florida 2003, 2005). According to Florida, creativity flourishes in 'a social environment that is stable enough to allow continuity of effort, yet diverse and broad-minded enough to nourish creativity in all its subversive form' and a creative economy required the acceptance of the '3 Ts' of 'technology, talent and tolerance'. He has devised his own Creativity Index which measures a region's overall standing in the creative economy. Within this index, there is a 'Gay Index' which equates a vibrant gay community to the diversity and tolerance of the city. Although Florida's theory has been criticised by some academics and journalists (Clark 2003), it has been influential in urban planning and has been adopted by governments who are trying to harness the creative economy. He was recently appointed the 'new guru' for the coalition government after David Cameron was elected as the Prime Minister of the UK (The Economist 2010). Embracing the Knowledge-based Economy and the need for creativity, Singapore seemed to be loosening up and becoming more liberal. The Singapore government seemed to take 'diversity' and 'tolerance' seriously. In 2003, the then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong announced that it allowed gay saunas, clubs and gay employees in civil service (Singapore: A Lion in Winter 2003), which could be seen as acknowledgement of Florida's 'Gay Index'. Although homosexual acts are still illegal in Singapore, the government has stated that it will not strictly enforce the law and allows private gathering in the gay

community. However, it will not allow public events like gay parades and festivals to happen as the majority of the population is still conservative⁷.

The Knowledge-based Economy emerged as a result of the revolution in Information and Communications Technology (ICT). With the emergence of the Knowledge-based Economy, we also see the rise of an Information Economy. Both these economies are often associated with the digital economy as knowledge and information are transmitted in digital form. Although both economies seem similar, there is a clear distinction between them.

Information Economy refers to the scenario when information is the core of a society's economic needs (Low 2000). Although the focus of this research is on the Knowledge-based Economy, it is important to point out that Singapore has developed its wealth through its trade and production of ICT and thus its economy is very much entrenched within the Information Economy⁸.

Singapore's ICT production and trade happened since the late 1960s to the late 1970s when there was an influx of electronics assembly plants set up by MNCs from US, Europe and Japan. Much of the focus for ICT in the initial period was on hardware. The software industry developed later, around the period of 1980–1985 when the Singapore government launched a national information drive embodied in the National Computerisation Plan in 1981. However, the main focus from 1960s–1990s was on manufacturing and building IT infrastructure in Singapore. Between 1992–2000, Singapore implemented the *IT2000 plan* to make Singapore an 'Intelligent Island' through the implementation of IT infrastructure (Masuyama and Vanderbrink 2003, 259-298).

⁷ In 2004, the Singapore Police started to reject permits to Jungle Media Pte Ltd to hold their openly gay parties, 'Snowball.04' and 'Nation.V', despite previously granting permits to 4 similar parties for 4 consecutive years (Au 2004; Singapore Police Force 2004). The reason for banning of such parties was due to the open public display of same sex intimacy and complaints by the traditional and conservative part of Singapore. This incident reflects the 'heartlander' politics which PAP employs as a kind of ideological control over Singapore. 'Heartlanders' is a constructed majority of PAP's electoral supporters, who are moral, traditional and conservative and not ready for a more liberal Singapore (Tan 2007e, 2007f). This undermines the Singapore government's intentions in liberalising Singapore and I will discuss in this thesis that liberalisation in Singapore has been 'gestural'.

⁸ The Knowledge-based Economy emphasised the development of innovation and creativity while Information Economy and ICT trade in Singapore did not promote innovation and creativity.

As part of the *Enterprise Development Industrialisation* period, the Singapore government implemented policies in the ICT sector to encourage creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. This could be seen in the launch of Technopreneurship 21 (T21) in 1999 which offered a Technopreneurship Investment Fund (TiF) of \$1b to help develop local technology companies. At the same time, there was a revamp of the legal regulatory framework to strengthen copyright laws in Singapore and the education system was revamped to foster creativity (Ibid.). In addition, the government continued infrastructure development with IT master plans making sure that the citizens could roam almost anywhere and still be able to connect to the internet (Intelligent Nation 2015 2006; Kanellos 2006).

According to economist Chun Wei Choo in his essay *IT2000: Singapore's Vision of an Intelligent Island* gives a clear and concise overview of how important IT is to Singapore's survival (Choo 1997). He argued that as a result of the lack of resources, Singapore relies on its citizens to combine their skills and diligence with education and technology to sustain its economic growth. This is evident in the Singapore government's concerted effort to harness computer power as early as in the 1980s. In addition, he traces the genealogy of computerisation in Singapore, pointing to how deeply ingrained the use of IT is to Singapore society. Perhaps, it is interesting to highlight that the position of IT was an important building block as it played an important role in Singapore's economic success. During the 1980s, computers were still expensive and not available to a large segment of Singapore's population. One can argue that the use of computers during this stage was also reserved for the class of computer engineers. Even with Singapore's early involvement with ICT and IT since 1960s, its focus was mainly on production of hardware and not software development. Therefore, despite Singapore being entrenched in Information Economy, its development was in technical skills as opposed to developing innovation and creativity.

It is probably the same reason that despite Singapore's long history with technology, we do not see Media Art or technology in art being practised in Singapore. This indicates that despite the emphasis on IT and its strong presence in Singapore, technology is not usually associated with the arts and thus there are no arts policies to promote its development in the arts. It was only in 2001 when the National Art Council (NAC) started a New Media Arts Fund which funds collaborations between art and technology, and in the same year, a CyberArts component was introduced at the Nokia Singapore Art⁹ in 2001, which showcased

⁹ Nokia Singapore Art was a biennial visual arts event which has its roots in the Singapore Art series of exhibitions originating from the National Day Art Exhibitions of the 1960s–1980s.

a series of new media art works by Singapore artists. Around the same period, CCRI (Cyberarts/Cyberculture Research Initiative) started as a course in the University Scholars Programme at the National University of Singapore¹⁰. Evidently, New Media Art coincided with the Singapore government's efforts of promoting innovation and creativity in the ICT sector in Singapore.

Although the Singapore government has embraced the Knowledge-based Economy and Creative Industry, what actually constitutes creativity and innovation remains ambiguous. Despite the ambiguity, the government sends the message to all Singaporeans that innovation and creativity are desirable qualities that Singapore needs to survive economically. However, critics feel that for creativity to flourish, the repressive style of governance by PAP would need to change. The current efforts by the government to grow the creative community pushes it the other way and have created a counter-productive effect (Indirani 2010). This could be seen in the example of NAC trying to promote busking to liven up the streets in 1997. In order to discourage 'disguised begging', NAC required buskers to audition for a licence and they were limited to busking at designated areas. This process was counter-productive as it attempted to control and manage the creative activity instead of allowing it to happen naturally. In that sense, Singapore's history of being efficient has allowed it to implement a strong infrastructure development like building of art infrastructure and institutions, and IT infrastructure. However, the 'software' development, the cultivating of innovation and creativity for the people is the more challenging aspect for the new economy.

According to the Renaissance City Report (RCR), 'the ability to imagine, conceive and realize something new, to create something meaningful and valuable that never existed before is the single most prized quality of a work of art. The highest creative achievements in endeavours like engineering, architecture and even science are described as being "state-of-the-art"' (MITA 2000, 32). RCR also proposes that Singapore workers should have the creativity of artists. In that sense, the arts are seen as central in inspiring and training the citizenry for the creative economy. The arts and culture are thus considered as being at the core of Singapore's creative economy (Ooi 2011).

As economic success provides political legitimacy for PAP, the Singapore government is determined and serious in achieving success in this new economy. How has the role of artists changed in the era of the Knowledge-based Economy in Singapore? By default of the

¹⁰ For more info on CCRI, see <http://www.cyberartsworld.org/>.

Singapore government's economic vision in the Knowledge-based Economy, the role of artists is now politicised through the social 'disciplining' process to spur creativity in its people. While this 'new role' for the artists is quite limiting and ambiguous, it signifies important changes for the arts and culture in Singapore: firstly the inclusion of art into an economic plan; secondly, the introduction of new fundamental values in the people; and thirdly, the need for a more liberal and open Singapore. These changes create interstices which allow a different interpretation of the RCP's vision from the one provided by the Singapore government. In Chapter 4 and 5, I will discuss community-led initiatives by artists/cultural activists and their emancipatory projects which provide an alternative to the RCP's vision.

Conclusion

I have shown in this chapter the different phases of industrial development that Singapore has experienced since the 1960s: From *Labour-Intensive Industrialisation* in the 1960s, *Export-Oriented Industrialisation* in the 1970s, *Cost-Competitive Industrialisation* in the 1980s, *Enterprise-Development Industrialisation* in the 1990s and a move towards the Knowledge-based Economy from 2000. As a result of these economic transformations, Singapore has become economically successful over a short span of four decades.

The economic success of Singapore is often attributed to ruling party PAP who came to power in 1963. I have shown that economic success for Singapore is part of the ideology of 'survival' which PAP uses to rationalise the 'pragmatic' method of governing Singapore. It is within this ideology of 'survival' that PAP has rationalised the making of unpopular decisions and policies where citizens are expected to make self-sacrifices for the greater national interests. Thus, in the name of national 'survival' rhetoric, PAP has extended its transformation of Singapore, changing and shaping the nation beyond economic policies, as seen in the areas of education, union laws and the civil society movement, in order to achieve a stable environment to attract MNCs to invest in Singapore. Therefore, the continued economic success has become a political tool which is used to maintain the political legitimacy of the ruling government.

However, with the rise of new industrialising countries like China, India, Malaysia, Vietnam and Indonesia, Singapore faced much difficulties in maintaining its reputation as a cost-competitive location. Thus, the Singapore government attempted to build its Singapore

enterprises in the late 1990s as it was losing MNCs to cheaper cities. Towards the end of 2000, Singapore began upgrading its infrastructure through its policies to encourage growth towards the Knowledge-based Economy.

In the Knowledge-based Economy, the success of the Creative Industry model, which started in the UK, prompted many countries to adopt similar strategies. Under the Creative Industry model, the arts and culture is included with other businesses like advertising, film industry and design because the model identifies their common fundamental driving force as creativity. With more countries adopting the Creative Industry model, there is a global tendency where cultural policies become more economically driven. Singapore adopted the Creative Industry model under the Renaissance City 2.0, the second revision of the RCP, a master plan whose policies would affect the arts community directly.

Embracing these changes in Singapore's economic directives, Singapore faced the challenge to re-invent itself. Over the years, PAP has crafted policies which encouraged a conformity in the people to create political stability which attracted MNCs to Singapore. However, with the need to transform Singapore in the Knowledge-based Economy, the Singapore government has to attract creative people to want to work in Singapore and at the same time encourage its people to be innovative and creative. The Singapore government needs to re-invent itself in a completely different light. This also suggests that the state needs to re-engineer the very basic fundamental ideology and outlook of the people in order to create the right environment for the growth of the Knowledge-based Economy.

The Singapore government responded by making efforts to loosen up and liberalise Singapore. They also embarked on a new social 'disciplining' process to encourage the people to become more innovative and creative. These efforts have been criticised as counter-productive but the government remains determined. Within this transformation of Singapore, the arts and culture is considered as the core of Singapore's creative economy and artists are responsible for inspiring citizens to be creative. In this context, the arts and culture, for the first time in Singapore's history, plays a significant role in economic development. Economic success provides political legitimacy for PAP and under the Knowledge-based Economy, the role of artists is politicised through the social 'disciplining' process to spur creativity in its people. However, I argue that this should not be the only role of artists as defined by RCP's vision offered by the government but one should be hopeful as the changes create interstices for community-led initiatives by artists/cultural activists to provide an alternative to the RCP's vision.

Chapter 3: The Knowledge-based Economy and the Arts

Following the thread of the previous chapter, Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy is due to Singapore's inability to compete with other countries based on cost-effectiveness. Economic success provides political legitimacy for the People's Action Party (PAP), therefore in order to ensure economic success, the government in the 1990s began moving Singapore towards the Knowledge-based Economy.

In the name of the economy, the Singapore government has always adopted an interventionist approach and this resulted in state-led initiatives to make Singapore more creative and innovative. This suggested a shift in PAP's fundamental philosophy in the governance of Singapore.

It is within this shift in ideology that in 2000, the government introduced the Renaissance City Report (RCR), a master plan by the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA), which was aligned with the state's efforts to develop the Knowledge-based Economy in Singapore and function as an important building block for sustained economic development. This signifies the start of Singapore's Renaissance, a period of government-led rapid cultural development and liberalisation of Singapore. Unlike the other master plans like IT2000 and *iN2015* which include infrastructure development in support of innovation, the RCR deals directly with innovation and implicates the arts community directly. The RCR is also the first time that the Singapore government has included the arts into its economic plans. Under the RCR, the arts and culture are recognised as the core of the new creative economy and artists had a new role of inspiring citizens to be more creative. Although RCR covers a broad area of the arts, culture and heritage in Singapore, for the purpose of this research, I will focus on how the fine art community is impacted with the advent of the Knowledge-based Economy in Singapore and how artists respond to Singapore's Renaissance with cultural activism.

The importance of Being Cultured: 1989 Report

“We have reached a stage in our economic and national development when we should devote greater attention and resources to culture and the arts in Singapore. Culture and the arts add to the vitality of a nation and enhance the quality of life.”

- PM Goh Chok Tong (then-First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence) in a written response to the Report of the Advisory Council and the Arts in April 1989.

It is acknowledged by Goh Keng Swee, Deputy Prime Minister (1974-1984), that since the onset of PAP's rule, the Singapore government has made a conscious choice of 'trading off' Nation Building for Economic Growth. This was a different position from its neighbours like Indonesia, where under President Sukarno's rule in Indonesia, building of a national identity was placed over economic growth and where the Indonesians now have a much higher level of consciousness of their national identity as compared to Singaporeans. This trade-off affirms that the economic was privileged over the building of a Singapore culture (Goh 1972).

In 1989, an advisory council was formed to study the arts and culture in Singapore and as a result, it has published the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts (1989 Report 1989) which presented recommendations designed to make Singapore a culturally vibrant society by the turn of the century. The 1989 Report affirmed that the arts and culture mould the way of life, the customs and the psyche of the people. It asserted that the arts are important because of the following: they give the nation a unique character, broaden minds and deepen sensitivities, improve the quality of life, strengthen social bonds and contribute to tourist and entertainment sectors. The 1989 Report also recommended that Singapore's cultural development should realise the vision of a culturally vibrant society by 1999. Its definition of a vibrant society was one where its people were well-informed, creative, sensitive and gracious. In addition, it recommended that Singapore should use its multi-cultural heritage which made it unique in multi-lingual, multi-cultural art forms. Lastly, it recommended that Singapore should explore the potential of being an international exhibition centre and market for art works and a regular performing venue for the world circuit.

The 1989 Report also assessed that there were a number of factors which were negatively

affecting cultural development in Singapore. They were the lack of the following: funds, knowledge, qualified professionals, publicity, cultural facilities, educational opportunities, streamlined licensing procedures and co-ordination on heritage matters.

The 1989 Report is highlighted in this research because it was a predecessor to the Renaissance City Plan (MICA 2000). Since the 1960s, the Singapore government perceived that the arts could play the role of Nation Building but this possible role remained underdeveloped. With the introduction of the 1989 Report, the Singapore government re-defined the role of the arts and culture in Singapore. The 1989 report emerged as a result of the financial recession in the mid-1980s and it marked the early period in which cultural policies started to intersect with economic development in Singapore (*Art vs art: conflict & convergence* 1995; Kong and Yeoh 2003, 162-200; Tay and Coca-Stefaniak. 2010). As a result of the 1989 Report, the government started focusing on the development of the arts, heritage and cultural scene in Singapore. The increased in government-led initiatives in the development of the arts marked a significant change to the cultural context in Singapore.

From the recommended changes proposed by the 1989 Report, the government started the process of developing the arts and culture in Singapore, by creating infrastructure and institutions which shaped the arts and cultural scene. Statutory bodies such as the National Arts Council (NAC)¹¹, National Heritage Board (NHB)¹² and National Library Board¹³ were formed, and other infrastructure such as Singapore Art Museum¹⁴, Asian Civilisation Museum¹⁵ and The Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay¹⁶ (Esplanade) were built during this period. These infrastructure and institutions contributed to significant changes in the arts and cultural scene in Singapore and addressed the issues of funding, cultural facilities, streamlined licensing procedures and co-ordination on heritage matters, as identified in the 1989 Report.

For the fine art community, the forming of NAC was very significant as it transformed the dynamics of the art scene. NAC is a statutory board which overlooks the development of the

¹¹ NAC was set up in September 1991. For more info, see: <http://nac.gov.sg>.

¹² National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed with the merger of the National Archives, National Museum and Oral History Department in August 1993. For more info, see: <http://www.nhb.gov.sg>.

¹³ NLB was formed on 1 September 1995. For more info, see: <http://www.nlb.gov.sg>.

¹⁴ SAM opened in January 1996. For more info, see: <http://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg>.

¹⁵ ACM's first premises was opened in April 1997. For more info, see: <http://www.acm.org.sg>.

¹⁶ The Esplanade opened in October 2002. For more info, see: <http://www.esplanade.com>.

arts in Singapore. Therefore, NAC's policies and schemes directly affect artists and the art community, and its decisions on the allocating of funds and implementation of development and assistance schemes would influence the direction of the art scene. In 2000, the arts community responded to the RCR with a letter signed by members of the community (Arts Community 2000). The letter welcomed the increased funding support but questioned the way it would be distributed as NAC would allocate half of it to 8 flagship arts companies which it had identified as professional and have the potential to growth. However, the concern was that, in focusing on big companies, the smaller companies and those who chose to remain small would be neglected (Oon 2000).

The Singapore Art Museum which opened in 1996, marks the first time that Singapore had a museum which was dedicated to art. The Singapore Art Museum collects and presents art from Singapore and the Southeast Asia region. Through its collection and research on Singapore art, the museum produces knowledge on Singapore art.

In addition, the S\$600 million purpose-built Esplanade, which was the largest investment that the State has made for the development of the arts and culture opened in 2002 after 10 years of preparations. Although it is mainly a venue for performing arts, the Esplanade has established Jendela, a designated 216m² visual art space¹⁷ within the building, and in addition, various in-between spaces in the building were carved-out to be used as exhibition spaces for art works. These spaces in Esplanade where a broad range of artworks are shown include the Concourse¹⁸, Tunnel¹⁹, Community Wall²⁰ and LCD@Basement²¹. Artist Jeremy Hiah, having worked with Esplanade, has commented that in Singapore, Esplanade was the most generous with their budget when commissioning artists to create new artworks (Hiah, J, Personal Communication April 21, 2005). The Esplanade could be considered a monument for the arts as the building was the most expensive one which was ever built for the arts in

¹⁷ For more information on Jendela, see

http://www.esplanade.com/about_the_centre/venues/jendela/index.jsp.

¹⁸ For more information the Esplanade Concourse, see

http://www.esplanade.com/about_the_centre/venues/concourse/index.jsp.

¹⁹ For more information on Tunnel, see

http://www.esplanade.com/about_the_centre/venues/tunnel/index.jsp.

²⁰ For more information on Community Wall, see

http://www.esplanade.com/about_the_centre/venues/community_wall/index.jsp.

²¹ For more information on LCDs @ Basement, see

http://www.esplanade.com/about_the_centre/venues/plasmas_b1/index.jsp.

Singapore, and its distinctive architecture also changed the skyline of Singapore. Given the high profile of the Esplanade, the artists who exhibited in it not only benefited financially but had the added potential for their artworks to be highly visible and accessible to a large audience.

The above quote by the then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in 1989 indicated a greater need to give more attention and resources to the arts. The same statement shows that, prior to 1989, the government did not place a strong emphasis on the arts in Singapore. As justified by PM Goh, Singapore has achieved good economic success and now the time has come for Singapore to look at developing the arts and culture. Perhaps this shift could also be an attempt to re-dress the imbalance which has resulted from the trade-off of growing the economy instead of building national identity. When the Singapore government directed funds into the development of the arts and culture, it showed the government's seriousness in pursuing this aim and signalled to Singaporeans and the world that the arts was an important sector in Singapore.

As a substantial amount of funds was spent on building infrastructure and institutions, members of the arts community began to criticise the Singapore government for its over-emphasis on funding 'hardware' while not spending on 'software', i.e. the people in the arts and culture sector. This showed that the recommendation to address the develop knowledge and qualified professionals has not been fulfilled²². The emphasis on the building of infrastructure and institutions has neglected the arts community and their development, and perhaps caused the community to be sceptical as to whether the Singapore government had any genuine interest to develop the arts. It is worth pointing out that the 1989 Report did not explore and promote Creativity and Innovation as qualities for the people of Singapore²³.

Singapore's Renaissance

Following the 1989 Report, the Singapore government produced the Renaissance City

²² It was acknowledged in the Renaissance City Report that there was not enough talent development since the implementation of the 1989 Report in the last ten years (MICA 2000, 13).

²³ Refer to Appendix A, which shows the main recommendations of the 1989 Report and brief notes on the progress in implementation ten years from 1989.

Report (RCR) in 2000 (MITA 2000), acknowledged as the successor of the 1989 Report. The RCR introduced the Renaissance City Plan, the Singapore government's new master plan in its move towards the Knowledge-based Economy. The Renaissance City Plan in 2000 was later updated in 2002 as the Renaissance City 2.0 (ERC-CI 2002, chap.2) and again in 2008 as the Renaissance City Plan III (MICA 2008a; NAC 2008; NHB 2008). The Renaissance City Plan (RCP) put in place policies which have driven rapid cultural development and liberalisation. This new phase is what I term Singapore's Renaissance.

RCP included a strong focus on the development of the arts and culture in Singapore and how it would determine the future economic success of Singapore. Therefore, RCP indicated that the State's interest in the arts and culture was no longer limited to enhancing the quality of life of Singaporeans or limited to nation building. The arts and culture is now more importantly a determinant in the economic survival of the nation. Thus, RCP showed that the government was becoming more entrenched in the development of the arts and culture. I will now provide an overview of RCP and its development in order to provide a clear understanding of this master plan.

The Renaissance City Report (RCR) aimed to establish Singapore as a vibrant global city of the arts and to use the arts to strengthen Singaporeans' sense of national identity and thus aid nation-building efforts. It acknowledged the need to develop the 'software' of the nation since its previous developments in this area were mainly infrastructure. Therefore, RCR planned to give more attention to this area. At the same time, the master plan states its ambition of Singapore achieving the status of a vibrant city like Melbourne, Glasgow or Hong Kong, with the ultimate aim of Singapore reaching the ranks of London and New York (MITA 2000, 24-27).

RCR stated the new recognised currency of the arts and culture. It listed the direct and indirect benefits to be gained: direct benefits being the economy of art activities and indirect benefits being enhancing the quality of life, giving a sense of national identity, adding attractiveness to the city and encouraging creativity and innovation. The arts and culture in Singapore was now a 'critical component to Singapore's ability to remain competitive' (MITA 2000, 31). RCR aimed to transform Singaporeans into Renaissance Singaporeans and Singapore into a Renaissance City where culture is woven into the people's lives. For this inner transformation to happen, it was crucial for all Singaporeans to play a part by being imbued with creativity and innovation. According to the then-Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, 'creativity cannot be confined to a small elite group of Singaporeans [...] In

today's rapidly changing world, the whole workforce needs problem-solving skills, so that every worker can continuously add value through his efforts' (MITA 2000, 31). Through the RCR, the arts and culture has been recognised as the core component and artists would play the role of spurring the citizens to be more creative in Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy. Through this definition, artists were now co-opted into the social 'disciplining' process.

In 2002, RCP was revised by the Economic Review Committee-CI and the Renaissance City 2.0 was released. This updated version was an ambitious and comprehensive blueprint for the development of the creative economy in Singapore. RCP at this time would include the development of the media and design sectors. The Singapore government borrowed from the UK Creative Industry Taskforce to define the creative cluster as 'those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property' (ERC-CI 2002, iii; MTI 2003, 51). The strategy for Creative Industry would concentrate on three broadly defined creative sectors (ERC-CI 2002, iii):

Arts and Culture: performing arts, visual arts, literary arts, photography, crafts, libraries, museums, galleries, archives, auctions, impresarios, heritage sites, performing arts sites, festivals and arts supporting enterprises;

Design: advertising, architecture, web and software, graphics industrial product, fashion, communications, interior and environmental; and

Media: broadcast (including radio television and cable), digital media (including software and computer services), film and video, recorded music and publishing

With the introduction of Creative Industry into the Renaissance City 2.0 in 2002, we see the government's move towards the development of the arts and culture expanded to include the design and media sectors, and the arts and culture being subsumed within the creative economy (Tan 2008).

In 2008, RCP underwent another development as MICA launched the Renaissance City Plan III, Singapore's arts and cultural master plan for the period 2008–2015. The plans were

published in three documents, namely the Renaissance City Plan III Public Report, RCP III Arts Development Plan and the RCP III Heritage Development Plan (MICA 2008a; NAC 2008; NHB 2008).

Under this phase of RCP, the goal is to turn Singapore into a 'vibrant magnet for international talent' with an 'inclusive and cohesive population, appreciative and knowledgeable about its diversity, and proud of its national identity' (MICA 2008a, 17). The plan calls for a 'whole-of-government' approach (MICA 2008b) in business development, talent development and implementation of its three focus areas: 1) to produce distinctive art and cultural contents which would reflect Singapore's unique identity; 2) to produce a dynamic art and culture ecosystem as an art ecosystem would not only include the content creators but also the arts businesses and specialised arts services like commercial art galleries, auction houses, private museums, arts administrators, technical exhibition designers, artist management companies, conservation services, art logistics, art storage, art historians, art critics, arts educators, art therapists and more (MICA 2008a, 22); and 3) to cultivate an engaged community as part of the nation building process and help build creative and innovative mindsets (MICA 2008, 29). From looking at Renaissance City Plan III, the Singapore government has calibrated its plans and shown a more sophisticated approach in its policies and vision of Renaissance City.

Since the launch of the RCP, the Singapore government has shown strong commitment to make Singapore into a vibrant global city for the arts through the funding of these developments. The Singapore government spent S\$10 million per year from 2000–2003 under the first Renaissance City Plan, and the amount was increased to S\$12 million annually from 2004–2006. Under Renaissance City Plan III, the government further increased the amount to S\$23 million a year, and an extra S\$8 million was allocated in 2009 (Singapore Parliament Hansard 2009). The commitment of the Singapore government was further reflected in the development of infrastructure and institutions such as the building of Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay which opened in 2002 and the setting up of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music in the National University of Singapore in 2001. Local art schools Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA)²⁴ and the Lasalle College of the Arts²⁵, which started as small private schools largely funded and initiated by private support, were developed by the government into the main institutions for art education. NAFA's early years

²⁴ For more info about NAFA, see <http://www.nafa.edu.sg>.

²⁵ For more info about Lasalle College of the Arts, see <http://www.lasalle.edu.sg>.

had been financially difficult due to the low enrolment in the school and limited resources. The support of the Singapore government has enabled NAFA to grow and move into a new campus situated in the city centre. NAFA has also associated itself with the new economy through Art Education (Lau 2009). The government also created the School of the Arts (SOTA)²⁶, a dedicated pre-tertiary arts school, which opened in 2008. Furthermore, the Singapore Art Museum, Asian Civilisations Museum and the National Museum of Singapore opened in the mid-1990s. In 2014, the National Art Gallery²⁷, refurbished and transformed from the former Supreme Court building, will be opened. Taking up 60,000m², the National Art Gallery will be the largest visual arts venue in Singapore and in the region. With increased funding invested in the arts, the government has raised the stakes and become more involved in the development of the arts.

RCP provided the vision of a vibrant and exciting Singapore and that is a remarkably different image of Singapore as it is a country known to be clean, sterile, lacking in creativity and run by an authoritarian government. An example of this is well-known Science Fiction writer William Gibson's criticism of Singapore being too clean and sterile for any creativity, an environment which resulted from the Singapore government's strong management of the country (Gibson 1993). The Singapore government responded to the unflattering article by banning Wired magazine in the country, an act that affirmed Singapore's authoritarian nature, while Gibson's phrase 'Disneyland with the death penalty' would become widely-referenced. The Singapore government's continued authoritarian reputation makes it difficult to shake off this image of Singapore (Chong 2005).

RCP employs the 'whole-government' approach and the Singapore government, with its people, will have to make these changes for the survival of the nation. To make Singapore a 'hip, cool and creative' city and to attract knowledge workers to 'live, work and play' in Singapore, the government has made attempts to liberalise Singapore through opening up civil society and even opening up political spaces through the creation of Speaker's Corner²⁸. However, these attempts at liberalisation are criticised as being 'gestural' as they are in fact a form of a soft-authoritarian style of governance employed to maintain political power (Lee

²⁶ For more info about SOTA, see <http://www.sota.edu.sg>.

²⁷ For more info about the National Art Gallery, see <http://nationalartgallery.sg>.

²⁸ Speaker's Corner is fashioned after Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park, London. Although Singaporeans are required to submit the identity details to the Police stationed there, political expression is allowed here and no licence is required; non-Singaporeans are not allowed to speak there.

2005, 2007; Ooi 2010b). Despite the increased emphasis on the arts and culture in Singapore, these cultural policies are economically motivated (Kong 2000; Chua 2008).

Singapore's Renaissance saw the rise of government-led cultural development, and prior to this period of rapid cultural development, cultural development efforts were mostly community-led. The artists and fine art community had always had the desire to develop a more vibrant art scene as this would provide more conducive conditions for making art. This is reflected in essays by Liu Kang and Ho Ho Ying, who gave an account of their views of the art scene in the 1960s. Liu was well known as one of the pioneer of the Nanyang Style and he emerged as one of the leading artists in Singapore in the 1950s (Kwok 1996, 50-55). Ho is a proponent of abstraction and a leading figure of the Modern Art Society who has written and promoted non-objective abstraction in art (Ibid., 79-80). While they had conflicting views on their positions in art, reflected in their writings in the 1960s, they both showed genuine concerns for the art scene and its development (Ho 2005; Liu 2005). Artists in Singapore have always been concerned about the conditions available for practising art, and in some instances, they have acted on their concerns and made attempts to solve their problems creatively. This is also evident with the emergence of The Artists Village in 1987 when Tang Da Wu and a group of young artists started an artist colony in the rural kampung²⁹ area in Lorong Gambas, Ulu Sembawang. They created studios and living spaces for the artist community so that they could work and live together (Kwok 1996, 142-150).

The Singapore government has taken an active role in developing the arts and culture since the 1989 Report, and it has become even more entrenched in it with the current RCP. In a way, the Singapore government has become a major stakeholder of the arts community. Although in the past, artists have on different occasions felt that the government should spend more to develop the arts (Liu 2005, 80), there is also a growing wariness of the 'real' intention behind its support for the arts. This wariness is articulated in the conference held in The Substation in 1993 when Foo Meng Liang, then-Director of NAC, participated and spoke with members from the arts community and the public, and concerns about the government's intention of supporting the arts and censorship issues were raised (*Art vs art: conflict & convergence* 1995, 29-37; 57-71). Such tensions between the Singapore government and the arts community have been seeded from its very initial involvement with the arts and was not a new phenomenon which came about with the RCP.

Hence, I would point out that the involvement of the Singapore government in the

²⁹ 'Kampung' is a Malay word for rural village.

development of the arts will always be conflicted. The arts community is a loose group of people who belong to the group by virtue of their profession and interest. However, within this group, there are many views which each person holds dearly and when the Singapore government decides to push for certain policies, there will be artists who would agree and converge as well as those who would disagree and resist. In this way, community-led cultural developments provide an alternative vision from the government-led cultural development, and hence, I defined these community-led efforts as a form of cultural activism within the Singapore context.

In the following segment, I will describe the problems that occur as a result of RCP and Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy, and also point out my views on cultural development from my observations in the art scene in Singapore based on my position as an artist/cultural activist in Singapore.

Renaissance City Plan and the Subjugation of the Arts

The *Singapore Creative Industries Sector's Value Added (VA)/Employee Chart* is unable to be reproduced here due to copyright restrictions.

The *Singapore Creative Industries Sector's Value Added (VA)/Employee Chart* can instead be accessed via DesignSingapore Council. 2008. Dsg-II, Strategic blueprint of the Design Singapore Initiative 2009 - 2015. pg. 56. Singapore. DesignSingapore Council, Ministry of Information Communications and the Arts.

Figure 3: Design Singapore, *Singapore Creative Industries Sector's Value Added (VA)/Employee*, 2008, Chart. In DesignSingapore Council. 2008. Dsg-II, Strategic blueprint of the Design Singapore Initiative 2009 - 2015. Singapore. DesignSingapore Council, Ministry of Information Communications and the Arts. pg. 56.

Singapore Sociologist Ooi Can-Seng made the observation that with the introduction of the Creative Industry as part of the Renaissance City 2.0, art was framed within the Creative Industry, resulting in the fine art community being subjected to increased pressures. He

questioned this subjugation of fine art within Creative Industry when fine arts had to 'compete' with other creative clusters on economic and popularity terms (Ooi 2011). One of the most obvious pressures that Ooi mentioned is the worrying trend of the Singapore government's view of art as part of economic development. Although the Singapore government's efforts in promoting the arts and culture is getting attention in Singapore, under the Creative Industry model, the arts and culture, though positioned as one of its sectors together with design and media, do not receive equal support.

Even with the increased funding to the arts via the NAC, Esplanade and School of the Arts from S\$55 million to S\$99 million in 2003–2009, the arts received less support than its 'cousins' in the creative clusters which were allocated S\$500 million to develop the digital media industry for 2006–2010 (MICA 2010, 41; Balakrishnan 2005). The reason for this disparity was due to the design and media cluster being seen as more lucrative and thus deserving more investment from the government. As the chart above shows, a comparison of the three creative sectors indicates that the arts was the least economically productive (See Figure 3).

In a bid to address the Arts' economic productivity, the government has asked for a shift away from the 'arts for arts sake' mindset, to look at development of the arts from a holistic perspective so that it can contribute to the development of the Creative Industry and the nation's social development (ERC-CI 2002, 14). This is in turn reflected in NAC's ideology of helping the arts 'achieve sustainability in the long term' (NAC 2006, 3) and the revision of schemes like the Arts Housing Scheme. The Arts Housing Scheme, first introduced in 1985, helped subsidise rents to artists and arts group in land-scarce Singapore by about 90%, thereby providing much-needed spaces for the development of the arts and culture in Singapore. With its new ideology, NAC further calibrated the policy as it saw the need to enter into collaboration with, or outsource to, private entities so that the spaces become self-sustaining and were not over-dependent on public resources (NAC 2008, 42). Although the Singapore government continues to acknowledge the importance of the arts and culture, its position is that artists should learn from the design and media sectors to exploit their creativity so as to be more economically productive and become self-sustainable in the long run.

With comparisons based on economic returns, the fine art community has to constantly remind themselves that they are in the business of cultural development and not economic development. While many artists still celebrate their works in aesthetic terms, they are

nonetheless subsumed within the same economic logic as design and media, and would often even internalise the market logic and tie their art practices to economic value (Ooi 2011). As Ho lamented, it is frustrating for the artist that while most of their audience would be 'curious' about the artwork, they would not be able to appreciate it because everything in Singapore is measured through monetary value and art is no exception (Ho 2005, 64). The problem is not that art is measured by economic value but that economic value seems to be the only measure.

Another problem arises with the quantification of the value of art as the determining factor for government funding. Visitor numbers, visibility in the public, ticket sales and the like are used to evaluate artists and gauge the success of their events. Such quantification ignores other values of art and is not healthy for the development of art. Often the success of an art event is judged by the number of visitors to the museum and ticket sales. This method of assessing art can potentially limit the content production process in museums and festivals. Although visitorship for museums has increased in recent years (MICA 2010, 10), museum officials feel the pressure to maintain and improve its visitor figures. The Singapore Arts Festival in 2008 was criticised when its ticket sales dipped (Chia 2008a; Chia 2008b; Ong 2008) while the positive comments from the press was that despite the low ticket sales, the standard of the programme was higher than before (Goh 2008). In the subsequent year, the Singapore Arts Festival tweaked its approach with cheaper tickets, timing and also a change in direction of programming, which the press labelled as a more 'crowd pleasing slant' (Chia 2009). If arts funding is justified by visitor numbers, visibility in public and ticket sales, as in the case of the Singapore Arts Festival where the content is calibrated towards populist taste, the creative autonomy of the arts community will be limited and this would in turn limit the growth of the arts when artists, curators and museum officials limit their programming to 'crowd pleasing' content.

The inclusion of fine art within the Creative Industry model means that fine art would be compared to other creative enterprises like design and media and subjected to the same economic logic. This economic emphasis would subject the performance of artists to being gauged by economic returns and other quantitative measures in order to receive greater approval from the government and the public. This form of measure and approval is rather coercive and it is not a surprise that artists and the arts community at times would repeat the same rhetoric. Therefore, the subjugation of fine art within the Creative Industry model in the RCP is problematic. The economic emphasis asserts pressure on artists to be economically productive, which in doing so, would sideline the aesthetic dimension of fine

art. While most fine art practitioners welcomed the increased support and funds for fine art, I argue that the type of artists that the government 'preferred' in its vision of Singapore's Renaissance was too narrow. Persistent development in this direction would produce an uncondusive environment for the fine artists. Therefore the work of cultural activists engaging in community-led projects are important because they provide an alternative vision of Singapore's Renaissance.

Soft/Self Censorship in the Arts

For success in the Knowledge-based Economy, Singapore undertook a rapid intense re-branding process, most successfully reflected in the 'Uniquely Singapore' campaign by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) which promoted an 'open, creative, cool and funky Singapore'. The re-branding of Singapore would see the Singapore government implementing a series of liberalisations in the form of casinos, bar-top dancing and later opening hours of clubs and pubs. This show of the Singapore government becoming more open and liberal did not go unnoticed as Singapore received relative success in becoming a cultural hub in the region. This transformation of Singapore from 'Disneyland with a Death Penalty' into a vibrant global city of the arts is being recognised through the media internationally. New York Times reported in 2007 that 'Singapore may be clean, efficient and manicured, but the prosperous island-state knows how to get down and dirty too' (Kurlantzick 2007). Earlier, Time magazine's cover story said that Singapore is getting creative and funky thus losing the nanny state image that is often perceived of Singapore (McCarthy & Ellis 1999). Therefore, the re-branding of Singapore has been rather successful.

Although the Singapore government seems to have relaxed its control on many fronts in the attempt to make Singapore a vibrant global city of the arts, in reality, it still exerts social and political controls in the city-state. Singapore Sociologist Terence Lee observed that the government's attempt at liberalisation in order to encourage creativity in Singapore was 'gestural' (Lee 2005). In Singapore's cultural transformation, creativity was depoliticised by the encouragement of creativity which is functioning and thriving on 'non-political' margins. The Singapore government continues to exercise different forms of control and censorship to limit undesired forms of creativity. Lee argued that if the Singapore government wants to make Singapore more creative and innovative, there is an urgent need to give up centralised

control to individual autonomy.

In 2006, the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) put on *Telar Terbit (Out Now)* (2006), a satellite exhibition of the first Singapore Biennale. The exhibition showed the works by Southeast Asian artists from the 1960s–1980s framed within the political climate in Southeast Asia. Included in the exhibition was a political timeline of Southeast Asia and it was observed that Singapore's political history was not reflected within this timeline. While artists from the other Southeast Asian countries were presented as a response to their respective political climates, the works by Singapore artists Cheo Chai-Hiang and Tang Dawu were not (*Telar Terbit (Out Now) 2006*). Instead, the two artists were framed within the shifting paradigms between modernism and contemporary art in Singapore. It seems that the curatorial decision taken by SAM was to focus on conflict within aesthetics and not politics in Singapore. This could be seen as a conscious decision by SAM's curators to depoliticise art and artistic practices in Singapore through this exhibition. In addition, SAM has been criticised on different occasions for censorship of artworks which do not uphold 'Singapore's values'. One case which drew international criticism towards the museum was the Artists Regional Exchange 5 (ARX 5)³⁰ exhibition in Singapore. The work of participating Hong Kong artist Zunzi Wong was removed and destroyed hours before the opening of the exhibition. The artwork showed a cartoon drawing in which the then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong was portrayed as a puppet of the 'Elder Statesman' Lee Kuan Yew. The curator from SAM explained that the artwork was suppressed in order to avoid any conflict from her superiors in the Singapore government ministry (Saat 2005; Ihlein 2005; Donald 2001).

The Singapore government continues to control mainstream media and is still wary of social political activism (Lee 2007; Ooi 2010b; Tan 2007a). Given the nature of the design and advertising sector, most of the creative products produced do not engage in making strong local political and social statements. Some artists make social and political statements that are not flattering to the authorities, and their works may be censored or banned as a result. Ooi argued that controversies from artists and art works are part of a maturing arts scene and cultural products, ranging from paintings to literature, can be insidiously political. However, pushing the social political limits in artistic expression has its limits in Singapore. The

³⁰ ARX 5 refers to the fifth edition of the Artists Regional Exchange, an Australian initiative which offered a platform for Australian and Southeast Asian artists to showcase and network in this region. The exchange provided opportunity for the selected artists to travel to different host cities where they would do a residency and stage an exhibition in the host city. For ARX 5, 15 artists toured the host cities Singapore, Hong Kong and Perth.

Singapore government has consciously weighed the political and economic on the front of liberalisation (Ooi 2010b).

Although Singapore seems more open to the creativity of artists, the control of the arts now comes in 'softer' forms. This increased funding for the arts is welcomed by the arts community, as it provides the artists with much-needed resources to develop their art. However, control over the funds has resulted in the emergence of 'soft' censorship of the arts. By deciding what projects and who to support, the NAC could 'reward' artists who kept in line or 'punish' artists who were not aligned with the government directives.

In 2010, theatre group Wild Rice saw its funding from the NAC cut by more than ten percent. Over the years, Wild Rice has made news for plays that criticize the Singapore government on issues of race, religion, homosexuality, censorship and media regulations. The cut came about because the NAC would not support 'projects which are incompatible with the core values promoted by the Government and society or disparage the Government' (Chia 2010b). A group of theatre practitioners issued a statement to the authorities, stating that 'NAC's priority should be directed towards developing Singapore's potential as a world-class city for the arts, and not towards developing the potential of a statutory board [NAC] – entrusted with public money as an organ of social control.' (Ibid.). When asked about the case, Elaine Ng, Director of Arts Development at NAC, said, 'Given the limited pool of resources, we have to prioritize our funds to areas and arts groups which need greater support from us'. NAC chief Benson Puah admitted that the cut in Wild Rice's funding was based on the theatre group's actions over the years and NAC wanted to send a message to the arts community. He said, 'The cut could have been much more severe, but it was just a gentle message to be sent that the conditions have to be complied with. The difference [compared to the past], of course, was that we didn't fudge it, which was probably the first time such a clear statement was made, explaining the reasons for the cut [...]' (Chia 2010a).

On a separate occasion, theatre group Drama Box wanted to stage three short forum theatre³¹ plays which dealt with important social issues including homosexuality, sex education and religious radicalisation. These were planned to be performed in a public space to engage with

³¹ The forum theatre format encourages audience members to interject and act in an ever-emerging play. For more info, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forum_theatre .

the public. The licence³² to perform outdoors was rejected by Media Development Authority (MDA), the licensing body (Tan 2010). According to MDA, the topics were considered sensitive and since the endings of the plays remained open, the MDA stated that the plays should only be staged indoors.

Both Wild Rice and Drama Box did not have their activities banned even though the works did not fit 'core value' and were critical of the Singapore government. Instead, NAC and MDA exercised a more nuanced/refined form of control: Wild Rice was allowed to continue staging any 'subversive' content but they just would not receive as much funding; Drama Box was only allowed to stage their plays in an indoor space which would effectively limit its audience potential. It is a matter of time as the state becomes accustomed to this method of control (Chua 2008). As argued by the arts community, when NAC and licensing bodies refuse to clearly define its Out-of-Bound markers (OB markers)³³ and choose to enforce it when deemed necessary, these open-ended guidelines would create a climate of fear and serve to encourage the arts community to exercise self-censorship (Gomez 2000; Ooi 2010a; Ooi 2010b).

Unlike the design and media clusters where the creative work are motivated by commercial gains, the arts do not limit itself to commercial gains and sometimes, artistic expressions can disparage the authorities. The Singapore government regards such expressions as unproductive and discourages such practices through its policies. This indicates that the Singapore government is wary of the arts and doubts its value in engaging with society, and that its push for arts and culture is only for the arts to be self-sustainable, popular and economically productive. Hence, this stunts the growth of the freedom of the arts and

³² Every public performance, indoor and outdoor, requires a licence application. Failure to do so will make the event illegal. With the formation of MDA in 2002, it oversees the licensing for arts, film and media while Public Entertainment licences, which are linked to pubs, bars and businesses, are managed by the Police. In the following chapter, I will discuss The Artists Village's engagement with the licensing process in response to the stigma of performance art in Singapore.

³³ Out-of-Bound markers denote what topics are permissible for public discussion. The term was first used by the then-Minister for Information, Technology and the Arts to describe the boundaries of acceptable discourse. The OB markers are not clearly stated and are not fixed boundaries but are determined by shifts in Singapore's political climate so that a topic that is not permissible to be discussed today could be allowed in the future or vice versa (Minister Yeo on OB markers and Internet 1999). As the OB markers are not clearly stated, it would appear that Singaporeans are free to discuss anything as long as they do not cross these shifting and invisible boundaries.

suggests the state's efforts in promoting the arts to be only half-hearted and a form of selective grooming.

The Position of the Arts in Singapore

The advent of the Renaissance City Plan has resulted in the arts receiving more attention. With increased funding, the arts are given more publicity, and more media representation, and hence, the artist figure is becoming more prominent in Singapore. This can be observed in the Monday Interviews Series, a feature on a distinguished person in society by Life!, the lifestyle section of the Straits Times. These include successful businessmen, celebrities, well-known chefs and quite a number of people from the arts community. Potter Iskandar Jalil is one artist who was featured in the Monday Interviews Series. This series would usually be shown in a similar format with the interviewee's portrait splashed on the cover page of Life! and the content of the interview would consist of the interviewee's life story and how he has come a long way to arrive at success. Including artists in the Monday Interview Series suggests that artists, like successful businessmen and celebrities, are important figures in our society (Lui 2010).

With more funding and higher visibility of the arts in Singapore, the social position of arts professionals and the arts has improved but, as compared with the RCP's vision for the arts where art is woven into society, there is still a long way to go. The relatively low status of the arts in Singapore has a social historical context (Kong 2000; Ooi 2011).

This relatively low status can be seen in the position of the arts within Singapore society. Firstly, there is the lack of appreciation of the intellectual property of artists in Singapore where visual art works are largely appreciated for its monetary and decorative value. Its aesthetics and importance to the Knowledge-based Economy are not widely recognised. Two, in the Singapore education system, the arts is the option for academically weaker students while academically inclined students are encouraged to study the sciences at all levels. In addition, arts and cultural activities in school are often considered as peripheral and extracurricular activities. Through this conditioning, this perception of the arts education system is felt beyond the schools as many people continue to consider art as a hobby and not as a profession. Three, there is the view that the arts is for the economically desperate. The fear that artists are 'free-riders' is institutionalised in the Singapore system where strict rules for busking reflect the fear that anyone who is desperate can turn to busking and hijack art

into a form of 'disguised begging'. Four, art is often promoted as a form of entertainment and lifestyle. This is problematic as there is a tendency to promote art that is popular and entertaining, which promotes a very narrow definition of art (Ooi 2011).

Although there are many attempts at promoting the arts in Singapore and conditions are improving, the fine artists are still struggling to get recognition for their profession and their art. The relatively low status of the arts in Singapore persists and therefore discourages creative individuals to go into the arts while the public is not educated to appreciate artists and their works.

Developing Software of Art

The Singapore arts community has for a long time lamented about the need to develop 'software' (the people) and not just 'hardware' (infrastructure) in the arts. The arts community has had many dialogues and discussions about the state of art and has expressed many views on the direction of its development and what needed to be done in order to have a vibrant art scene (*Art vs art: conflict & convergence* 1995; Ho 2005; Liu 2005). The Singapore government's efforts in developing the 'software' through its cultural policy remains ineffective as the relatively low status of art reflects that the 'software' is still neglected.

Therefore, it was not surprising to find that the arts community was sceptical and appeared unmoved by the RCP introduced in 2000 which claimed to want to develop the 'software' (Tan 2007a; Arts community 2000). On closer observation, RCP's policies for the development of the arts is geared towards professionalism which has more to do with sustainability and art markets (MICA 2008; MITA 2000).

Although art is seen as a catalyst for creativity and used to suggest the highest form of creativity, RCP envisioned that creativity was for everyone and everyone could be creative (MITA 2000). This promotes the democratisation of creativity and seems to suggest a very open interpretation of art. It seems that anyone who is creative is or can be an artist and good art is commercially sustainable. :phunk studio³⁴, a design collective which has in recent years become known as an art & design collective, has begun showing and selling their

³⁴ For more info on :phunk studio, see <http://www.phunkstudio.com>.

paintings and prints through commercial art gallery Art Seasons³⁵ and exhibiting in art galleries and museums. Director of the collective Jackson Tan explained that they are

'hybrid creatives who can straddle between creativity and commerce, who can do art and design at the same time. Where the creators are not restricted to just whether they are designers or they are artists but they are more like a hybrid of both.' (BusinessinSingapore 2011).

Tan's statement indicates that :phunk studio is creative, not disruptive, commercially sustainable and inspires people – a position which is aligned with RCP's vision for the artist. Being aligned with RCP's vision, :phunk studio has received greater approval from the government and public. This would suggest to the public that all artists should strive towards similar ambitions.

However, I argue that this should not be the only position and vision for artists. The lack of art history and art criticism in Singapore would further compound this problem as there is a lack of knowledge to understand art in art historical terms, criticality and aesthetics. For most people, art is a showcase of creativity. T.K. Sabapathy, probably the most well-known and respected art historian in Singapore and the region, has on many occasions advocated the need for art history in Singapore. He pointed out that most people in Singapore have little knowledge about Singapore's art history as it has not been valued in Singapore. He said art history has not gained...

'currency to constitute part of our ethos and dynamics of the nation. Each of our lives will be richer, enhanced, if we know the manifold ways by which reality is conceptualized and constructed, and the varied expressions of values within our society. Such knowledge enables us to think deeply and imaginatively; it can enable us to act with discrimination and conviction; it can also allow us to relate to our fellow human being expressively, with understanding and humanity.' (*Art vs art: conflict & convergence* 1995, 17-18).

Sadly, Art History is on a 'road to nowhere'. Sabapathy charts his personal journey and the development of the discipline of art history in Singapore, and how, though at times there seemed to be a chance for it to happen, it never did. The road of art history for him at this

³⁵ For more info on Art Seasons, see <http://www.artseasonsgallery.com>.

juncture has not progressed much since the 1950s and 1960s. Therefore the story of the history of art as a disciplinary field in Singapore remains frozen, entombed as 'chapter two in the 1960s and 1970s' (Sabapathy 2010).

The development of art does not lie solely with the government but with all the stakeholders and hence opinions often differ. The arts community responds in different ways: some creatively, some defiantly, some diplomatically and some pragmatically. It is this crisis which create responses from the arts community, that a kind of cultural activism dimension emerges. Although Sabapathy may have acknowledged that art history is on a 'road to nowhere', he is not resigned to it and has not given up. Instead, he continues his practice and has created meaningful book projects like *Liu Kang and Ho Ho-Ying: Re-connecting: Selected Writings on Singapore Art and Art Criticism* and *Bits And Pieces: Writing On Art by Chia Wai Hon* (Cheo and Sabapathy 2005; Chia 2002). Both these book projects are commendable and important as they compiled art writings from the 1960s to 1980s which were written in Chinese and translated and published them in English. Sabapathy in his forewords in both these books stated that the projects were meant to help lay the foundation for art history and future art historians³⁶. Therefore these book projects can be seen as acts of a cultural activism which addresses the lack of emphasis of art history in Singapore's art scene.

Throughout Singapore's history, the Singapore government has expressed many views on the role of the arts in Singapore and its recent embrace of the Knowledge-based Economy has redefined the role of the arts with the vision of the RCP. Hence, the government's statement of developing the 'software' of art does not effectively match the reality. Instead these statements reflect the recent decisions in the realm of arts policy and infrastructure development as responses to a changing economic environment, Therefore, it can be concluded that these measures to develop the 'software' of the arts serve a much larger political agenda than that of the arts (Bereson 2003). Despite constant feedback from the arts community, the Singapore government still continues to hold a limited view of the role of the arts in society. In Singapore's Renaissance, artists and their art do not only serve these limited functions of economic development. Therefore, it is important for cultural activists to propose and realise projects which define an alternative role of the arts in society.

³⁶ Sadly, it seems that these books were on cheap sale at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Singapore (Martin 2010).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have surveyed the government's involvement in the development of the arts and culture in Singapore which began with the 1989 Report and continued under the RCP, resulting in cultural policies which are more economically motivated than cultural. Through this, the Singapore government has become more entrenched in the art scene as it built infrastructure and institutions which have shaped the cultural condition for the arts.

At the same time, the Singapore government began a rapid 'liberalisation' process in an attempt to transform the image of Singapore in order to become economically competitive in the Knowledge-based Economy. This marked Singapore's Renaissance as a period of rapid cultural development and liberalisation for Singapore. However, this process of liberalisation and opening up of spaces have been criticised as 'gestural' as the Singapore government remains cautious of 'disruptive' works, and through NAC and MDA, has exercised nuanced control over the outcome of these works.

Within this context, the government's involvement in the arts has shifted the ground for the arts. Although the RCP addresses the whole arts community, my research focuses on the issues that affect the fine art community. Therefore, I have highlighted the issues that have affected this community from my experience as an artist/cultural activist.

The issues that have surfaced show the conflicting views between the Singapore government and the arts community. I argue that the view of artists and their art serving the political agenda of economic development is problematic for cultural development. Therefore, the work of cultural activists is important within the cultural context of Singapore as their projects provide an alternative vision for Singapore's Renaissance. For this research, I am interested in how individuals or groups from the fine art community, or even the whole community, have responded to this crisis. For it is this urgency to respond that motivates cultural activism in those who have chosen to do so. In the following chapters, I will discuss the work and artistic practices of The Artists Village and Koh Nguang, and how my own practice with cultural space Post-Museum is a form of cultural activism.

Chapter 4: Recent Gestures: Cultural Activism, Art & Artistic Practice

As seen in Chapter 3, the Singapore government, through the justification of Singapore having reached economic stability, has started to look at the development of the arts and culture in Singapore. Based on the recommendations from the 1989 Report, the government has responded by building infrastructure and institutions for the arts. In aligning with Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy, the government embarked on the Renaissance City Plan (RCP) which aimed at transforming Singapore into a vibrant global city of the arts. As a result, there was an increase in funding for the arts and creation of spaces for art, and the government appeared more liberal and supportive.

Hence, it was the first time that art would play a crucial part in economic development in Singapore. As observed previously, the cultural policies are economically motivated and I argued that this approach to the development of art is problematic and not conducive for its development. I have shown that the arts community has always been vocal of their views on the development of art and has expressed concerns in the cultural policies of the Singapore government. This shows that there are conflicting views between the Singapore government and the arts community. However, the arts community does not resign to the situation for when the conditions are not ideal and challenging, some artists would respond through engaging in strategies or activities which can be classified as cultural activism and these in turn shapes their identity and their practice and works.

It seems that the vision of Singapore's Renaissance as defined by the cultural policies would focus on the artists' artworks as the final outcome and ignore the cultural activism motivations in their artworks and practice. This would undermine the understanding of these works and the artists' contribution to the development of art in Singapore.

In this chapter, I will discuss the works and artistic practices of artist group The Artists Village and artist Koh Nguang How, both of whom have cultural activism embedded in their art practices, and show how these activist motivations are important considerations for their work and hence make their work.

Therefore, in this chapter, I will present both their work as artworks/art practices, not peripheral activities and consider their value in Singapore's context of the Knowledge-based

Economy. I will do so through borrowing from the theoretical frameworks developed by Nicolas Bourriaud's theories of Relational Aesthetics and Postproduction. These theories lead us to reconsider the art practices and works by The Artists Village and Koh Nguang How as important contributions to the development of art and locate their work in art history in Singapore.

Side-lining the Cultural Activist within Fine Art

There is a lack of knowledge in the areas of art history and art criticism in Singapore and despite the rhetoric of focusing on 'software', there is little done in this area. The general view is that art is seen as decorative, a sign of creativity and often judged on economic value instead of aesthetics terms. In addition, in art education, art history and art criticism is offered as a non-compulsory module and most students are uninterested (Ooi 2010a; Ooi 2011). The Singapore government has continued to invest in 'hardware' and this has led to the increase of exhibition spaces for art in the recent years and hence an increase in the number of exhibitions. However, the writing on art and art history, i.e, the development of knowledge on art, has not increased.

Singapore Art critic Quah Sy Ren posits that the art critics are to the arts community what intellectuals are to society (Quah 2002). He borrowed Edward Said's definition, that an intellectual is one who is not afraid of opposing orthodoxies and dogmas, and pointed out that in Singapore, the intellectual's ideologies and criticism have been seen as hindering progress. While art critics can provide an understanding between the artists and the audience in relation to specific works, the broader societal role of intellectual criticism is a necessary ingredient for innovation. While the lack of intellectual criticism has not stop Singapore from becoming an efficient and productive city, it may prevent Singapore from being a great city.

The fate of art criticism seemed to improve in Singapore's renaissance, when the National Art Council (NAC)-funded publications like *focas*³⁷ which took a liberal, critical stand on the arts. However, the NAC withdrew funding after the 4th volume of the journal.

³⁷ *focas* (Forum On Contemporary Art & Society) is a journal that engages issues of contemporary art, politics and social change – primarily but not exclusively – in Singapore and Southeast Asia. *focas* is dedicated to interdisciplinary, critical exchange among scholars, activists and practitioners.

The Singapore Art Museum (SAM) would seem to present an ideal mechanism to record and develop a critique of art, and in particular, Singaporean art. However, SAM is consistently presenting a busy schedule of Singapore, regional and international shows, ranging in the period from 1930s to contemporary. While this is a very welcome contribution, there seems to be a stronger emphasis on turn over of exhibitions, rather than the development of knowledge on Singapore art practice.

With these features of the government sponsored art institutions, it is perhaps not unexpected that Singapore continues to have an under developed appreciation of art history, or arts social value beyond mere decoration. Sabapathy has expressed that without knowledge about our art, we fall short of appreciating its relevance (*Art vs art: conflict & convergence* 1995). This obsession with exhibition spaces and exhibits indicates that the number of exhibitions put up is a quantifiable index to measure success in the arts and that aesthetic value, though important, serves only the surface role of performing a 'vibrant' eco-system of art in Singapore. Hence, the content which gives the meaningful existence of art is being sidelined.

In 2008, SAM presented Artists Village: 20 Years On, an exhibition which aimed to show The Artists Village's work in its first 20 years. As I am a member of the group, I was involved as part of the curatorial team, which consists of members of The Artists Village, the museum curators and a participating artist. However, the museum's curatorial team made most of the decisions. The exhibition was staged in two of the museum's lower galleries, which some of us felt was too small to sufficiently show the 20 years history of the group. The exhibition showed artworks which were made between 1988–2006 by artists who were affiliated with the group. Most of the artworks shown were made by individual artists except for three pieces which showed collaborative projects by the artists in the Post-Ulu period (2000–2008). These pieces were *The Bali Project* (2001), *B.E.A.U.T.Y* (2002) and the *Public Art Library* (2003). The physical artworks were centre-staged, while the interactions between its members, friendships, art strategies, documentation work and other cultural activism type of activities of The Artists Village took the form of captions, time-line, charts and documentation that was much less well presented. This format suggests that these activities are peripheral and serve to only support the artworks within the exhibition, whereas my own view was, and is, that these aspects make a critical contribution to The Artists Village's identity and contribution to contemporary art in Singapore.

Koh Nguang How is an artist with a unique and important position in the art scene in Singapore. His practice consists of working in the multiple roles of researcher, curator and

artist which includes the activities of collecting and documenting art-related development. He started his artistic practice in the late 1980s with The Artists Village, and over the years, his area of research has broadened to cover from the 1930s to the present. Koh's collecting and documenting has resulted in building a huge comprehensive collection of materials on Singaporean art. Since the formal institutions of Singapore have not been building an archive of art practiced, Koh's collection has become more rare and precious. It is possible that, with regard to the work of Singaporean collectives and cultural activism, he has managed with his meager resources to build a collection in his own HDB flat³⁸ that is more comprehensive than any art institutions' in Singapore.

Koh's practice of collecting and documenting has shaped and informed his artworks which often take the form of an archive. At the same time, his collection and wealth of knowledge on Singapore art is valuable, as proven by institutions engaging him in the role of a researcher. From his CV³⁹, it is evident that he has more often been engaged to play the role of a researcher than that of an artist. That art institutions continuously engage Koh to be an advisor and loan his collection affirm he has the knowledge and the collection which they do not have. Koh has also revealed that art institutions have previously approached him with interest to purchase his collection but they were 'insincere' and the transaction never happened. In 2008, Koh was engaged by the National Museum of Singapore as a researcher to provide research materials and photographs for 'Documenta 50 Years'⁴⁰ while several Singapore artists were commissioned to produce artworks. He commented that the museum did not consider him an artist as they did not commission an artwork by him and that perhaps his 'art' did not look like sculpture or painting (Koh. N.H, Personal Communication October 22, 2010).

³⁸ About 80% of Singapore's population reside in high-rise HDB (Housing Development Board) flats located in housing estates and new towns. These flats are mostly owned by the residents under a home ownership scheme which allows Singaporeans to use their Central Provident Funds, a social security fund to purchase these homes (Kong and Yeoh 2003; Singapore 2010). Almost the whole of Koh's flat is currently occupied by his collection.

³⁹ For Koh's CV, see Appendix B.

⁴⁰ Archive in Motion: 50 years documenta 1955–2005 was a travelling show presented by Goethe Institute which took place in National Museum of Singapore. The museum responded to documenta's archive by creating *Picturing Singapore 1955–2005: An Archival Perspective* which brought to life the corresponding developments in Singapore's arts scene. Koh was commissioned as a researcher to produce a corresponding Singapore timeline (Tale of Two Histories 2007).

With the increase in art infrastructure and institutions since the 1990s, it was thought that the artists' 'cause' was being 'realised'. The then-Deputy Director of NAC Foo mentioned 'the battle is won' (*Art vs art: conflict & convergence* 1995, 36), reflecting his sentiments that art at that time was considered important from the Singapore government's perspective, and that the arts would be getting the support it needed. But this notion brings to question the value of the cultural activism work which the arts community invested prior to being supported. What does The Artists Village establishing an artist colony independently in 1988 have to do with NAC's Arts Housing Scheme in 1995? What does it say of SAM's ambition of being the world's leading institute for the study of Southeast Asian art in the region, while Koh's humble HDB flat houses a comprehensive collection of Singapore art-related materials that is arguably better than that of any Singapore art institution? The increase in official institutions suggests that the work of administering and managing the arts have become the institutions' scope of work. This implies that it is not necessary for artists to find their own space as NAC's Arts Housing Scheme will fulfil that function, and that artists do not need to know their history because it is in the Singapore government's electronic depository. Hence, there is more time for artists to focus on what is at hand, to produce artworks which are needed to fill the increased exhibition spaces in Singapore.

Returning to *The Artists Village: 20 Years On*, I wish to refer to artist Daniel Buren's seminal text entitled *The Function of The Studio*, which he wrote in 1971. Buren wrote that seeing the work in the artist's studio and later seeing the work in an exhibition, he came to realize that 'it was the reality of the work, its "truth", its relationship to its creator and place of creation, that was irretrievably lost in this transfer' from the studio to the exhibition space. While if the art work remains in the studio, it suffers "total oblivion" and the artist's death from starvation' (Buren 1971). This was my experience with *The Artists Village: 20 Years On* that in the process of this transfer, the main point, the life force of The Artists Village was lost somewhere inbetween the place of production and its place for consumption. The lost dimension can be located within The Artists Village's cultural activist work which, I observed, has been side-lined.

I will, in the following sections, relate how The Artists Village and Koh have responded to the context and crisis in Singaporean art by producing a significant body of work and at the same time contributed to the development of contemporary art in Singapore.

The Artists Village

The Artists Village is a Singapore contemporary art group whose goals are to promote contemporary art and to bring about a better understanding of contemporary art practices and their contribution to society (The Artists Village: About Us 2005). The Artists Village emerged in 1988 with the establishment of an artist colony in a chicken farm in a kampung⁴¹ in Ulu Sembawang. The group lost the 'village' space in March 1990 when the land was repossessed by the Singapore Government for urban development. Despite losing the physical space, The Artists Village continued its existence.

The Artists Village has exhibited in museums and art institutions in Singapore and internationally. While many curators and writers have acknowledged the importance of The Artists Village in relation to the development of contemporary art in Singapore and that its emergence in the 1980s marked the beginning of contemporary art and would change the way art is made (Kwok 1996; Storer 2007; Tan 2007b; Turner 2005), there has never been an attempt to survey the work of The Artists Village in an exhibition. Hence, The Artists Village: 20 Years On was the first attempt to showcase the group in a 'retrospective' and to locate its position in art history. However, the exhibition was a modest attempt at that as sociologist Kwok⁴² in his introductory essay to the catalogue says, 'The exhibition does not attempt to wrap things up and tie loose ends; instead it unwrapped two decades of development of the group.' (Kwok 2009, 1-3).

While considering the position of The Artists Village in art history, it is important not to consider the group as an unchanging entity. Since its formation, there have been many artists who have had affiliation with the group. While some were members and have maintained their links since the beginning, there were others who participated in various events as non-members. The Artists Village registered as a non-profit society in February 1992 under

⁴¹ Kampung is a Malay word for rural village.

⁴² Kwok Kian Woon, a sociologist in Singapore, is the co-editor of *The Artists Village: 20 Years On* catalogue. Not to be confused with Kwok Kian Chow who was the then-Director of Singapore Art Museum and author of *Channel & Confluences: A History of Singapore Art*.

Singapore's Societies Act⁴³. Under the Societies Act, all non-profit societies and associations must submit the names of its members to the Registrar of Societies and must be updated on an annual basis. Art societies and associations are not exempted from this. With the Societies Act, artists' membership in The Artists Village and affiliation with the group became clearer compared to the earlier period when they were just artists living and working in the village.

Stimson and Sholette, in their analysis of collectivism in art, have poignantly outlined the different forms of collectivism in history where 'each responds to and cultivates a yearning for an absolute and idealised form of collectivity, each makes the need for the community more pressing by reconstructing the glory of an imaginary social form.[...] while new collectivism and old collectivism seems the same but doesn't mean, it hasn't changed' (Stimson and Sholette 2007 1-3). They argue that collectivism can and should be periodized and that art collectivism itself should be given a greater definition as a history.

In this research, I am looking at The Artists Village as a collective entity, although the founding can be attributed to individual action, in this case, Tang Dawu's sharing of the space which he found. The group developed distinct characteristics that transcended the individual. Hence, The Artists Village becomes an entity represented by the collective of artists who have had affiliation with it and at the same time shaped its ideology. Through its history of 20 years, it has seen different confluences of artists who would interpret its ideology and collectively re-shape its identity and direction. Therefore, The Artists Village does not refer to a group of individual artists engaging in cultural activism but as a collective form of cultural activism which included seeking spaces, creating platforms for exhibitions and sharing resources. It is these collective characteristics of The Artists Village that made its work unique. For it is this that determined the relevance of The Artists Village to art in Singapore as it has successfully created formative grounds for the development of contemporary art in Singapore at a time when it seemed difficult to conceive of a space for art.

⁴³ The Societies Act requires all associations to register with the Registry of Society. Failure to do so would make any unregistered associations and their activity illegal. There are a number of laws which restrict the individual's right to freedom of expression and assembly in Singapore. In 2009, the parliament passed the Public Order Bill right before the APEC Meeting of world leaders in November, making that even one person alone can constitute to an illegal assembly (Registry of Societies: About us 2010; Tay 2000; Lim 2009b). Hence, TAV's official entity as a Society would be different to Post-Museum whose official legal status is a Business. Since the time of writing, the Bill is now an Act.

Seeking Spaces: Resourcefulness and Sharing in Art

In land-scarce Singapore, space has always been a challenge for artists as it is difficult to find affordable and suitable spaces. In 1985, in response to this crisis, the former Ministry of Community Development introduced the Art Housing Scheme to provide subsidised rental housing to arts groups, so that they would have a place of their own to practise and develop their art. With the establishment of NAC in 1991, the Art Housing Scheme came under its care. The first Arts Housing project was Telok Ayer Performing Arts Centre, which opened in October 1985 (Arts Housing Scheme 2005; Lim 2009a). This space was limited to the performing arts and did not include fine art. Hence, The Artists Village emerged in 1988 as a response to the lack of space for fine artists and this resulted in the forming of the first artist colony in Singapore. In doing so, The Artists Village found the space for artists to practise and 'experiment' with their art, allowing for more interdisciplinary art forms like performance, installation and process-based art.

When artist Tang Da Wu returned to Singapore from the UK in 1987, he and his family found a home at 61-B Lorong Gambas in Ulu Sembawang which was offered rent-free by Tang's relative. This home was a 1.6 hectare kampung space which was in a neighbourhood of agricultural and animal farmers surrounded by lush greenery. Tang's new home offered him a huge resource, with a huge space in land-scarce Singapore, situated in one of Singapore's last few remaining rural areas. In addition, it is important to note that Tang's relative's goodwill in offering the space rent-free made it financially sustainable.

While living in the UK, Tang had been witness to two important phenomenon. The first was the clear and socially celebrated cultural and economic contribution of the arts to the UK's economy, as seen in the volume of creatively 'leading edge' original pop music, fashion and art from the 1960, which was significantly driven by artists. The second phenomenon was the social disruption caused by the harsh economic reforms introduced by the government of Margret Thatcher, which led to civil unrest and even violent street protests. This socially divisive political 'economic rationalism' policy became known as "Thatcherism", and was responded to with extreme and open criticism by the arts community in the UK, even as it was occurring. Returning to Singapore, Tang was very aware that neither of these things was occurring in his homeland.

Instead of keeping the space for himself and his family, Tang generously shared it by inviting other like-minded young artists to live in and use the 61-B Lorong Gambas space as their

studios and thus formed Singapore's first artist colony. Tang's resourcefulness made available a 1.6 hectare space, which is a huge space by Singapore's standard, and most importantly, it was affordable to artists. Tang's gesture transformed a family home and personal studio to a community space. Besides sharing the space, Tang was also open to sharing his knowledge of art in the West which he experienced while living in the UK by giving slide shows and talks about contemporary art forms with interdisciplinary practices and a strong focus on performance. This sharing took place in workshops, exhibitions and seminars in the space. At that time, such art forms had little presence in art schools, art societies and art galleries in Singapore. This series of events created the opportunity for artists to come together and eventually form The Artists Village as a collective responding to the need to create a space to work, produce and show their art.

The Singapore art scene has been dominated by art societies and they have played an important role in the development of art in Singapore. An example is Modern Art Society⁴⁴ which can be seen as the predecessor of The Artists Village (Kwok 1996). These societies represent a kind of collectivity. And I would borrow from art historian and curator, Reiko Tomii's analysis of pre-war/post-war collectivism in art in Japan where she observed early collectivism to be a form of *characterised collectivism* (Tomii 2007). This was the type of collectivism that art societies like Modern Art Society, which stage exhibitions only with their members, was. Although The Artists Village was legally registered as an art society, it was not the same type of collective as it did not limit its activities to members but included non-members.

Curator Russell Storer observed The Artists Village's activities in seeking spaces as significant because it created experiential space within Singapore's social and political framework which in turn expanded the perceptions and expectations of the public and the State, thus changing the way of how art is made and perceived in Singapore. He argued that this was a fundamental characteristic which has been the group's strength through its 20 years (Storer 2009). Engaging a similar concept, art theorist Bourriaud in his book *Relational Aesthetics* (Bourriaud 1998, 27), observes that artists have increasingly been using social relations as both form and content of their artwork. The artworks which Bourriaud considered within this framework would encompass 'meetings, encounters, events, various types of collaboration between people, games, festivals, and places of conviviality'.

⁴⁴ Modern Art Society was formed in 1963 and today has 50 members. For more info, see <http://www.mass.org.sg>.

Bourriaud argues that avant-garde practice reaching back to the 1960s and 1970s embodies a revolutionary search for 'social-utopias' and the recent use of social interactions as art is part of a search for 'everyday micro-utopias'. It was more possible to 'invent relations with our neighbours in the present than to bet on happier tomorrows' (Ibid., 44). Rather than mourn for the loss of the revolutionary project, artists create these micro-utopian projects which demonstrate the desire to act now instead of deferring to some unattainable future. Bourriaud views these projects as the creation of interstices which presents the possibility of functioning differently in a world which is more and more homogenized.

It is in this framework, established by Bourriaud and as observed by Storer, that the seeking of spaces vis-à-vis micro-utopias and experiential space gives an aesthetic form to The Artists Village and thus form its collective identity. Hence, the individual artists and artworks produced as a result of the group's activities should reflect this relationship. Within the same framework, we can continue to assess the development of The Artists Village after it lost its space in Ulu Sembawang.

Although 'spaceless', The Artists Village continued to create 'micro-utopias' / 'interstices' / 'experiential spaces'. This is reflected in projects where the group initiate spaces and opening up those spaces for non-members of the group to participate. TAV's project *The Space* (1992), where the group negotiated for a disused warehouse which could be converted to temporary site for artistic activities during the Singapore Arts Festival, was an ambitious project as it featured the participation of 92 local and international artists. The success of *The Space* saw The Artists Village garnering some support for the warehouse to be converted into a permanent art space however, the plans for it fell through (Ong 1992 ; Lee 2005a). *The Space* created a temporal 'art space' for three months and created the imagination of an art space for fine artists and the actuality of lobbying for it. Hence, the collective energies of the participants in the project created a platform for meetings, encounters, events and collaborations, in what Bourriaud terms a place of conviviality. Relating this to the cultural activist context of The Artists Village at that time, even though *The Space* was temporary, they collectively managed to create it for fine artists and gave the public, participants and the Singapore government a chance to imagine its reality⁴⁵. If The Artists Village's artist colony in Ulu Sembawang (1988–90) created the possibility within the marginal rural space of Singapore, *The Space* has re-affirmed the importance of art space for artists within the urban

⁴⁵ An extensive report on the Straits Times investigated the possibility of making the warehouse a permanent art centre.

setting of Singapore – and that it could be done.

NAC finally responded to the need for studio spaces for fine artists in 1997 and developed Telok Kurau Studios, a studio complex for about 30 artists⁴⁶. Ironically, this was distinctively different from the spaces for artists created by The Artists Village through their earlier projects. It is observed that the studio complex was often quiet as the spaces seem to be used as storage more than work spaces. In addition, there was much bickering and conflicts/tension between the artists in Telok Kurau Studio (Ooi 2011; Martin 2010a). Hence, this is a good example of how government-led development could learn from community-led ones – NAC could learn from The Artists Village how to create vibrant and exciting studio spaces.

Between 1999–2000, The Artists Village saw a renewal of leadership under a new group of artists like Lina Adam, Jeremy Hiah, Lam Hoi Lit, Jennifer Teo and myself. The new leadership gave the group a new updated name of TAV to signify the change. This was a very different time compared to 1988 when cultural policies were beginning to take shape. By 1999, NAC and SAM were already operating, and the Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay was being constructed. Although there was funding and more exhibition space for art now, there was still a shortage of space for fine artists. TAV, with a new collective, created a different kind experiential space. The new group of fine artists heading TAV organised *Post-Ulu*⁴⁷ (1999–2000), an event which brought together more than 100 participants, who used the gallery space as a process-based studio and, staged talks, discussions and a 12-hour multi-disciplinary gig as a New Year's Eve programme. This period saw shift in TAV's cultural activism where the collective with *Post-Ulu* questioned the dormant status of TAV⁴⁸ ever

⁴⁶ For more info on Telok Kurau Studios, see <http://sites.google.com/site/telokkuraustudios>.

⁴⁷ *Post-Ulu* took place at The Substation between 28th Dec 1999 to 16th January 2000 (The Artists Village 1999).

⁴⁸ TAV has been active since 1988 but became dormant between 1994–1998 and did not organise anything except for *Tour De Art Lah* in 1996. Although TAV was dormant, many of its members remained active both locally and internationally (Singaporeart 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d).

since the Josef Ng Affair⁴⁹ in 1994. This incident implicated the group as it was co-organiser and considered a group which 'promoted' performance art, a subversive art form. Since the event, NAC would not fund any performance art-related events in Singapore or overseas and performance art gained a de facto banned status. This resulted in a stigma looming over performance art, performance art was mythologised as a banned art form and there were no performance art being staged in Singapore.

TAV's response came in the form of 're-questioning' its history and its relevance in the cultural climate during that time. As Hiah shared, The Artists Village's dormant period made the younger members restless and this led to making *Post-Ulu* happen. Instead of accepting the reality, the group created a 12-hour multi-disciplinary gig on New Year's Eve, a similar event to the one which sparked off the Josef Ng Affair, as TAV wanted to test the system and find out what the stigma was. Therefore, TAV negotiated with NAC for funding and applied for a licence from the police. The outcome was that NAC would not fund the event but it was not banned – the licence was approved without TAV having to pay a security deposit to stage it.

In a way, the new phase of TAV from 1999 approached the creation of 'space' differently. The emphasis on a physical space, though important and relevant, was not as important as a new ideological space which was necessary for the development of art in Singapore. It was this creation of ideological space which TAV sought to do, starting from *Post-Ulu*, when TAV tested and de-mythologised the stigma of performance art. Also notable is *A.I.M (Artists Investigating Monuments)* (2000), a project which used monuments to respond to issues pertaining to history, memory and politics (Lingham 2009). From 2000 onwards, TAV devised into their artistic practice strategies to navigate constraints of limited resources and imagination, and through an intensive licensing routine in order to 'legalise' performance art and art in public spaces, further sought to contribute to redrawing the OB markers in Singapore.

⁴⁹ In 1994, during the *Artists' General Assembly* (1994), an event jointly organised by TAV and Fifth Passage, fine artist Josef Ng presented a performance entitled *Brother Cane* (1994), in which he protested a police entrapment exercise against 12 homosexual men. During the performance, Ng partially exposed his buttocks and with his back to the audience appeared to cut his pubic hair. This sparked a controversy as the image of Ng appeared in the tabloids and the police took action. Ng, another artist and the organisers of the venue were charged in court (Lee 1996; Langenbach 1996, 2003).

Kampung as Site

The *Site 14, Luding Bridge, from the Miniature Long March, 2002–2005* is unable to be reproduced here due to copyright restrictions.

The *Site 14, Luding Bridge, from the Miniature Long March, 2002–2005* can instead be accessed via Qin, G. 2002–05. *Site 14, Luding Bridge, from the Miniature Long March*. Performance Documentation. New York. Asia Society.
<http://sites.asiasociety.org/chinarevo/?p=70>. (accessed July 28, 2010).

Figure 4: Qin Ga, *Site 14, Luding Bridge, from the Miniature Long March, 2002–2005*, photographs and video work. Asia Society. <http://sites.asiasociety.org/chinarevo/?p=70>. (accessed July 28, 2010).

In this section, I will highlight The Artists Village's strategy of choosing the kampung as a site (1988–90) and how it was an important factor in their work and contributed to the group's identity and its success. Internationally, in art projects like *Long March Project*⁵⁰ and *the land* the 'site' play a crucial element in their work.

The *Long March Project* has strategically used China's Long March⁵¹ event, which was a defining moment for China's political history and ruling government the Chinese Communist Party, as a physical, ideological and metaphorical site which serve as a framework for their work and practice. The project is founded by curator Lu Jie and is an ongoing series of exhibitions, performances, discourses and workshops designed to 'interrogate Chinese visual

⁵⁰ For more info on Long March Project, see

<http://www.longmarchproject.com/english/homepage.htm>.

⁵¹ The Long March event was a historical trek of 10,000 km by the Chinese communists when they were fighting the Nationalist forces from 1934–1936. The Long March saw the relocation of the communist revolutionary base from Southwestern to Northwestern China where the communist troops crossed 18 mountain ranges and 24 rivers. The Long March established Mao Zedong's leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, and enabled the communists to grow in strength and eventually defeat the Nationalists in the struggle to control mainland China (Xia, Z., and G. Young 2009).

culture and revolutionary memory'. Initiated in 1999, the *Long March Project* is simultaneously a metaphor, a campaign and a complex art project. Participants include over 300 artists, theorists, and art activists from both China and abroad who use, as a geographic and discursive framework, the historical Long March. Projects were staged on the actual Long March road and these included *800 Meters Under* (2006) by artist Yang Shaobin in China's coal mining region engaging with socialist memory and the ruins of industrial society, and the *Yan'an Project* (2006), a 3-month programme in Yan'an, featuring interventions by well-known international Chinese artists like Cai Guo-Qiang (Symposium C6 2007).

These local projects are linked internationally through numerous *Long March Project* exhibitions abroad, like *Chinatown* (2005) which was featured as the China presentation at the 2005 Yokohama Triennale; the 27th Sao Paulo Biennale; and the Asia Pacific Triennale, Brisbane, Australia. The whole *Long March Project* travels along three parallel and interrelated journeys: in various localities, in international exhibitions, and in the project's Beijing space called The Long March Space which serves as the primary space of operation, curatorial laboratory and commercial outlet (Ibid.). In addition, the *Long March Project* also incorporates a New York-based non-profit foundation called Long March Foundation. This is because the Chinese government does not recognise non-profit organisations (Maerke 2007).

The *SUPERGAS/USER/THE LAND*, 2002, *Installation photo* is unable to be reproduced here due to copyright restrictions.

The *SUPERGAS/USER/THE LAND*, 2002, *Installation photo* can instead be accessed via SUPERFLEX PRESS IMAGES. <http://superflexserver.net/press/image/171>. (accessed July 28, 2010).

Figure 5: Superflex, *SUPERGAS/USER/THE LAND*, 2002, *Installation photo* from *the land* in Chiang Mai, Thailand. SUPERFLEX PRESS IMAGES.

<http://superflexserver.net/press/image/171>. (accessed July 28, 2010)

Another project I wish to highlight is called *the land*. Initiated in 1998 by Rirkrit Tiravanija and Kamin Letchaiprasert, *the land* was a result of the merging of ideas by different artists and attempts to cultivate a place of and for social engagement. It is located in proximity to the village of Sanpatong, a twenty-minute drive from the centre of the provincial capital of Chiang Mai, Thailand. Although the project was initiated by Tiravanija and Letchaiprasert, *the land* is free from ownership and is intended to be cultivated as an open space. As Letchaiprasert explained, 'No one owns *the land*. I helped give life to it but now it has its own life.' (Creating An Artistic Space 2009). *the land* is open to the day-to-day activities of local living (i.e. the growing of rice) and to the neighbouring community. On the social field of *the land*, artistic practices are discussed and tested. The project is a hybrid of innovation and traditionalism, contrasting contemporary materials and technologies with ancient forms of agriculture (Oldfield 2008; Rirkrit Tiravanija: The Land 2004; the land 2010).

The site for *the land* is a small rice field and it is tended by a local farmer and his two water buffaloes. Basically, anyone including artists can come and use the land. A number of local and international artists and architects have built architectural constructions or created projects which contributed to *the land*. One of this is *SUPERGAS/USER/THE LAND* (2002) by Danish art group Superflex who installed a biogas system and used the faeces of the water buffaloes to create biogas which could be harvested and used in the kitchen for cooking. As such, people are invited to come and use *the land* to create their projects and subsequently take it and show it in an exhibition elsewhere. *the land* was shown in *Utopia Station* (2003), curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Rirkrit Tiravanija and Molly Nesbit, at the Venice Biennale in 2003 (Utopia Station 2003). Individual projects on *the land* were exhibited offsite, like Rirkrit's own structure, as well as that of Tobias Rehberger, which was exhibited as part of

the *What If...Art on the Verge of Architecture and Design* curated by Maria Lind at the Moderna Museet Stockholm (Utopia Station 2003; Rirkrit Tiravanija: *The Land* 2004).

In a way, Tiravanija and Letchaiprasert acquired a rice field (a non-art space) in Chiang Mai, and subsequently, relinquished their ownership of it⁵². They converted it into a site to create an open space which allowed endless possibilities since it was open to all. *the land*, represented as a utopian space, complements the physical site, which is tucked away amidst Chiang Mai's rice farming community, thereby provoking the international art world's curiosity, resulting in curators and artists travelling there just to take a look at it (Browne 2005). In a way like the *Long March Project*, *the land* is a combination of physical, ideological and metaphorical site which serves as a framework for the project. The rice field thus becomes a ideological utopian space.



Figure 6: Koh Nguang How, *kampung looking out towards the urban Singapore*, 1989, photograph, Courtesy of Koh Nguang How.

Like *Long March Project* and *the land*, The Artists Village used a similar strategy of choosing a site which has strong imagery and is loaded with meaning. The Artists Village situated themselves within a *kampung* space in Singapore, an environment which was rural, amongst a cluster of zinc-roofed huts, with real farmers, chicken and pigs. Their site, 61-B

⁵² *the land* is currently managed by a group of young artists who are based in Chiang Mai (Creating An Artistic Space 2009, 320).

Lorong Gambas in Ulu Sembawang, was previously a chicken farm, and it had to be converted to create studio spaces so that the artists could work and live there. The artists were carving out an art space within the rural community of farmers. During this period, they had open studios, exhibitions, events and conducted workshops, talks and guided tours. In addition, the artists worked in close proximity with one another and had frequent exchange of ideas (Lee 1989).

As Tang Da Wu mentioned, 'Environment here is important visually and emotionally. The fact that it is isolated, without the usual distractions of food-stalls, shops, amusements, means that you can concentrate solely on your work. The actual environment of woods, trees, grass, earth, animals, birds can impinge on your work. All of these can make us see anew, afresh and relate differently.' (Sabapathy 1989). The kampung is the alternative to the urban environment of city life in Singapore. Living and working in a kampung presented an alternative lifestyle vastly different from the HDB. The artists were immersed in a completely different landscape, far away from urban Singapore which was efficient, clean and organised. Urban development in Singapore was initiated by the Singapore government in the mid-1960s, this saw the transformation of farming and cottage industries into high-rise housing for the people. Under this programme, the Singapore government reorganised the communities and transformed the lives of the people. The public housing scheme provided material comfort and home ownership, which was often used by the government as an incentive to maintain their power. Hence, urban development had an intense homogenisation effect on its people (Chua 1995a, 124-146; Wee 2006, 77-98).

Sociologist Chua Beng Huat observed that the 'politicisation' of stress under the disciplinary effects of industrial capitalism in Singapore has become an important issue since the early 1990s (Chua 1995b). Within such stressful conditions, people would invoke the nostalgia towards the kampung where life was 'relaxed'. Although, the nostalgic image of the kampung is abstracted from its historical conditions⁵³, this idyllic life is juxtaposed against a highly competitive environment at every social level, and in this way, 'invoking the kampung' is a resistance against the 'present'. Although, the 'nostalgia for kampung' contains the possibility of an ideology for social change, there lacks the political will to bring about the realisation of this preference. However, the political effect is not about bringing back the past but rather to

⁵³ Similarly, the nostalgia for kampung life often presents itself as an idyllic surroundings and ignoring other factors like poor sanitary conditions and unemployment resulting in 'collective idling' (Ibid., 227-230).

recover the control over the daily life, and hence, suggests that society has shifted away from the craving for material wants to some other higher grounds. Therefore, the move into the kampung space allowed the artists and their activities and their audience to be moved out of urbanity, i.e away from development, consumerism, financial constraints and ultimately from the stress of the disciplinary effects of industrial capitalism in Singapore. Therefore, The Artists Village's choice of the site 'invoked' the 'nostalgia of kampung' and offered a materialisation of place from an ideological space which allowed a temporal control over their daily life. Through the physical space of the kampung, The Artists Village created this micro-utopia (Bourriaud 1998). This allowed The Artists Village some form of autonomy from the Singaporean 'system' to re-examine the assumptions, values and concepts of art-making in Singapore. It was also during this period that more alternative art forms like performance and installation art started emerging. Hence, this 'site' which was both physical and ideological – alternative to urban Singapore – created the perfect environment for artists to explore and experiment with radical new ways and ideologies in making art.

Physically the kampung was quite remote. An article noted that its location was quite out of the way, 'mysteriously signed-posted' with enough 'mud to sink an army' and mosquito infested. This suggested that these environment were far from what most Singaporeans are used to in their comfortable urban surroundings (Lee 1989). Despite being remote, The Artists Village did not slip into obscurity. Instead, The Artists Village forming Singapore's first artist colony in the kampung captured the public's imagination and was featured in media reports both locally and internationally. During its short occupation in the kampung, The Artists Village's open studio, exhibitions and events were well attended. It seems that by choosing the kampung as a site, the group became very visible and as a result allowed the artists to introduce experimental art forms to the public.

In responding to the lack of studio spaces, museums and galleries in Singapore then, the kampung 'site' offered to the artists an additional space. It wasn't an alternative space at this point of time and it did not critique museums and galleries. In fact, The Artists Village worked with state-funded arts festivals because it offered an opportunity for more visibility and funding, reflecting that the kampung 'site' was a response to the lack of space and financial constraint (Seng 2009). The artists were finding a space which the fine art community needed to create a more vibrant art scene. At the same time, the kampung 'site' created by The Artists Village, through escaping the urban city, offered a kind of temporal resistance, which Bourriaud spoke of in artistic projects which created micro-utopias, to the kind of political conditioning, social 'disciplining' project of Singapore which Chua

discussed (Chua 1995a, 1995b; Bourriaud 1998). It is historically specific as it was during 1988–1990 that being an artist was not pragmatic because there was no economic benefits. Thus, The Artists Village in the kampung activated the 'nostalgia for kampung' which suggested the opposite to urbanity. Hence, the 'nostalgia for kampung' in itself was an ideological resistance to 'Singapore's progress' and this seemed to have resonated well with the public. It is this invoking of the 'nostalgia for kampung' and the manifestation of this nostalgia which evoke such emotive power, so endearing and romantic. Hence, the appropriation of kampung as a site for an artists' village is relational and thus created meaningful relationships to different people which was valuable. The critical strategy of choosing the kampung as a 'site' did not translate in The Artists Village: 20 Years On, hence the exhibition seemed to have lost some of the meaningfulness of the site specific practice.

Even today, people will still ask where the village of The Artists Village was though it currently does not have a physical site and works on projects using different spaces. While the real village was a physical space lost to urban development, it continues as a metaphorical and ideological site in The Artists Village's and the public's imagination.

How the kampung/village is to be imagined and interpreted by future members will determine the success and relevance of The Artists Village in Singapore in the future.

Koh Nguang How

Koh is an artist with a unique and important position in the art scene in Singapore. Koh is often referred to as a 'walking history book' because when there are historical queries and it is necessary to remember the past, he is the one who will most likely know and he is always ready to share his knowledge with anyone who seems interested.

Koh's practice consists of working in the multiple roles of researcher and artist which includes the activities of collecting and documenting art-related development. Through the years, Koh's archive has become more rare and precious as institutions have not made their own archives of these materials.

I have chosen to discuss the practice of Koh Nguang How because his practice embodies the motivation of cultural activism. This is seen in his activity in maintaining his collection of art-related documents which dates from the 1930s through to the to 2000s. He started

collecting because he felt no one was doing it and that these documents needed to be 'saved' from disappearing. As he continued, he felt that both the collecting and art-making were integral parts of his practice (Koh. N.H, Personal Communication October 22, 2010). At the same time, Koh's role as a researcher who collects and an artist who creates are often seen as two separate practice. This view should be challenged as I argue that it is the cultural activist in Koh who started the collection process, and as it developed, he had to strategically merge it into his practice and it is the combination of the two which makes his practice unique. As the archive of materials which he has accumulated remain in his custody, he is saving them for the future. Therefore, the negotiation of these materials into an art practice was necessary both for the legitimisation of 'being an artist' in Singapore and for maintaining the visibility of the collection.

In the following sections, I will highlight *Errata* (2004–2005) and *When Photographs Become Drawing* (2009) and discuss how these two works relate to Koh's strategies in cultural activism and artistic practice.

Errata



Figure 7: Koh Nguang How, *Errata* exhibition view with students exploring the materials, 2004, photo from the *Errata* exhibition, Courtesy of Koh Nguang How.

In February 2004, Koh was invited as a resident researcher for independent curatorial team, p-10's inaugural residency programme⁵⁴. Through this, Koh was invited to bring a part of his archive to p-10's space to share with the curatorial team. The objective was to find a way to frame Koh's extensive research and create an exhibition to give more visibility to his work and his collection. This resulted in the production of *Errata: Page 71, Plate 47. Image caption. Change Year: 1950 to Year: 1959; Reported September 2004 by Koh Nguang How* (Errata) and the project was exhibited in p-10's project space at 10 Perumal Road (16 September to 14 October 2004). Then, it was exhibited at the Central Library of the National University of Singapore (2 to 16 March 2005)⁵⁵ and in the then-Singapore History Museum (15 August to 25 September 2005).

Errata was a joint effort where Koh was the researcher and p-10 the curators. The full title of the project states the exact location of the error Koh spotted in the book *Channels & Confluences: A History of Singapore Art* written by Kwok Kian Chow and published by the National Heritage Board/Singapore Art Museum in 1996 (Kwok 1996). This book is very important as it is the only significant scholarly book published on Singapore art history. Koh spotted that a painting by Chua Mia Tee was wrongly captioned as being painted in 1950 instead of 1959 as he believed. The project framed that an errata should be made to change the 0 to a 9. By changing the number in the year, the project 'recovered 9 years in the history of art in Singapore', and in doing so, would unfold or even re-order Singapore's art history.

In the following paragraphs, I will proceed with the brief walk-through of the project to provide an understanding of the installation and the other activities held in conjunction with the exhibition. I will also highlight some of the concepts and issues which the project dealt with⁵⁶.

⁵⁴ p-10 was an independent curatorial team based in Singapore from 2004–2008. Its focus was on the development of artwork and areas surrounding the practice of art. I was the co-founder of this curatorial collective and it was my first foray into curatorial practice. As part of p-10, I began to include curatorial work as part of my practice. The other members were Cheong Kah Kit, Lee Sze-Chin, Lim Kok Boon and Jennifer Teo.

⁵⁵ This version of *Errata* was titled *Errata at NUS* (2005). It was a collaboration with the University Scholars' Programme, National University of Singapore (NUS) and was initiated by three NUS students (Seng Yujin, Ong Zhenmin and Wang Zineng) who visited the first exhibition in p-10's project space.

⁵⁶ For a more detailed explanation of *Errata*, see the *Errata* Catalogue where I wrote a curatorial essay and compiled the documentation. This is provided in Appendix C.

Upon entering the exhibition space, the visitor saw shelves filled with books and documents, video monitors, tables, chairs, a black board and a metal cabinet. The visitor was greeted by the gallery sitter and handed a pair of gloves, a pencil and a clipboard with an exhibition worksheet and a flyer containing basic information on the project was printed in the four official languages of Singapore: English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil. The visitor was also given a worksheet which is an interactive element which allowed the visitor to perform their own research work with the materials in the exhibition. The entire project consisted of 269 artefacts – all of which pertained to the error found in the book *Channels & Confluences: A History of Singapore Art*. The artefacts ranged from publications, photographs, paintings and woodcuts, which were either from the 1950s–1960s or contained references to the period. Koh had marked out pages in the books with post-it notes. Some of these would have some comments he has written while doing his research. As the visitors explored the collection, Koh's notes connected with them and offered insight into his research methodology.

In addition to the *Errata* collection, a series of artworks by artist Koeh Sia Yong⁵⁷ was exhibited. Koeh's artworks are fine examples of works done in the Social Realist style, a style which is often affiliated with the Equator Art Society. The artworks which were shown in the exhibition were paintings and woodcut prints which were made during the 1950s and 1960s. The paintings were *Portrait of Indian Man* (1966)⁵⁸, *Cannot Grow Vegetables Anymore!* (1966), *Studying* (1966) and *Indian Balloons Seller* (1961) and the woodcut prints were *Scene of Bukit Ho Swee Fire* (1961), *Extortion* (1957) and *Flood at Potong Pasir* (1957). This was a rare opportunity to view the actual works instead of seeing them only in books; in fact, some of these works have never been exhibited since they were made.

In addition to the exhibition component, there were guided tours and an education pack for teachers was also released during the first exhibition at p-10. With the education pack, teachers were provided with additional background information and context of the exhibition, thus allowing them to conduct a tour of the exhibition themselves with their students. A series of workshops and talks were presented through the duration of the exhibition as part of the project.

⁵⁷ Koeh Sia Yong was the last President of the Equator Art Society before the society de-registered.

⁵⁸ This painting was shown at the first and second exhibitions.

The Artist-Researcher

Errata was well-received by both critics and the public in all three sites where it was exhibited. Singapore curator Eugene Tan saw *Errata* as a 'challenge to the unquestioned status of institutions'. Through the questioning of the error in a book written by Kwok Kian Chow, the then-director of government-run SAM and author of an account of history of Singapore art, it also challenged the accuracy and objectivity of Kwok's government-sanctioned account of art history in Singapore by highlighting its omission of an art movement which was thought to have Marxist links (Tan 2007b, 25-26). Although it is correct that *Errata* challenged the dominant account of art history by Singapore Art Museum, the project also aimed to dispel the myth of the Equator Art Society's 'Marxist links'. Curator Storer said *Errata* was a 'selection from Koh's comprehensive archive that formed a critical narrative of Singapore art history and its institutional representation' (Storer 2007, 18).

Errata was a complex project. It dealt with the history of art in Singapore and how art history was implicated with the social and political struggles in Singapore's history. Some historians like Hong Lysa and Huang Jianli have produced work which aimed at critiquing the problem of this dominant narrative of Singapore history and other political detainees have also begun publishing their memoirs to tell their side of the story (Hong and Huan 2008; Tan and Jomo 2002; Zahari 2007). Hence, there is a revisionist movement that is taking place in other fields and *Errata* could also be seen as one of the first few within this movement in the cultural field.

It highlights the value of the artist-researcher role which is very relevant in the cultural context in Singapore. As discussed previously, the lack of understanding of art in Singapore and the economic emphasis/hegemony within the development of cultural policies does not allow growth of art, art history and art criticism. Without them, art remains decorative and artworks merely objects of cultural consumption in the newly envisioned Singapore's Renaissance. Hence, the activist-artist-researcher can potentially engage this crisis and *Errata* showed the potential of such work.

One of the more memorable and meaningful experiences of *Errata* is how the project engaged with the troubled reputation of the Equator Art Society in art history. According to Kwok, the society was associated with the Social Realist Movement in Singapore during the

1950s. According to Koh's research, some of the members from this society were arrested under the Internal Security Act for communist activities⁵⁹, and at that time, some art societies were suspected to be fronts for communist activities. Communists and Marxists were 'villainised' by the Singapore government and all associations, real or imagined, were seen as a threat to national security (Wee 2008, 181). Hence, the arrest of the society's members probably fuelled the rumours of the society having 'Marxist links'. With such allegations, it is not a surprise to find so little information available about this art society. The surviving members, including Chua Mia Tee, the artist whose painting was wrongly dated in Kwok's book and became the 'inspiration' for *Errata*, would not speak publicly about their experiences with the society or their involvement with it. Although the Equator Art Society did have activist/political intention, they were certainly not as extreme as Marxism, but nonetheless, the society suffered repression as though it did, with very real personal consequences for its members. This is reflective of the climate of fear which resulted in Singaporeans becoming disengaged with politics (Chua 1995a). In addition, some laws are vague and open-ended, creating 'self-censorship' in the arts (Lee 2007; See 2009), Chua and other artists from the Equator Art Society have chosen to remain apathetic to the group's position in art history. In this way, art through this silence and absence of 'politics' and 'social' context became depoliticised.

Due to its possible links with the political struggle between the Communists and PAP for Singapore, the Equator Art Society was a sensitive topic that was avoided and hidden. With *Errata*, a space for the discussion on the society was created and Koh managed to convince Koeh, who was the last president of Equator Art Society, to 'come out' and share his archive relevant to the art society. It was not easy to do so as the climate of fear was very real. In addition, it was rare for artists of different generations to mix, and due to many of the older artists being Chinese speaking, there was also a language barrier. It was Koh's dedication and sincerity which allowed him to gain a rapport with Koeh and other members of the older generation of Singapore artists, convincing them to eventually share the 'sensitive' materials. *Errata* was therefore a ground-breaking project as contemporary art in Singapore rarely referred to its own history or admitted any influence from earlier Singapore artists, and art of the past has not generally been used as material in contemporary art.

Koh and p-10 felt that it was important to discover this missing chapter in our art history and

⁵⁹ During the 1960s, under Operation Cold Store, the Internal Security Department arrested a number of people suspected of being communists (nevets432 2006).

the roles the artists in the Equator Art Society played in it. This was done through the *Errata* exhibition which showed the most complete collection of the society's materials which included films, photographs and exhibition catalogues. In addition, there were workshops and talks with Koeh⁶⁰. The talk was attended by several previous members of Equator Art Society, including Chua Mia Tee. It is important to note that this was the first time that a talk about the Equator Art Society was made in public since the society was disbanded in 1972 (Kwok 1996; Yeo 2006). Through *Errata*, we found that the society was an active group of young artists who had strong beliefs about how art should reflect life. At the peak of the society's history, it had 800 members and was divided into different wings: art, theatre and literature. This new information revealed an art society with a multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural outlook, and hence, a very interesting and different dimension of art in Singapore Art History. As a result of their re-emergence through *Errata*, Equator Art Society members have started to be included in public talks at SAM and SAM became more open to exhibiting the artworks made during that period. In addition, Chua's painting, *The National Language Class* (1959), the 'inspiration' for *Errata* became an inspiration and title for a play by Singapore theatre group Spell #7 in 2006 (Spell #7 2006). The visibility created by *Errata* for the Equator Art Society has debunked the myths of it being motivated by extreme politics, and has given Equator Art Society a significant place in art history. In this way, *Errata* is important to the discourse on art history.

Errata provided the strategy in exhibition making and art-making for Koh, who was often seen to be performing two separate roles, both as researcher and art making. With *Errata*, Koh's two roles were merged and he was seen as an 'artist-researcher' (Storer 2007). Koh's practice of collecting and archiving art-related materials, the cultural activism aspect, was often side-lined and not considered as part of artmaking. *Errata* brought Koh's activist work to the central focus for the exhibition, and as a result, the 'cause' in the form of his archive became visible. Therefore, *Errata* created an interstice which allowed the archive 'cause' to take form through the exhibition. The exhibition became a site for distribution and dissemination, where the archive 'cause' was easily consumed as cultural object while potentially engaging the issues of Singapore's art history. This was realised through engaging with Equator Art Society and questioning the representation of it in the main narrative of Singapore art history. In another way, *Errata* was an art project which was informed by cultural activism. It highlighted the 'artist-researcher' as a cultural activist, framed the 'cause'

⁶⁰ The talks were conducted in three venues: p-10's space, Central Library in NUS and Singapore History Museum where *Errata* was exhibited.

into an exhibition allowing it to be visible, initiated dialogue and discourse and made Koh's practice relevant visually.

After *Errata*, Koh continued on the same trajectory by working with p-10 on the *Singapore Art Archive Project @ p-10 (SAAP@p-10)* where he used materials from his archive to set up a temporary resource room in p-10's project space. According to Koh, *Errata* allowed him to exhibit and share many of the historical materials on Singapore art. *SAAP@p-10* was an archiving project that was a continuation of his work on documentation and archiving on Singapore art. 'Both projects helped in sorting out part of my collections; at the same time, deal with issues concerning storage, data-entry and basic archiving practices.' (Koh. N.H, Personal Communication October 22, 2010).

When Photographs Become Drawing



Figure 8: Koh Nguang How, *When Photographs Become Drawing* exhibition view, 2009, Installation photo from *Drawing as Form* (2009), Courtesy of Koh Nguang

Errata showed Koh as an 'artist-researcher' and framed his activity and collection in an exhibition context. Since then, Koh has continued to develop this position in his practice and created *Singapore Art Archive Project* (SAAP) which formed the archive.

When Photographs Become Drawing is an artwork made by Koh in 2009 for a group exhibition entitled *Drawing as Form* (2009), organised by TAV at Sculpture Square⁶¹. This work is different from *Errata* in several ways. One, Koh was the sole author of this work. Second, it was an artwork exhibited in a group exhibition. Third, it showed the methodology in Koh's artmaking. I have chosen to highlight this work because it articulates Koh's position as an artist-researcher vis-à-vis the artists/cultural activist and showed a different strategy in

⁶¹ *Drawing as Form* took place from 12–28 August 2009. For more on this show, see <http://www.tav.sg/index.php?/project/drawing-as-form> and a review by Mayo Martin <http://blogs.todayonline.com/forartssake/2009/08/12/artists-draw-crowds>.

engaging the issue of the 'archive'.

When Photographs Become Drawing is a mixed media work. It comprises of one customised clipboard with a collage of photographs and four frames containing photographs, each with a corresponding clipboard with captions for every photograph in the frame. The work is an interpretation of Koh's 'artist-researcher' work on a computer desktop. The customised clipboard alluded to the computer clipboard where he has cut and paste materials from his other folders, represented by the four frames of photographs. The clipboard below these frames are 'file-info' for each of the images. Therefore, the work is a 'print screen' or a 'snapshot' of his work process. The photographs consist of Koh's photographs which were taken from then 1980s through to 2009 and are arranged in a grid. The photos in these frames, which included documentation of The Artists Village, places, interesting 'things' and his personal life, concludes with an image of his father's death certificate, all organised into a form of narrative.

In addition, Koh shared with me that he has maintained the practice of being physically present in all of his exhibitions. For the exhibition of this work, he was at the exhibition venue everyday. Although his presence was not necessary for the work, it was his usual practice and if anyone was interested in the content (photographs), he could elaborate more on its context and the story behind it (Koh. N.H, Personal Communication October 22, 2010).

For this work, Koh has 'sampled' the archive as the photographs were assimilated into the artwork and sequenced towards some form of narrative. The customised clipboard showed the process of mixing and cutting up of the archive. Through this, he showed what Bourriaud would call Postproduction in art, where the original materials are manipulated by artists for the creation of their own work (Bourriaud 2002). Postproduction challenges the idea of originality and authorship but Bourriaud argues that this was not a phenomenon only in art. It can be traced to the field of music where DJs would sample and mix songs and from this create their own music. Hence, Koh through an archive sampling and mixing has made an artwork⁶².

Koh's work can be regarded as archival in art which is often seen in many artists' work. An

⁶² This use of the archive is different from those of *Errata* where the archive retains its function as research and reading materials.

example of this would be in the work of Art & Language's Indexes series. With its first project, *Index 01* (1972)⁶³, the group was in its most self-reflexive period and the work showed how the group functioned. This work was housed in filing cabinets that resembled library card catalogues and contained within the cabinets were series of propositions, drawn from the Art-Language Journal and other sources, together with wall diagrams showing how the propositions connected. The artwork (cabinet with the archive) was made for the exhibition. The work could be understood as a sculptural object but it also had functionality and documentary qualities (Gilbert 2007, 83-86).

The title of Koh's work referred to the exhibition title *Drawing as Form*, which referenced *The Drawing Show* (1989) organised by The Artists Village in at Ulu Sembawang. The exhibition's main objective was to show different possibilities of 'drawing' or the act of 'drawing'. The show highlighted drawings as a fundamental process of artmaking. Koh's title *When Photographs Become Drawing* was a statement which affirmed his practice as an 'artist-researcher'. The work presented a 'snapshot' of his work process and framed it as a 'drawing'. Since the premise of the exhibition suggested that drawing was a fundamental process in realising an artwork, Koh's work showed a moment in pre-production and suggested the eventuality of the artwork. This was also further reflected in the work as he used the photographs, i.e, content from his archive, as 'raw materials' to create this work. The content of the photographs did not serve primarily as a narrative but supported the statement that it was 'drawing'. This showed a shift in Koh's practice and his methodology of art-making. Therefore, the 'When' in the title proposes that with this work, Koh shows a more defined and resolved position of an 'artist-researcher' than in *Errata*.

Art critic Hal Foster Art has observed that art which invokes the archive often shows certain characteristics (Foster 2004). The archive in art often sees the retrieval of the archive as a gesture of alternative knowledge or counter-memory. It often shows the artist seeking to make historical information, which have been lost or displaced, physically present and calling out to the audience to interpret the archive. In this regard, archival art is often drawn to unfulfilled beginnings or incomplete projects in art and in history and potentially offers points of departure again. The archive in art tends to have a utopian ambition to recoup failed visions in art, literature, philosophy and everyday life into possible scenarios of alternative kinds of social relations, to transform the no-place of the archive into the no-place of a

⁶³ This work is sometimes referred to as the 'Documenta Index' after its first exhibition in Documenta 5 in Kassel, Germany.

utopia.

While this work showed Koh's resolve in art-making, I would suggest that his archive, although submerged as the artwork, was still present. This was seen with Koh's physical presence in the exhibition, which offered an entry point into the archive, an option he felt was necessary to provide a context to the content in the frames⁶⁴. His presence helped create an opportunity to engage in a dialogue about the archive and enhanced the visibility of the archive. The cultural activist dimension of the work in the form of the archive was activated on demand with his presence. From these observations, it shows that Koh's cultural activist motivation was still present but packaged into a cultural object as an artwork. In this sense, the archive's utopian ambition to recoup failed visions in art was still there. Like *Index 01, When Photographs Become Drawing* was exhibited as an artwork while being functional (as storage of the archive) and documentary (recording the archive).

In Singapore's cultural context, where artworks and exhibitions are privileged in art history, Koh's strategy of using the archive to create artworks while being able to invoke the archive through his artwork is a relevant strategy to make the archive more visible and heighten the chances of its survival.

Conclusion

As the Singapore government continues to develop the arts, we see an increase of exhibition spaces and exhibitions. However, there has not been enough emphasis on the development of the discipline of arts criticism and art history. Hence, there remains a lack of knowledge to appreciate the arts. In this environment, it seems that the artist's role is reduced to merely produce artworks which can fill up the exhibition spaces and be consumed as “decoration”.

Meanwhile, artists and art groups like Koh Nguang How and The Artists Village, although recognised for their contributions in Singapore art, have their cultural activism work side-

⁶⁴ Koh's later work, *Artists in the News* (2011), presented in the Singapore Biennale 2011, showed his archive of Singapore newspapers from which he highlighted media coverage of contemporary Singapore artists in different periods in time. In this work, his presence as an archivist is part of the artwork, while for *When Photographs Become Drawing*, Koh stated that his presence was not part of the artwork (Koh. N.H, Personal Communication October 22, 2010).

lined in the pre-occupation with producing exhibitions. The side-lining of their cultural activism motivations results in their practice and artworks, which are both practical and potentially critical in a valuable way, being devalued.

Through looking at the collective entity of The Artists Village, I have explored how cultural activism shaped the group's practice. Although it started with the motivation to seek out spaces for artists and hence the creation of an artist colony in the kampung, the group began to seek ideological spaces through the processes of negotiation with the Singapore government and other constraints. The Artists Village has thus contributed to the creation of physical spaces and ideological spaces and helped redraw the OB markers.

Koh Nguang How's cultural activism motivated his forming of an archive which contains art-related materials which are rare, or already lost to the public. I showed how he developed the strategy of 'artist-researcher' to utilise the 'archive' in his artworks. By interrogating his private art archive, Koh questions the state of the Singapore government's art archive and creates opportunities for others to learn of the contents of his archive. He has thus given his archive visibility and enabled it to remain relevant, and can be described as a researcher-artist.

In this chapter, I have tried to show how, despite the cultural developments led by the Singapore government, artists have initiated their own cultural developments. This is reflected in The Artists Village forming an artist colony in the kampung space which responded to the lack of work spaces for artists and Koh Nguang How forming his independent *Singapore Art Archive Project* (2005), which collects and store materials relating to Singapore art from 1930s, responding to the lack of such initiatives in Singapore's art institutions. These motivations lead to what I term cultural activism, which I argue creates an added dimension in the art practices of The Artists Village and Koh. This cultural activist motivation has shaped and informed their practices and has led them to create artistic strategies responding to the cultural developments in Singapore.

Often, their cultural activism is seen as separate from their artistic endeavours. This view is both limiting and downplays the significance of their work, in terms of both aesthetic value and possible social contribution to cultural development in Singapore. Through highlighting their work, I hope I have provided a framework to understand their art practices and artworks by considering their cultural activism as an integral quality which is reflected in aesthetic considerations in their strategies of artistic production. Also, I have employed art theory,

political science, sociology, cultural geography and cultural theory such as Bourriaud's notion of postproduction, Chua's 'ideology of pragmatism', Kong's 'economic hegemony' and Wee's study of urbanity and culture. By discussing their work within aesthetics and Singapore studies, I have shown that their work is a part of contemporary art development, and indeed, a specific response to cultural conditions in Singapore's Renaissance.

Chapter 5: Post-Museum and Server Foundation

In this chapter, I will discuss my own art practice which includes the works produced with Post-Museum (a cultural space which I co-founded in 2007) and discuss my practical investigation project *Server Foundation: Indexes* (2011). *Server Foundation: Indexes* is a compilation of activities (art making, curating, writing and arts administration) that demonstrates my practice as an artist/cultural activist. In the making of this new work, I was 'indexing' these activities and engaged in a reflexive process which examined the connections between 'activity' and 'ideology'. Hence, the project produced a 'compression' of these connections in my art practice in the form of 'indexes'. This took physical and virtual formats which were presented as artworks while functioning as documentation and storage. The project showed an integrated practice of concepts of a 'community-led cultural development' a.k.a. cultural activism and art production. Hence, the practical work is presented as an artistic strategy to working in Singapore's Renaissance while Singapore is undergoing rapid cultural development and liberalisation because of the government's responses to the changing economic environment. *Server Foundation: Indexes* is available as Appendix G.

Examples of collective/activist art practice can be found outside of Singapore, of course. The art collective Sarai⁶⁵, based in New Delhi, India, and also many such groups in the West, of which Dimitry Vilensky and the Chto Delat group in Russia, the Freee Collective, and the Critical Art Ensemble are good examples, and the collective movement overall is well described by John Robert's writings, among others. However each of these collectives has a unique character due to its particular context, and this thesis focuses on describing the uniquely Singaporean situation over a period of time.

Collective Strategies in Art Practice

In my artistic practice, I have continuously been responsible for founding and co-founding art initiatives. These include Telawi Studios (1997), Footbridge to All Platforms (1998), Tie-jiang (1998), Danger Museum (1998), Spending Time with Raffles Club (2000), Rational Sky Pictures (2001), tsunamii.net (2001), p-10 (2004) and Post-Museum and *Food #03*

⁶⁵ For more info on Sarai, see <http://www.sarai.net/about-us/introducing-sarai/background>.

(2007). In addition, I have also been an active member of The Artists Village from 1999-2006 where I participated in organising and producing projects collectively. It is through these activities that I have established my position as an artist who often collaborates and works collectively. In that sense, my work is not confined to an art studio and to the activity of producing artworks. Instead my practice is about negotiations, collectivity and collaborations which adopt an open approach to art-making. Hence, I do not specifically paint, sculpt or make performances but work towards realising art projects. Within this format and framework of art projects, there are no fixed methods of working, it depends on the dynamics of the collaborators and context of the project.

As curator and art critic Okwui Enwezor observed (Enwezor 2006), collectivism in art is not new as there are different forms of collectivism throughout art history. Collectivism itself has been a crucial strategy of the avant-garde throughout the 20th Century. He also observed that historically, collectives tend to emerge during times of crisis where there are moments of social upheaval and political uncertainty within society. These crisis bring about shifts in the conditions of art making, especially the need to reconsider the nature of artworks and reconfiguration of the position of the artist. In recent decades, collectivism has been appearing globally in the forms of art collectives and collaborative modes of production. From this, Enwezor identified two types of collectivity. The first is a result of the advances of communication technologies in the age of globalisation termed the 'networked collective', which is becoming more prevalent. 'Networked collectives' work across affinities of interest which emphasises flexible and non-permanent courses of affiliation, privileging collaboration on a project basis rather than on a permanent alliance. The second form of collectivity is the 'structured collective' which is based on fixed groupings of practitioners working together over a sustained period of time. In a 'structured collective', the work represents the expression of the group rather than the individual artist.

Enwezor also argued that collectivity and collaborative practices generate critique and question the modernist reification of the artist as an autonomous individual within modernist art. He raised three issues which problematise collectivity within modernism. One is the issue of the authenticity of a work of art, as collective work complicates modernism's idealisation of the artwork as the unique object of individual creativity. Two, as collectivity is often a response to crisis, the nature of collectivity often extends into political horizon. This tends to give collective work a social rather than artistic quality. Hence, collectivity is often seen to be 'essentially political in orientation with minimal artistic instrumentality',

challenging modernist formalism's insistence on the primacy of the artwork. Thirdly, collectivity can also be understood as a critique of the reification of art and the commodification of the artist. Under the operative conditions of capitalism, the loss of the individual artist is undesired, thus collectivity inherently rejects capitalism, and capitalism rejects collectivity.

Like the work of The Artists Village and Koh Nguang How, my work is also informed by the cultural activist motivation. As I have shown in Chapter 4, cultural activism is an important contributing factor to the identities and works of The Artists Village and Koh. In the context of Singapore's Renaissance, Singapore is undergoing rapid cultural development led by the Singapore government, resulting in Singapore opening up and liberalising. However, from the perspective of many artists, the process of liberalisation has been slow as the Singapore government has often introduced policies which seem to open up only to then make a U-turn soon after.

Singapore political theorist Kenneth Paul Tan observed that there are three positions in responding to Singapore's Renaissance (Tan 2007d, 253-268). One is the optimist who believes that liberalisation of Singapore will happen in time as it is inevitable because the global market will force Singapore to open up. The second is the pessimist who considers that liberalisation efforts by the Singapore Government are not 'genuine' as it is fundamentally an economic policy that will maintain the status quo of politics, thus retaining excessive control on its people. The third is the strategist, who desires genuine and comprehensive liberalisation, and having seen enough policy U-turns, is engaging with Singapore's Renaissance by working out strategies and tactics for dealing with what are perceived as windows of opportunity created by shifts in the government rhetoric, in the hope to realise a more open and liberal Singapore .

My work with collectives identifies me as a strategist. For example, my work with the curatorial collective p-10 (2004–2007) was motivated by the observation that there was an over-emphasis on exhibitions⁶⁶ while there was no focus on the development and discursive aspects of art. As described by Enwezor, we were responding to a crisis and we felt that forming a curatorial (as opposed to artist) collective was strategically important to address the uneven ground for art. As the cultural grounds have shifted, we reconfigured our roles

⁶⁶ Since 2000, there has been an increased of art spaces which are both State-initiated and community-initiated.

from artistic to curatorial to resist the tendency to 'produce' for the sake of exhibitions. Our activities were directed towards encouraging a discursive and research culture in art and to think beyond the confines of exhibitions. With p-10, I took on the role of a curator and adopted it as part of my art practice.

My preference to work in the mode of collectivity and collaboration has led me to experience some challenges in Singapore's art context. Like The Artists Village and Koh, our cultural activism is not fully understood and this is reflected in the lack of literature and research on art groups, collectives and collaborative practices in Singapore. The tendency to depoliticise art in Singapore essentially privileges individual artistic mastery rather than the social and political aspects. Therefore collectivism is an area of artistic practice which does not get prioritised within the support and resources allocated for government-led cultural development. Through an understanding of this context, this chapter seeks to respond to the question, 'What are the strategies that artists/cultural activists employ in navigating Singapore's Renaissance?'

Post-Museum: After p-10



Figure 9: *Pogo Stick Club outside Post-Museum, 2007*,
Personal photograph by author.

Post-Museum is an independent cultural and social space in Singapore which aims to encourage and support a thinking and pro-active community. It is an open platform for examining contemporary life, promoting the arts and connecting people (About Post-Museum 2009). It is a ground-up project initiated by Singaporean curatorial team p-10 which was subsequently 'managed' by Jennifer Teo and myself⁶⁷. Its current premises was opened in September 2007 and is located in two 1920s shop-houses in Little India, an exciting and

⁶⁷ Jennifer Teo is a curator while I am an artist/curator.

truly historical and multi-cultural area in Singapore⁶⁸. Through its activities, Post-Museum aims to respond to its location and community as well as serve as a hub for local and international cultures. On the premises, there are *Food #03*⁶⁹ (deli-bar and artwork of mine), Show Room (exhibition cum performance space), Back Room (multi-purpose space), artists studios and offices. Post-Museum is registered as a private limited company to reflect its goal of being a self-sustaining social enterprise. Its main sources of income are from sale of artworks and merchandise, rental of spaces and contributions from the community.

Post-Museum is very different from p-10 and other collective work which I have been involved with. Firstly, it is a 'networked collective' as defined by Enwezor, where both Teo and myself are 'custodians' and adopt an open philosophy to collaborating, planning and programming. This means that collaborators come from a diverse background, and although they are affiliated with Post-Museum, collaborations are on a project basis rather than a permanent alliance. Secondly, as a cultural and social space, Post-Museum engaged in the field of cultural work which is defined by Post-Museum as including work in the arts and creative fields, education and academic research and civil society⁷⁰. This is different from p-

⁶⁸ Little India is Singapore's foremost Indian enclave under the British Colonial administration. Under PAP's policy of racial harmony, though people from ethnic Indian groups do not live solely in this area, it is maintained as a cultural heritage area where many of the old commercial or cottage industry still remain. Today, there are a mix of commercial and residential estates in the area. With the influx of South Asian migrant workers, Little India has become a popular area for this community on their rest days. Many view Little India to be very 'un-Singapore' as it is the most messy, dirty and chaotic part of Singapore (Tee 2010).

⁶⁹ *Food #03* is a development from *Food #02*, an artwork/performance I created in 1999/2000 while I was studying in the UK. It was based on an appropriation of American artist Gordon Matta-Clark's restaurant called *Food* which he opened in Soho, NYC in 1971. In the midst of planning for Post-Museum, there were plans to create a F&B area where visitors and exciting creative people can hang out. Instead of renting the space to another business, I decided to create *Food #03* which is a deli-bar, social-enterprise, source of revenue for Post-Museum, hang-out venue for like-minded individuals to mingle, platform for new exciting ideas and a work of art.

⁷⁰ In a roundtable discussion on the state of culture in Singapore, it seems that there is a tendency to view Singapore as a 'cultural desert' whose culture is still in its infancy. This view is critiqued by Singaporean sociologist Chua Beng Huat that this tendency comes from a very romanticised ideal of culture. He argues that Singapore has a culture – a consumerist culture that is a result of accelerated capitalism. Yet, we tend to not accept this as Singapore's culture (Kwok, Mahizhnan and Sasitharan 2002, 246-255).

10 where the curatorial collective has a fixed team working in the field of fine arts. As such, Post-Museum's activities are more diverse than those of p-10.

As art collectives become more prominent globally, many artists who have worked with earlier collectives would often use the lessons and forms that they have learnt in the collectives in their own work. An example is Tim Rollins who left Group Material⁷¹ to form Kids of Survival (KOS), a group with young people from the South Bronx neighbourhood to produce artworks (Moore 2007, 215). In that way, Post-Museum was informed by my experience from working with other collectives. I would say that Post-Museum has come from a crisis which is happening in the Singapore art scene. Singapore's Renaissance has brought about several problems. One, government-led cultural development efforts have led to an increase of exhibition spaces and the emphasis on exhibitions and mega-art events. Second, community-led cultural development seems to be decreasing as there are less independent initiatives from the community. Third, some artists including myself were feeling a sense of disillusionment and restlessness with the role of the arts in Singapore. I always held the belief that the arts and culture are important and relevant to life but despite the increased visibility of art in recent years, art's position in society remains relatively low. Although artists and art groups continued to claim that their art was engaging with the public and society, there was little evidence pointing to that. My experience seems to show that independent art events and exhibitions reach out to a small community.

The concerns raised here are not new. In my research, I have found similar ambitions and concerns which resulted in ground-up initiatives from the community. This is best reflected in a statement by theatre doyen and founder of The Substation⁷² Kuo Pao Kun on why he wanted it to be a Home for the Arts:

We don't have an arts centre in Singapore. We have theatres and art galleries but these are all places where you cannot really 'stay'. There was no way you could mix with the artists. [...] I am very

⁷¹ Group Material was an art group based in New York and have become well-known for their projects such as *Democracy* (1988) which was a complex project engaging four issues: Education, Electoral Politics, Cultural Participation and AIDS.

⁷² The Substation, opened in 1990, was Singapore's first arts space and it played a crucial role in developing the arts as it provided the much-needed platform for artists to showcase and develop their work.

concerned about creating a space in Singapore life for the arts. A space not in terms of a place, but a space in our value systems, lifestyle and consciousness. A space that will be as important in our lives as the need to find a job [...] The Substation will be a permanent space to do arts, see arts, talk arts and live the arts. A space where artists can mingle and encounter strange artistic activities far removed from their own.' (Sasitharan 1990)

As illustrated through Kuo's statement, Post-Museum's emergence is not a response to an entirely new crisis but to a persistent crisis that is side-lined in Singapore's Renaissance. In this way, the forming of Post-Museum has a cultural activist motivation which is shared by the co-founders. One of the most prominent strategies that we have adopted was to position art within the broader framework of cultural work. This expanded the scope which we normally worked with and this was done because we felt that, as art in the last 20 years has failed to overcome the crisis, we needed to find new ways of responding. Thus, to include other forms of the arts and creative work like music, dance, theatre, film, architecture and design was one category of expansion. In the interest of education and the development of research and critical thinking, we felt that the inclusion of teachers, writers and researchers, both academic and independent, was critical. The last category was the inclusion of civil society work as part of our definition of cultural work. The Singapore government liberalised its civic space in the early 1990s to encourage Singaporeans to play more pro-active roles in building society. This liberalisation led to an increase in civil society groups in Singapore and we believe that active participation in causes should be an important part of culture in Singapore's Renaissance.

Post-Museum attempts to bring together diverse groups in the hope of seeing these disparate practices find a connection with each other. As such, Post-Museum consciously plans and defines its community and encourages people in this community to develop projects and programmes in our space. Hence, using it as a place to allow artists, film-makers, designers, researchers and activists to share their practices with the public and the community. As 'custodians' of Post-Museum, we respect the autonomy of the organisers and they are free to do what they want. In this way, they take their own responsibility for the success or failure of their projects. This means that there was very little 'curation' for the organisers. We maintain this position because we feel that if the way we have been working during the p-10 period (2004–2007) has not brought about much transformation to the art scene, we should un-learn

what we knew about art and culture previously, and try to start afresh and allow new possibilities. Hence, there is more 'un-curation' than curation, which is most difficult and challenging because it forces us to re-define our notion of the arts and culture.

However, Post-Museum is a complex project to describe and discuss because it is a 'networked' collective, it occupies a physical and ideological space and it works on projects which do not take place in its current premises. In this research, I will be discussing it from the role of 'co-creator', collaborator and participant within the 'networked collective' model of Post-Museum. Hence, I do not claim authorship for all the activities that Post-Museum has presented since its inception. I do not see the activities as my artwork, but my interactions with these activities and people form my art practice within the 'networked collective' model of Post-Museum. Within this, my artwork occurs when I 'frame' these activities and negotiations as I manage the day-to-day operations of Post-Museum.

In the case of Post-Museum, my art is in the co-authoring of the dynamics behind the physical space, which through the building of a community and its activities, forms an ideological construction of Post-Museum. This reflects the de-materialisation tendency in art where my artwork exists as an ephemeral dimension. Hence, my ephemeral artwork's cultural activist motivation aspires towards art's potential in creating an interstice in Singapore's Renaissance so as to create an open and liberal space which is rare in Singapore. In the process of creating the ephemeral artwork, I also started to explore the more 'traditional' notion of art practice of making artworks in the form of sculpture, painting, drawings and videos. This process explores how the act of de-materialisation of art in my practice can be re-materialised in recognisable art forms which can be distributed through exhibitions. This may seem conflicting as collective work is often regarded as more social than artistic, but in my research process, I have found that to be complementary. Re-materialising the Post-Museum 'experience' has allowed a reflexive methodology which brought new insight into my practice.

In this way, I also consider Post-Museum a 'studio' but not in the conventional sense. Artist Daniel Buren, in his seminal text on the function of the studio where the studio is a site of production, said that the studio was important in providing the space for artists to develop the first 'frame' (Buren 1979). For Buren, after he has found his first 'frame' in the studio, the space becomes no longer necessary. Hence, Buren works 'in situ' rendering his studio 'extinct'. The space for artists to create and produce has been a challenging aspect of art

practice in land-scarce Singapore. This was discussed in earlier chapters and explained as a motivation for The Artists Village in the 'seeking spaces' methodology in their practice. Also this reflects the 'first frame' of The Artists Village as the kampung space which allowed a 'spaceless'⁷³ group to continue to work.



Figure 10: Danger Museum, *The Dream Plan Project* in Seoul, Korea, 1999, Project based artwork, Personal photograph by author.

⁷³ Although The Artists Village has been without a physical space, the group's activities like *A.I.M.* and *Bali Project* show that the group's projects seek ideological spaces within a revisionist framework. *A.I.M.* investigated monuments thus revising the nation's monuments and the relevance of the meaning of those memories it conjured while *Bali Project* brought about the focus/gaze of the art historical moment of modern art when the group went on a trip to Bali to 're-connect' with it.



Figure 11: Danger Museum, *Mongolian Camel Show on the road to Cardiff Performance Art event*, 1999, Project based artwork, Personal photograph by author.

In my earlier art initiative Danger Museum⁷⁴, I have tested strategies to address the limits of space and resources for art in Singapore through exploring the idea of a mobile museum in different projects. In the *Mongolian Camel Show on the road to Cardiff Performance Art event* (1999), Danger Museum re-configured a van and created a space for a mobile museum space. In *The Dream Plan* (1999), Danger Museum used cardboard boxes to create exhibition spaces for artists to stage solo exhibitions and the artist having the exhibition would carry this box which became a mobile and interactive platform which was an exhibition, museum and studio at the same time. I was interested in reconciling the limitations of space and museum, and through Danger Museum, I wanted to re-think the forms of museums, exhibitions and studios to re-configure their meanings and purpose.

Post-Museum's physical space serves as a site of production, exhibition and gathering space for both the management team and community. Therefore, in relation to my practice with Post-Museum where I engage in the reflexive process in the production of 'ephemeral artwork' and 're-materialising' the ephemeral, Post-Museum has become a studio whose space, as Buren discussed, was necessary to develop the 'first frame'. As mentioned, Post-Museum is very different from my previous work as it situates itself within a broader cultural

⁷⁴ For more information on Danger Museum, see <http://www.dangermuseum.com>.

context and is not limited to fine art. Post-Museum is a 'studio' where I meet people from diverse backgrounds, engage in collaborations and learn from the community. Therefore, the 're-materialisation' of the ephemeral where more recognised forms of art⁷⁵ are produced (collaboratively or individually) offers an opportunity to engage the community with art. Through this, I am able to refine my art practice and hence develop the 'first frame'. Therefore, my practical work *Server Foundation: Indexes* (2011) indexed and showed what I have done in the 'studio'. Indexing Post-Museum through my 'first frame' allows the artwork which is both 'ephemeral' and physical to be shown outside of Post-Museum's physical site.

In the following, I will discuss Post-Museum by highlighting two of its projects: *Really Really Free Market* series (2009–2011) and *All Together Now* (2010). Both projects were shown outside of the physical site of Post-Museum.

Really Really Free Market Series: Singapore, Fukuoka and London, (2009–2011)

Post-Museum has been organising *Really Really Free Market*⁷⁶ (RRFM) since February 2009 in Singapore. In addition, Post-Museum presented its *RRFM series* in Fukuoka, Japan and London, UK. In late 2009, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (FAAM) invited Post-Museum to produce a work for the 4th Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale in 2009. The title for the Triennale was 'Live and Let Live: Creators of Tomorrow' and the exhibition explored how a creative 'rebirth' is much needed to address the gloomy climate of worldwide economic recession, increasing income gaps and rising environmental problems (4th Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale 2009). FAAM wanted to present Post-Museum within this context because they felt that Post-Museum's belief and activities were very much aligned with the theme of the Triennale.

We felt that the challenge was how to translate what we were doing with Post-Museum which is very much rooted within a local community and engaging with the local audience in Singapore into something which the audience in Fukuoka could also experience and make sense of without being too contrived. We didn't want to just show documentation of what

⁷⁵ Mention art to most people in Singapore and they will often think of recognisable artforms like paintings, sculptures and installations (Foo 2004; Kassir 2007; Singapore 2006).

⁷⁶ The *Really Really Free Market* series can be viewed in Appendix D.

Post-Museum did in Singapore but wanted to create something meaningful within Fukuoka which would last beyond the Triennale context. The theme of the Triennale was 'creating a new tomorrow', so the project should be relevant beyond the limits of the museum, much like how we want Post-Museum to function beyond the limits of art in Singapore's Renaissance. Reflecting on these challenges and concerns, we proposed to create one of the activities which embodied the spirit and interests of Post-Museum for the Triennale. We proposed to create the first *Fukuoka Really Really Free Market (FRRFM)* (2009) as it had not happened in Fukuoka and Japan before. Although Post-Museum had already been staging the *Singapore Really Really Free Market (SRRFM)* (2009–2011), Fukuoka's version was framed as an artistic work within the Triennale. In addition, we expressed to the curators at FAAM the importance of *FRRFM* to continue functioning after the Triennale context because that was the point of 'creating a new tomorrow'.

Post-Museum has been staging the *SRRFM* on a bi-monthly basis on its premises on Rowell Road. *SRRFM* was inspired by the global Really Really Free Market social movement where non-hierarchical collectives of individuals form a temporary market based on an alternative gift economy where no money is used but people offer goods and services. The movement has its origins in America where it was first staged to protest the G8 summit, taking place simultaneously in Miami, Florida, and Raleigh, North Carolina during the anti-globalisation protests against the FTAA in Florida in 2004. The Really Really Free Market idea spread quickly across the United States (CrimethInc. Ex-Workers Collective 2008).

SRRFM has been well-received and gathered people from different walks of life. On the average, the *SRRFM* gets more than 300 participants for each session and it is one of the most popular activities at Post-Museum. Given the popularity of *SRRFM* and the potential to engage with a broad spectrum of participants in Singapore, we wanted to introduce the *RRFM* movement as part of the Triennale. We felt that *RRFM* as an activity was relevant in Fukuoka and it would be interesting to see how an 'alternative gift economy' translated to Fukuoka. After some discussion with the curators in FAAM, they helped to find interested people to form a local team of volunteers in Fukuoka to work with Post-Museum to produce the first *RRFM* market in Fukuoka and Japan. Post-Museum was represented by Jennifer Teo and myself while the *FRRFM* supporting team was guided by Professor Keio Fujihara and consisted of University students (Tabihito Fujihara, Geirei Kim, Nane Koituska, Rika Kojima, Minna Matumoto, Akiyo Nakamura and Mami Uramoto) and representatives from Geikou Festival in Kyushu University. Collectively, we titled the project: *Fukuoka Really*

Really Free Market: Heart to Heart and created a new logo for it.

FRRFM took the form of staging *RRFM* spaces in various sites in Fukuoka. Besides being featured as an artwork in the Triennale exhibition in FAAM throughout the exhibition period⁷⁷, this took place in several temporary sites including B-Cafe in Hita, Asia Pacific Festival at Marine Messe Fukuoka, Tenjin Central Park and Geiko Festival in Kyushu University. At the same time, Post-Museum presented the ideas behind the project in public lectures and workshops which took place in FAAM, art space Konya 2000 and Geiko Festival. The project was also featured in the Fukuoka Triennale Catalogue and in Artists Exchange Program, a post-event catalogue of the Triennale which included an interview with Post-Museum.

Framing Fukuoka Really Really Free Market



Figure 12: Post-Museum, *Interview with FRRFM Core Team*, 2009, Project based art, Personal photograph by author.

Chief Curator of FAAM Raiji Kuroda wrote that 'Post-Museum is even further away from the conventional idea of the “maker” as the result does not have objects' (Kuroda 2009). He observed that while the *RRFM* event seemed light-hearted, it is in fact radically anti-

⁷⁷ The exhibition period was from 5 September–23 November 2009.

capitalistic, and even anarchistic. He added that he was keen to see how the project might 'make' a 'really' wide-spread and sustainable system. *FRRFM* was an ephemeral art project in the sense that there was no visible artwork. Instead, Post-Museum and the *FRRFM* volunteer team attempted to carve out spaces or zones where a utopian marketplace based on an alternative gift economy could take place. In order to do so, we proposed the idea to the 'owners' or 'government agencies' of these spaces and negotiated for time and space to allow us to create *FRRFM* there.

FRRFM, like the other *RRFM* projects around the world and those staged by Post-Museum, would resemble an informal marketplace. Hence, it took the familiar form of a flea market where there would be goods and stalls offering services. Visually it would look like a normal market but the fundamental rules of the marketplace were changed. At the *FRRFM* sites, the participants were informed of the following guidelines (See Figure 13).

Fukuoka Really Really Free Market Guidelines
1. Nothing is sold or exchanged within this space.
2. Public is encouraged to have a giving, sharing and caring heart.
3. Everyone is free to participate and participants should organise amongst themselves.

Figure 13: *Fukuoka Really Really Free Market Guidelines*, 2010, Table by author.

FRRFM sought to break away from the capitalist system through abolishing the use of money. By removing money from the relationships between objects, services and the 'buyers' and 'sellers' within the *FRRFM* space, participants had to re-evaluate their roles within the market place and how they related to one another. The focus on 'giving, sharing and caring heart' as the central values created an environment that was more open for interaction since the participants were encouraged to do so. While *FRRFM* was organised by Post-Museum and the supporting team, within the marketplace, it was a non-hierarchical system and there was no central co-ordination.

In that sense, *FRRFM* was a temporal physical manifestation of a micro-utopia where the fundamental economic structure was altered or rather removed, and in its place, we installed a new structure which valued acts of 'giving, sharing and caring heart'. *FRRFM* contributed

to a collective experience of participating in a common cause for the participants, the creators (Post-Museum and the supporting team) and FAAM (Triennale organisers). According to Kuroda, *FRRFM* responded to the Triennale theme by being a symbolic gesture that showed an alternative marketplace, the collective experience reminded us that 'you are not alone' and hence brought some hope to the current gloomy economic outlook (Ibid.).

As mentioned earlier, it was important that *FRRFM* could continue after the Triennale since the theme was 'creating a new tomorrow'. We were thrilled to find out that the *FRRFM* supporting team expressed the interest to continue *FRRFM* after the Triennale. During the initial discussions with the supporting team, I was asked if that was possible and whether there would be any problems with authorship. I explained that Post-Museum's artwork was framed as all the activities/social interactions which Post-Museum and the supporting team engaged in to realise *FRRFM* in Fukuoka during the time of the Triennale. In that way, both Post-Museum and the supporting team were co-authors, and after the Triennale, *FRRFM* was no longer owned by Post-Museum but by the community in Fukuoka. For it to continue beyond the art exhibition would make the 'creation' of the artwork more meaningful as the value of the project is not in the exhibition but within its potential to engage with the citizens of Fukuoka⁷⁸ and in 'creating a new tomorrow'.

Locating Post-Museum's artwork within the creation of relations in order to realise the micro-utopia of an alternative gift economy can be reflected in Bourriaud's notion of Relational Aesthetics (Bourriaud 1998), a kind of contemporary practice where social interactions are used as a medium for artmaking. In this way, art is not a static object but can be found in experiences resulting from situations which artists create. Bourriaud's contribution to art theory with his Relational Aesthetics theory is how social interactions can be both the form and the content for an artwork. As such, an ephemeral project like Post-Museum's *RRFM* series, which seeks the achievable quest for 'everyday micro-utopias' using social interactions, can be framed as art. Bourriaud argued that the creation of micro-utopias is a way artists respond to the loss of the revolutionary project of art in the 1970s and the acceptance of the pervasive reach of global capitalism.

Relational Aesthetics has been criticised for artists relying on institutions like art galleries and museums for showing an illusion of community and togetherness. Curator Claire Bishop

⁷⁸ The *FRRFM* continues being staged at various locations in Fukuoka. For more info, see <http://server-foundation.org/frrfm>.

questioned the political efficacy of the micro-utopias described by Bourriaud because of their failure to escape the social divisions created by art galleries (Bishop 2004). In *Untitled (Still)* (1992) at 303 Gallery, New York, Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija moved everything found in the gallery office and storeroom including the gallery director into the main exhibition space. The gallery director then was obliged to work in public, while Tiravanija cooked curries for visitors, and the utensils and food packets became part of the exhibit when the artist was not there. Tiravanija himself observed that the involvement of the audience was the main focus of his work while the food allowed a convivial relationship between audience and artist to develop, producing human relations. However, what types of relations are being produced, for whom, and why? And, how are these relationships measured and compared? Bishop argued that the quality of relationships in Relational Aesthetics are not called into question, and she pointed out that Tiravanija's work may have reused the gallery space as a site for social interaction but that space seemed to be limited to the 'art' audiences. Therefore, the utopian part of the project seems like a feel-good illusion of community and togetherness while stopping short of being socially transformative (Ibid.). That being said, Bourriaud's Relational Aesthetics is an important contribution to understanding the kind of contemporary art practice which is not defined within a static object. It shows the historical precedence of these relational practices and the popularity of relational artists like Tiravanija whose works are shown in institutions, thus allowing discourse of such artworks to be beyond the discussion of 'is it art?'. Bishop's critique reminds us that such works need critical considerations which are not defined within Bourriaud's framework of Relational Aesthetics.

Hence, how should Post-Museum's *RRFM* series be understood? When Post-Museum created *SRRFM* in Singapore in February 2009, it was one of the many activities which aimed to bring people together. Therefore, *SRRFM* was motivated by Post-Museum's mission of connecting people and encouraging a thinking and pro-active community in order to connect disparate cultural practices so that we can 'learn' from each other and hope to find strategies to counter the rhetoric of Singapore's Renaissance. *SRRFM* allows diverse participants to share a space and ideology and potentially forms the basis for further collective action. In that sense, Post-Museum's *RRFM* series, like its other initiatives, had a cultural activist motivation. A member of the Post-Museum community, Singapore activist and geographer Heather Chi, highlighted that Post-Museum had come to serve as an important space for independent and creative social action in Singapore and *SRRFM*'s value is its function of seeking autonomous space in an authoritarian country that has largely monopolized urban social spaces (Chi 2010). She observed that a related aspect to the

success of the *SRRFM* is Post-Museum's consideration of the immediate environment of Little India where many of the market's participants are South Asian workers who happen to walk past Post-Museum and are curious about the items on display. She pointed out that as shopping is one of the most social activities in Singapore, the *SRRFM* is accessible to people of different ages and of diverse economic, social and national backgrounds, allowing them to partake in a common experience.

As Kuroda pointed out earlier, the *FRRFM* looks quite light-hearted but is in fact proposing a rather radical ideology (Kuroda 2009). Veteran RRFM organizers CrimethInc Ex-Workers' Collective explained that Really Really Free Market's model is successful because its content was 'inherently radical' and if it looked too much like anti-capitalist protest, it would alienate the public (CrimethInc. Ex-Workers Collective 2008). In a way, *RRFM*'s model of a 'light-hearted' protest with an 'inherent radicalness' provides an effective strategy to deal with the harsh laws which the Singapore government has put in place on public protests⁷⁹. However, Post-Museum does not hide the fact of *RRFM*'s origins and our ideology as we are explicit about this in our marketing peripherals and interviews. As observed by Chi, the 'inherent radicalness' of *SRRFM* did not alienate the public and market participants internalized this ideology, contributing to the richness in the meaning and practice of radicalism in the movement itself (Chi 2009). For Post-Museum, the openness of its *RRFM* series and its relational art aspects offers a platform, not for the sake of a feel-good quality or an illusion of community, but to connect people and encourage a thinking and pro-active community. It is important that this radicalness is not 'cloaked' or coded but is made explicit so that the participants can internalise it. Therefore, the participants can encounter the ideology of *RRFM* being an alternative to capitalist system ideology and interpret the degree of radical action they can take in their everyday lives. This was reflected in the feedback given by participants surveyed who expressed their interpretation of the non-economic nature of *SRRFM* and how it contrasts significantly with the highly competitive 'economic' setting ubiquitous to Singapore society:

'[...] symbolically, it's a form of protest against the materialism that undergirds Singaporeans' ways of life.' - Sudév Suth

'[...] reminds us that things cannot be measured in purely economical

⁷⁹ Unlicensed public demonstrations are against the law in Singapore as with all cause-related events without a valid licence from the authorities.

terms and tells us to appreciate the intangibles. This is especially important for Singapore which is so economically driven that we tend to apply economic concepts on everything, even on things like relationships with people – making friends only when they promise benefits.' - Tay Shi Ying

'Our government tells us to be 'gracious' but does not set an example itself. So the *RRFM* is an example of people getting together and being 'gracious' on their own accord, without the need for silly ads featuring an outdated comedian with yellow boots.' - Seelan Palay

' [...] can be used as a medium to cultivate the spirit of giving and sharing; recycle and reuse. I find that these values may be lacking and many skills are overly commercialized and tagged with high price.' - Quek Ser Ming

- Comments extracted from The Really Really Free Market Survey 2009 (Chi 2009)⁸⁰.

FRRFM, which was commissioned for the Fukuoka Triennale, was not completely detached from Post-Museum's context of responding to Singapore's Renaissance. The experience of organising *SRRFM* fuelled by the cultural activist motivation was informing how we created *FRRFM*. At the same time, we were aware that anti-capitalist sentiments, specific to the *RRFM* series and the alternative economy movement, was visible in different forms around the world. Besides understanding the global implications of a project like *RRFM*, we were also interested in how these ideologies were translated in different social, economic and political cultures. This offered a way for us to understand first-hand how it related to our activities in Singapore. At the same time, Post-Museum was aware of the limits of the museum space, and hence, it was important for *FRRFM* to be staged in public spaces to gain visibility and increase impact in Fukuoka. As mentioned, we expressed the desire for the project to be continued beyond the Triennale context as this was motivated by our belief that the artwork needed to be relevant beyond the limitations of an event. The option to continue *FRRFM* beyond the Triennale also depended on how the event was relevant within the community of Fukuoka.

⁸⁰ The Really Really Free Market Survey 2009 can be viewed in Appendix E.

In addition, Post-Museum produced *London Really Really Free Market* (LRRFM) (2010) for *No Soul For Sale* (2010) which was exhibited in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall as a platform to showcase the work of independent international art groups. For *LRRFM*, we invited volunteers in Singapore to collaboratively create a floor mat which served to demarcate the Free Market space. Due to limited resources, Post-Museum was unable to be physically present in London. As such we had to work via the internet with a supporting team in London. The floor mat was shipped to the supporting team in London, who set it up and were on site to stage *LRRFM* according to the same guidelines as those of *FRRFM* (See Figure 13). *LRRFM* provided an opportunity for Post-Museum to develop a strategy to present the *RRFM* series through remote participation and to connect people and further discussions in both Singapore and London.

Therefore Post-Museum's *RRFM* series, through Bourriaud's Relational Aesthetics, allowed the 'human relations' to be seen within the art context, but at the same time, Post-Museum was aware of Bishop's critique on relational art which is often limited within art institutions. As I have shown, Post-Museum's *RRFM* series is intentionally open as part of its strategy of achieving its mission despite working in Singapore's Renaissance where there are harsh laws on public demonstration. At the same time, involvement in international art exhibitions where Post-Museum presents the *RRFM* offers a platform to see the work within an art context and thus provide a dialectic process which attempts to reconcile art and social action. Also, working in Singapore and internationally allows for a reflexive mode of practice within different cultural contexts and a cross-cultural understanding of Post-Museum's activities. As part of my practical work, *Server Foundation: Indexes*, I have indexed selected traces of the *RRFM* series, showing the different processes and interactions which have taken place in the project.

All Together Now, Melbourne, 2010

In 2010, Post-Museum was commissioned to produce a work for Next Wave Festival's keynote exhibition entitled *Structural Integrity* which was shown from 13–30 May at the Arts House Meat Market complex in Melbourne, Australia. *Structural Integrity* was an exhibition exploring independent arts culture through the work of six Australian and five Asian Artist Run Initiatives (ARIs). The model of the exhibition took the structure of pavilions, a form

which referenced those of World Fair exhibitions like Venice Biennale, where each ARI developed its own pavilion within the exhibition. The pavilions in Structural Integrity were developed as an expression of the participating ARIs' artistic principles, in relation to their particular cultural or geographic situation while examining national and local cultural identity through their contemporary arts practice and their characteristics of grass-roots artistic culture across the region (No Risk Too Great 2010).

For this, Post-Museum proposed a work entitled *All Together Now* in response to the theme of the exhibition. The project attempted to bring together several Melbourne-based civil society groups who were currently active in a diverse range of causes. In this project, we examined the positions of civil society groups in the existing societal structure and created new structures for bringing them together in an artistic context. The work consisted of 5 components: a public action, a drawing, a video and 2 sculptures. The public action took place on 8 May along Bourke St in Central Melbourne while the other 4 components were presented in the exhibition venue of Arts House Meat Market.

Selection, Representation and Objectives

For *All Together Now*, Post-Museum was represented by Ong Xiao Yun⁸¹, Jennifer Teo and myself. Our initial research revealed Melbourne to have a vibrant and diverse culture of NGO (non government organisations) and activist groups, which is of particular interest to Post-Museum as this is one of the key groups Post-Museum engages with in Singapore. As mentioned earlier, Post-Museum is a cultural space which includes the work of civil society as part of its definition of cultural work. The notion of civil society had been promoted in the early 1990s by the Singapore government's vision of 'active citizenship' (Koh and Ooi 2004), and in Singapore's Renaissance, the process of liberalisation and opening up of Singapore has seen an increased presence of civil society groups.

However, the liberalisation of civil society has been criticised as 'gestural' as the civic space continues to be highly depoliticised. This is because there remains the lingering presence of

⁸¹ Ong Xiao Yun is a visual artist and a studio tenant in Post-Museum's premises in Little India. She organises exhibitions and workshops which attempt to engage different communities. She also has a keen interest in Human Rights, ideas and execution of collectivism and communities. For more on Ong Xiao Yun, see <http://ongxiaoyun.sg>.

the ambiguous OB markers which continue to regulate most aspects of public life (Lee 2005b). The inclusion of civil society in Post-Museum's cultural space would potentially allude to an expanded discursive space which is necessary for political discourse to mature and for trust to develop within civil society and with the state. Hence, allowing 'the emergence of a beneficent civil society acting alongside the state towards some sense of common good and social cohesion' (Kuo, 2000).

We proposed that *All Together Now* would attempt to engage with the community of civil society groups in the form of NGOs and activists groups in Melbourne. With the project, we were interested to provide a rare platform and context to bring together the diversity of ideologies and causes. At the same time, *All Together Now* would provide Post-Museum with an interesting cross-cultural experience in our interaction with NGOs and activists based outside of Singapore.

A similar strategy and position was also shared by Singapore theatre director from The Necessary Stage (TNS)⁸², Alvin Tan (Tan 2007a), who observed that the State is everywhere in Singapore and artists have often tried to escape it by looking for new ways of creating art. Tan discussed the different limitations which TNS and local theatre groups faced in Singapore in regards to censorship, funding and creative spaces and that Singapore's Renaissance's has brought about a tendency to import international acts as opposed to nurturing indigenous theatre. These have resulted in tremendous pressure on practitioners in Singapore. Tan proposed that such constraints could be addressed through re-strategising the creative process. TNS is known for its social theatre where it produces English-language productions which address social issues in Singapore. Tan expressed that the dominance of Anglo-American or Euro-American cultures makes 'non-western' indigenous theatre difficult to tour unless they are deliberately exotic, and he proposed that instead of resisting the globalisation trend, the next best thing is to work with it.

This strategy was reflected by TNS's intercultural work and international collaborations seen in *Mobile*, a production about Thai and Filipino female domestic maids. The production of the piece resulted in a series of workshops between 2003–2005 which provided TNS with the opportunity to meet 16 theatre practitioners from 6 Asian countries who were socially aware and also allowed interactions with NGO groups which worked with these women⁸³.

⁸² For more info on The Necessary Stage, see <http://www.necessary.org>.

⁸³ For more info on *Mobile*, see <http://www.nac.gov.sg/new/new02a.asp?id=263&y=2006>.

Eventually, *Mobile* premiered at the Singapore Arts Festival in 2006 and toured to Malaysia and Japan. By working with 'globalisation' limits propelled by Singapore's Renaissance, Tan showed a deliberate strategy to internalise globalisation as a positive force for the creative work and thus circumventing the constraints in artistic production in Singapore. *Mobile*, a production which dealt with issues which were relevant to the region, opened up new spaces which allowed TNS to work with international collaborators, in the hope of inventing new devices to communicate sensitive issues and taboo subjects. Thus, collaborations like this enable suppressed voices to escape censorship by staging such works in partner countries, away from the violence of local censors .

While *All Together Now* was limited by time and resources, the interaction with the NGOs and activists in Melbourne was valuable because it provided an opportunity to engage inter-culturally and, as Tan suggested, potentially invent new devices in relation to working with civil society in Singapore. *All Together Now* was quite different from the *RRFM* series as we did not focus on one ideology but decided to focus on the vibrancy of Melbourne's NGOs and activist network while attempting to bring them together. Previously, in the experience of creating *FRRFM*, where through the *RRFM* we could present Post-Museum to an audience outside of Singapore, there was a challenge to 're-present' *FRRFM* in Singapore as it was a project which was site-specific to Fukuoka. After much discussion, we adopted a strategy to use our interactions with the NGOs and activist groups as materials and 're-materialise' it into recognisable artworks so that the artworks which were exhibited in Structural Integrity in Melbourne were later able to be shown outside of the original site and context⁸⁴.

A guideline was established in selecting the NGOs and activist groups from the civil society in Melbourne. They were: one, invite diverse groups so that it will give a broad representation. Two, each group must contribute to a vision of making the world a better place. With the help of Next Wave Festival (the local guide), we identified a broad range of NGOs and activist groups and invited them to participate in our project. A total of 11 groups responded positively (See Figure 14).

⁸⁴ *155 x 135 x 125cm* was shown in Singapore for Activist Care Centre (2011) in Post-Museum's premises in Little India. For more info on Activist Care Centre, see <http://www.post-museum.org/acc>.

NGO/activist group	Description and url
The ALSO Foundation	Australia's largest community organisation for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender people. For more info, see http://www.also.org.au .
ANTaR Victoria	Not-for-profit community organisation dedicated to achieving equal rights and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander people. For more info, see http://www.antarvictoria.org.au .
Green Renters	Not-for-profit providing sustainable living advice specifically for those living in rental property. For more info, see http://www.greenrenters.org .
Joy 94.9	Radio station providing an independent voice for Lesbian and Gay communities. For more info, see http://www.joy.org.au .
Medical Association for the Prevention of War	Not-for-profit organisation that works to promote peace and disarmament. For more info, see http://www.mapw.org.au .
New International Bookshop	Co-operative organisation which is a bookshop, coffee-shop, activist meeting room and organises events which support a Left and literary culture. For more info, see http://www.newinternationalbookshop.org.au .
Next Wave	Biennial festival and artist development organisation, presenting genre-busting new works by the next wave of Australian artists. For more info, see http://inside.nextwave.org.au .
Project Respect	Non-profit feminist community-based organisation that aims to empower and support women in the sex industry including women trafficked to Australia. For more info, see http://projectrespect.org.au .
Sea Shepherd	International non-profit conservation society dedicated to marine wildlife conservation and end the destruction of habitat and slaughter of wildlife in the world's oceans in order to conserve and protect ecosystems and species. For more info, see http://www.seashepherd.org .
Urban Seed	Christian-based organisation that assists marginalised people while developing a broader, supportive community in the city of Melbourne and throughout Victoria. They run a free lunch programme, recreational and creative activities and provide a space for Homeless Person's Legal Clinic. For more info, see http://www.urbanseed.org .
The Victorian Women's Trust	An independent body with a mandate to improve conditions for women in practical and lasting ways. For more info, see http://www.vwt.org.au .

Figure 14: *All Together Now* participating NGOs and Activist groups, 2010, Table by author.

Coming Together

The process of conceptualising *All Together Now*, inviting the NGOs and activist groups and

finally bringing everyone together for the discussion and the public action was a rather long preparatory process. The materials gathered from the process of interactions with the participating NGOs and activist groups were used to create five artworks of *All Together Now*⁸⁵. These five artworks can be seen as five structures Post-Museum created to bring these groups physically together.

To begin, we invited the groups to meet and participate in a sharing session held in the Next Wave Festival office. During the discussion, Post-Museum shared the concept of *All Together Now* and the NGOs and activist groups took turns to make short presentations about their respective organisations. After a better understanding of the project, the participating groups discussed and collectively decided the public action to undertake. The public action was a walk down Bourke Street⁸⁶ on 8 May 2010, during which, volunteers distributed flyers about the project. The public action was the first artwork of *All Together Now* and it lasted 95mins, thus entitled *95mins* (2010) (See Figure 15).



Figure 15: Post-Museum, *95mins*, 2010, Representatives wearing T-shirts from The ALSO Foundation, ANTaR Victoria, Green Renters, Joy 94.9, Medical Association for Prevention of War, The New International Bookshop, Next Wave, Project Respect, Sea Shepherd, Urban Seed and The Victorian Women's Trust, Personal photograph by author.

The second artwork of *All Together Now* was *3mins 53secs* (2010), a video work comprising footage of Post-Museum introducing the project and a short edit of the footage of *95mins*. This was shown in the exhibition as a video lasting 3mins 53secs.

⁸⁵ See Appendix E for the captions for the artworks from *All Together Now*.

⁸⁶ Bourke Street is a high street in Melbourne with high human traffic.



Figure 16: Post-Museum, 155 x 135 x 125cm, 2010, Sculpture made from Cotton Overalls, Gloves, Socks, Shoes, Thread, Wood, PVC pipes, Newspapers, T-shirts from The ALSO Foundation, ANTaR Victoria, Green Renters, Joy 94.9, Medical Association for Prevention of War, The New International Bookshop, Next Wave, Project Respect, Sea Shepherd, Urban Seed and The Victorian Women's Trust, Personal photograph by author.

The third artwork was a sculpture entitled *155 x 135 x 125cm* (2010) with the title reflecting the dimensions of the sculpture (See Figure 16). The artwork was made with 11 T-shirts contributed by the NGOs and activist groups. The T-shirts were sewn together so that when worn by 11 people, it would create a circular form with the wearers facing outwards in a circle. This T-shirt component of *155 x 135 x 125cm* was worn collectively during 95mins by a representative from each participating organisation. When installed, *155 x 135 x 125cm* shows 11 life-size figures standing in a circle wearing the T-shirts. This sculpture shows a circle of causes and ideology represented by the NGOs and activist groups and reflects the utopian vision of everyone coming together to create a better world.



Figure 17: Post-Museum, $25 \times 120 \times 225\text{cm}$, 2010, Sculpture made from Flyers and Booklets from The ALSO Foundation, ANTaR Victoria, Green Renters, Joy 94.9, Medical Association for Prevention of War, The New International Bookshop, Next Wave, Project Respect, Sea Shepherd, Urban Seed and The Victorian Women's Trust, Personal

The fourth artwork was a sculpture entitled $25 \times 120 \times 225\text{cm}$ (2010) with the title reflecting the dimensions of the sculpture at the installation of the exhibition (See Figure 17). $25 \times 120 \times 225\text{cm}$ was made with the flyers and printed materials contributed by the 11 NGOs and activist groups. The sculpture is an arrangement of these materials in the form of a floor sculpture resembling minimalist sculptures. The audience were encouraged to take away these materials, so that they could learn about the groups and causes and that the sculpture would slowly disappear through the exhibition. In this way, we hoped that the disappearance of the artwork would signal the materialisation of social action for the causes of the NGOs and activist groups outside of the exhibition.



Figure 18: Post-Museum, 210 x 200cm, 2010, Marker on paper, Personal photograph by author.

The fifth artwork was a drawing entitled 210 x 200cm (2010) with the title reflecting the dimensions of the drawing (See Figure 18). 210 x 200cm was made of 12 pieces of paper with red marker drawings based on 11 campaign posters from the NGOs and activist groups and one-drawing of the poster of *All Together Now*. Together the 12 pieces of paper were arranged in a block of four by three which made up one large drawing. This work grouped

the posters of the project and the 11 participating NGOs and activist groups to create one big poster for social action and provided a snapshot of the overall cause of 'making the world a better place'.

Presenting these five artworks as the final outcome of the project reflected artistic strategies used by many contemporary artists as discussed by Bourriaud in his book, *Postproduction*, which analysed a set of artistic production that is prominent today (Bourriaud 2002). He argued that artists' intuitive relationship with art history is now beyond 'art of appropriation', which in turn suggests a shift towards the culture of the using of forms, 'a culture of constant activity of signs based on a collective ideal of sharing'. This challenged notions of originality, and even creation, as we see in the 'twin figures of the DJ and programmer, both of whom have the task of selecting cultural objects and inserting them into new contexts'. Bourriaud located appropriation not as a marginal art practice but as a central motif of contemporary art (Ibid., 9-13). He cited the example of Felix Gonzalez-Torres who in his work used the formal vocabularies of Minimalist art and anti-form, recoding them almost thirty years later to suit his own political preoccupations. This could be seen in Torres's *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in LA)* (1991) which was a portrait of his late boyfriend who died of AIDS-related illness in 1991. The work consisted of a pyramid of brightly coloured candy weighing 175 pounds, the ideal weight of Ross. Viewers were invited to take a piece and, suck on it as they walked from the exhibit. As visitors each took a piece of candy, the pile diminished, representing his weight loss through AIDS. Torres's pile of candies reminds one of Minimalist art but the work was dealing with the loss of his boyfriend to AIDS. It is in this way that artists are going beyond the 'art of appropriation', and in the case of Torres, he adapted minimalist structures in art to speak of his struggles of losing his boyfriend to AIDS.

In the same way, the series of artworks created out of the interactions with the participating NGOs and activist groups in *All Together Now* could be viewed within Bourriaud's framework of *Postproduction*. The social interactions were 're-materialised' as artworks which in their forms referenced recognisable art structures from Minimalist art. Within these forms, we brought a diverse group of causes together, and as such brought the fight for their individual causes into one unified fight. Hence, the artworks were not only based on the 'art of appropriation' but it was an attempt to create a micro-utopian moment, through the project. This ideal of coming together is of course part of Post-Museum's motivation in Singapore.

In relation to Bishop's critique of Relational Aesthetics and the political efficacy of the 'micro-utopia' described by Bourriaud which was raised earlier in regards to the *RRFM* series, the *RRFM* series produced social relations within the context of a utopia marketplace of alternative economy while *All Together Now* 're-materialised' the social relations (with the culture of NGO and activist work in Melbourne) and brought them back into the art space. Though seeming to conflict with the utopian aspirations in the *RRFM* series, *All Together Now* was an opportunity for Post-Museum to both create a 'micro-utopia' and create artworks which could be sold while we created a 'micro-utopia'. As such, *All Together Now* provided Post-Museum with a new approach and strategy in our practice with cultural work.

All Together Now, through integrating the interaction with participating NGO and activist groups with the artmaking process, has broadened Post-Museum's cultural practice by enabling a different way of constructing social space and artmaking. This experience has offered some lessons which are relevant to Post-Museum's vision of creating a space for the co-constitution of art and civil society in Singapore, and a similar strategy could be explored in the development of an alternative vision of Singapore's Renaissance.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Koh's use of his archive as materials for his artwork *When Photographs Become Drawing* and my 're-materialisation' of the day-to-day experiences of managing Post-Museum into artworks both provide relevant strategies in relation to Singapore's cultural context where artworks and exhibitions are privileged. Similarly, through *All Together Now*, Post-Museum has found a strategic position where the artworks created visibility of the work of NGOs and activist groups from Melbourne, while allowing the dialogues we had in Melbourne to carry on beyond Melbourne. This expanded the space for dialogue about the experience we had with activism in Melbourne and the impact of the project to Singapore where the work was subsequently shown. Therefore, *All Together Now* offered a strategy which is relevant to the cultural context of Singapore's Renaissance.

Server Foundation: Indexes (2011)

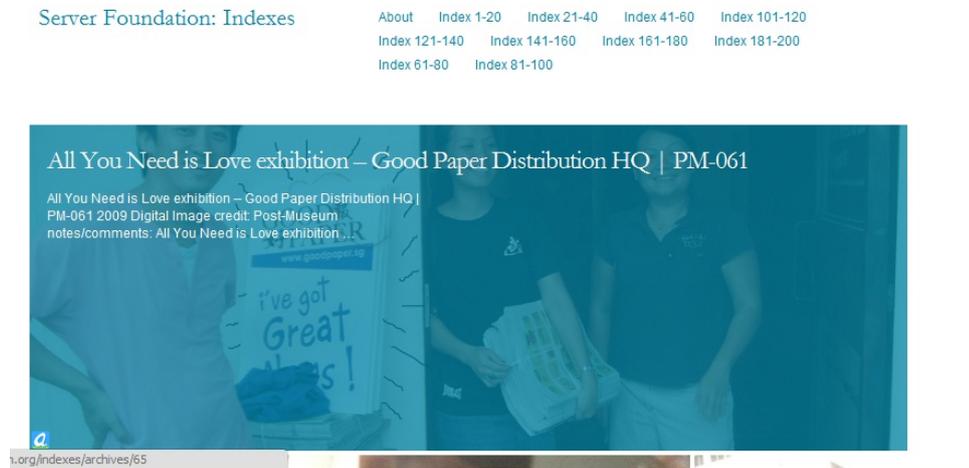


Figure 19: Woon Tien Wei, *Server Foundation: Indexes*, 2011, Screenshot, Personal image by author.

Server Foundation is an experimental platform which uses the metaphor of the computer server as a site (both physical and virtual) to link a series of micro projects together. Server Foundation is developed as a utopian 'networked collective' which allows fluid collaborations amongst a community of people from diverse backgrounds who have met online and offline. The idea was to establish a utopian server space to facilitate physical and virtual collaborative projects. This could be in the form of providing web applications for groups to organise their physical activities⁸⁷ or a creative platform to experiment and play⁸⁸. Collaborations are established on a project basis and membership is not fixed. Sometimes collaborators choose to remain anonymous but the collaborative contribution for each project with Server Foundation is often credited clearly. Projects are done in an ad-hoc basis while the physical server is administered and managed by myself.

⁸⁷ Server Foundation provided a web blog for *FRRFM* to allow the volunteers to communicate their ideas about their project and publicise upcoming *FRRFM* activities. See <http://www.server-foundation.org/frrfm>.

⁸⁸ Server Foundation contributed *Airport of Airports* (2007), a virtual and physical artwork, in a group show in Guangzhou, China. *Airport of Airports* provided the platform for contributors to create their art pieces. See <http://www.server-foundation.org/aoa>.

The *Black Box* is unable to be reproduced here due to copyright restrictions.

The *Black Box* can instead be accessed via <http://artcritical.com/DavidCohen/SUN57.htm>. (accessed 10 December, 2010).

The *Index 001* is unable to be reproduced here due to copyright restrictions.

The *Index 001* can instead be accessed via Lisson Gallery.

<http://www.lissongallery.com/#/artists/art-and-language/works>. (accessed 10 December, 2010).

Figure 20: (Top) Tony Smith, *Black Box*, 1962, steel, oil finished, 22½ x 33 x 25 inches. artcritical.com. <http://artcritical.com/DavidCohen/SUN57.htm>. (accessed 10 December, 2010)

(Bottom) Art and Language, *Index 001*, 1972, 8 file cabinets, text and photostat papers, Dimension variable. Lisson Gallery. <http://www.lissongallery.com/#/artists/art-and-language/works>. (accessed 10 December, 2010)

For my DCA research, I proposed to use Server Foundation as the platform to engage with my research question: 'What are the strategies that artists/cultural activists employ in navigating Singapore's Renaissance?'. The practical investigation would see me making a new work, *Server Foundation: Indexes*⁸⁹, where I attempted to index Post-Museum. Through the process of 'indexing' its activities, I engaged in a reflexive process which examines the connections between 'activity' and 'reflection'. The project produced a 'compression' of these connections in the form of 'indexes'. *Server Foundation: Indexes* took the form of a virtual presentation through a website and social media platforms Facebook and Twitter. The creation of indexes produced virtual objects but these virtual objects were also stored on physical devices and media. Therefore *Server Foundation: Indexes* took the physical form of

⁸⁹ *Server Foundation: Indexes* can be viewed in Appendix G and at <http://server-foundation.org/indexes/>.

a black box (hard disk storage) or a metallic column (DVD storage), like a Minimalist art object, which in turn were presented as an artwork. Hence, the physicality of this work references the forms used in minimalist art structures, much like those of Art & Language's *Index 001* (1972) or Tony Smith's *Black Box* (1963-65). Also reflected in the work are the strategies of *When Photographs Become Drawing* by Koh where the archive constitutes as material for the artwork but at the same time could potentially be invoked as an archive. *Server Foundation: Indexes* responds to the cultural context in Singapore where there is no facility to record or store the study of a co-constitution of art and civil society while at the same time its virtual presence allows the work of Post-Museum to be disseminated globally. Therefore, in this work, I am combining the complexity of Post-Museum's cultural practice and establishing a space for discourse for such practices. At the same time, I am bringing together my interests in ephemeral art practices and investigating how 're-materialisation' of such practices could give visibility and longevity in the context of Singapore's Renaissance. Hence, Bourriaud's notion of Postproduction can also be used to describe the mode of production which my practical investigation engages in where the use of Minimalist art vocabularies are recoded to suit my own aesthetic and political pre-occupations.

Investigating Post-Museum

My thesis has explored how the role of artists has changed in Singapore's Renaissance where Singapore has undergone rapid cultural development. I have in this chapter discussed the work I have done with Post-Museum in the period starting in 2007. Post-Museum employs a strategist position within Singapore's Renaissance, motivated by the desire to see a more liberal and open Singapore. Post-Museum represents a significant shift in my own practice as previous collective work were situated within fine art while Post-Museum positions its work within the broader framework of culture which included art, research and civil society. Therefore within this new framework, Post-Museum adopts a methodology of maintaining an open approach in presenting and producing its activities which include projects and collaborations that take place in its physical premises in Little India, Singapore and internationally.

In her study of community-led independent art spaces in Singapore, Yvonne Tham observed that Post-Museum and other independent art spaces play a vital intermediary role for the development of artists and experimental artworks (Tham 2009). While on the other hand,

state-led development which focuses on large-scale art events, art market and museums are limited by their positions. Tham argued that independent art spaces are unique for their flexibility in mapping out a self-defined position, and these spaces are initiated by artists, collectives or art administrators, offer support for artistic production, experimentation and discourse independent from the economic motivations of galleries and art fairs. Independent art spaces often respond to the cultural conditions of the city, offering a platform for art to connect and engage with broader issues of politics, identity, culture and society. The status of independence also allows the independent art spaces the freedom to reject or appropriate market exchanges and functions, which is an option that institutions like museums and biennales cannot exercise. As such, independent art spaces are potentially the most flexible spaces and are able to address the needs of a contemporary artist in connecting to his/her market, and importantly, still able to prioritise art's cultural value over economic significance.

However, independent art spaces often face the problems of lack of financial resources compared to state-led initiatives and this results in the short life-cycle of these initiatives. In Singapore's context, there is a trend where art groups like The Artists Village operate without a physical space to circumvent financial constraints. In this context, Tham noted that issues of financial sustainability often over-shadow issues of succession planning in ensuring the continued relevance of such spaces. Hence, Tham argued that more resources and research need to be distributed towards independent art spaces as they develop what cultural economists call an intangible cultural capital, and in that way, play a more critical role in the Singapore's context of the development of a contemporary art scene and market.

In another research on the cultural impact of independent arts spaces, Heather Chi observed that Post-Museum's strategy of actively fostering the arts and civic culture is crucial to 'ordinarizing' Singapore's Renaissance City vision (Chi 2011). Singapore's Renaissance City vision is often read under the dominant narrative of 'cultural capital' (Zukin 1995) or 'global city' (Hamnett 1995, Sassen 1991). Chi's thesis proposed to read Singapore as a creative city from a post-colonial perspective of an 'ordinary' city where collective actors constituted by 'distinctive assemblages of many different kind of activities' (Robinson 2006, 170) have the capability to shape their own futures, even if they exist in a world of (power-laden) connections and circulations. This framework provides an understanding of how community-led initiatives and their emancipatory projects are culturally significant in providing an alternative Renaissance City vision. Hence, Chi proposed to view Renaissance City not

merely as an urban image of economic revitalization with a Singaporean flavour but rather as the 'ordinary' Renaissance City vision which reflects an urban reality always-already acculturated in multiple diverse and potentially emancipatory ways.

In that sense, Post-Museum's co-constitution of the arts and civil society offers a 'good' space to develop and construct an alternative Renaissance City vision⁹⁰. Chi observed that the conviviality and openness facilitated by Post-Museum have over time positioned Post-Museum as a visible alternative space/community where its community feels a relative ease to organise events at Post-Museum, where like-minded people can meet and civic actors and artists have greater opportunities to engage in social projects (Chi 2011).

Although Post-Museum has operated for a short period of time (since 2007), it has attempted to bring a diverse group of people into its community. Through this, there are many successes and failures but this is because the nature of Post-Museum's collective activity is complex. It is a space where activists, artists and civic actors meet, a space where artists can push boundaries and be free to engage with social and political issues which state-led institutions would often discourage, and function as a 'micro-utopia' that proposes an alternative vision of Singapore's Renaissance. In that way, the complex nature of Post-Museum, its activities and its cultural impact in Singapore's context could not easily be re-interpreted in a linear narrative.

By highlighting Post-Museum's *RRFM* series and *All Together Now*, I have shown two distinctive strategies which Post-Museum has employed in its cultural practice, and through them, has produced social spaces which allows social exchanges between groups and individuals. Both projects show creative strategies which are employed by artists in navigating Singapore's Renaissance. My practical investigation has brought together the elements observed in this thesis and other research on Post-Museum. The project established

⁹⁰ Chi used geographer Robert Sack's notion of a 'good' place to describe co-constituted creative spaces/communities which serves both the arts and civic spaces (Sack 2003). Places which allow people to see the world clearly and as deeply as possible and that promote variety and complexity are 'good' places that expand our knowledge of the good and hence our ability to do good. Chi observed the utopian vision of Post-Museum where it functions as creative space that aims to facilitate diverse and complex projects which could potentially expand knowledge about contemporary issues and consequently progress beyond the Post-Museum's space fits Sack's description of 'good' places.

a discursive space outside of Post-Museum, and the process of indexing also provided another layer of interpretation of the cultural work and contributions of Post-Museum. This process facilitated the building of knowledge in the development of co-constitutional spaces for the arts, research and civic actors, and I hope that this knowledge can also help urban planners and policy-makers understand the potential of supporting such community-led developments within the context of cultural development in Singapore and globally.

Server Foundation: Indexes

Server Foundation: Indexes attempts to index the activities of Post-Museum. Through this work, I have addressed the research question: What are the strategies that artists/cultural activists employ in Singapore's Renaissance? Post-Museum is a 'networked collective', it occupies a physical and ideological space and it also works on projects which does not take place in its current premises. For this artwork, it is important to point out that I "authored" the work by taking the position of co creator, collaborator and participant within the 'networked collective' model of Post-Museum.

Hence, I do not claim authorship for all the activities presented in the creative work. Instead, the creative work is the activity of 'indexing' which 'frames' my artwork's ephemeral nature, formed by the interactions and negotiations within the activities and people in the 'networked collective' of Post-Museum.

In this work, I 'index' Post-Museum's activities and engage in a reflexive process which examines the connections between 'ideology' and 'activity'. Hence, the project produces a 'compression' of these connections in Post-Museum's work and reflects my art practice which works in the mode of collectivity and cultural activism. The project also shows an integrated practice of concepts of a 'community-led cultural development' aka cultural activism and art production and provides an understanding of collective work and ephemeral art practices.

In addition, the project is a study of the dynamics of an independent co-constitutional space for artists, researchers and civic actors in Singapore's Renaissance. It also highlights the cultural activism of Post-Museum's practice which work out strategies and tactics for dealing with what are perceived as windows of opportunity created by shifts in the government rhetoric, in a hope to realise a more open and liberal in Singapore. Therefore,

Server Foundation: Indexes is itself an artistic strategy of working in Singapore's Renaissance.

The project consists of virtual objects but it is proposed that the 'indexes' are also stored on physical storage media, which can also be presented as sculptural objects like a black box (hard disk storage) or a metallic column (DVDs). In that way, the virtual objects are 're-materialised' into art objects. Therefore this project will take physical and virtual formats which are presented as artwork while functioning as documentary and storage.

Lastly, it is important to note that indexing' is proposed as a structure to draw the diverse range of activities together and show how they connect to Post-Museum's ideology. However, it should be understood that the 'indexes' cannot show every detail and every connection but it is the most comprehensive model of representation.

Finding the Formats

In this section, I will discuss the formats for presenting *Server Foundation: Indexes* and the framework in producing the indexes, so as to providing a better understanding of how the work was produced and why it was presented in this way. As mentioned earlier, my art practice is often centred on collective work through working with different types of collectives and notions of collectivity. Therefore, my artworks are not confined to a specific medium like painting, sculpture or performance art but instead I work towards realising art projects.

For example, in the work *Virtual Marathon* (2005), produced by the net art collective tsunamii.net, I worked with programmers and artists to produce an online virtual running game. *Virtual Marathon's* creation process was more aligned to game developers than the traditional notion of artists as the skills and languages required in working in this kind of technical collaborations are different. Although the project was eventually presented in an exhibition and online, the process of collaborating with the programmers and artists were not reflected within the work. Revealing the processes in the work did not add to the work, though the collaborative process did allow new approaches and fresh perspectives on thinking about the work and the issues surrounding it. The understanding of the creative collaborative process further clarifies the position of the artist within such a mode of artistic

production and gives a precise understanding of authorship in such working relationships. As Enwezor argued, collectivity complicates the notion of modernist art being an activity of the artist as an autonomous individual and a study of the creative process allows an understanding of the nature of collaborative and collective work. It also reveals that such works are a result of co-authorship with inputs from collaborators with different disciplines.

Unlike *Virtual Marathon*, Post-Museum works in a 'networked collective' model with diverse programmes and initiatives where the working process is integral to how Post-Museum is developed. Hence, with *Server Foundation: Indexes*, I have presented the Post-Museum's working processes alongside with the final outcome of its projects. This is essential in understanding Post-Museum's cultural practice and its projects.

There are a few artists who have used similar strategies in their work. Lucas Ihlein's works explore the integration of his art in everyday life. Ihlein developed his own method of 'blogging-as-art' which he termed 'bilateral blogging' (Ihlein 2009, 2010). Through 'bilateral blogging', Ihlein created *Bilateral Kellerberrin* (April-May 2005)⁹¹ and *Bilateral Petersham*⁹² (April-May 2006). For these 2 works, Ihlein blogged about his experience as a resident in the towns everyday over 2 months. The blogs he created are the artworks and tools for the production and dissemination of the works. *Bilateral Kellerberrin* and *Bilateral Petersham* are successful works as they manage to integrate his art into everyday life because the process of blogging his interactions with the local townsfolk and day-to-day experiences allowed Ihlein and his readers to document, reflect on and discuss everyday life in the town.

Another similar project was initiated by Leonardo Electronic Almanac when it started the *LEA Exhibition* (2010) through its Facebook fan page photo album function and Twitter updates (Albums by Leonardo Electronic Almanac 2010). The *LEA Exhibition* was a curated virtual showcase featuring a body of works by an artist. In relation to my practical work, I would like to highlight *LEA Exhibition – Jane Prophet – Explorations of Structure 10.2010* where Prophet employed a reflexive approach in showcasing her work. In the Facebook album, Prophet took previous completed art works and re-evaluated them as explorations of structure. Prophet 's re-evaluation took the form of captions for each image, therefore

⁹¹ For more info on *Bilateral Kellerberrin*, see <http://kellerberrin.com>.

⁹² For more info on *Bilateral Petersham*, see <http://www.lucazoid.com/bilateral/projects/bilateral-petersham>.

providing an additional layer of reading of the images while at the same time framing these completed works under the theme of structural explorations. This presentation provided an insight into Prophet's thought processes while the framing of the work under explorations of structure linked her body of work. In that way, the caption provided the information which 'framed' her work thus providing a better understanding of her body of work. Prophet's interpretation of *LEA Exhibition* through Facebook and Twitter proposes an interesting strategy for *Server Foundation: Indexes*.

The *Explorations of Structure Digital Image* is unable to be reproduced here due to copyright restrictions.

The *Explorations of Structure Digital Image* can instead be accessed via LEA Exhibition – Jane Prophet 10.2010.

<http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.474758136252.295457.209156896252>. (10 December, 2010).

Figure 21: Jane Prophet, *Explorations of Structure*, 2010, Digital Image. LEA Exhibition – Jane Prophet 10.2010.

<http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.474758136252.295457.209156896252>. (10 December, 2010)

The use of Facebook and Twitter to transmit a portfolio of work through the use of micro-blogging and subsequently disseminated through the existing network on these social media platform would be suitable for *Server Foundation: Indexes* as Post-Museum has been using Facebook and Twitter to promote its activities and have gained a substantial following on these social media networks. As most visitors to Post-Museum only experience a handful of the activities, showing *Server Foundation: Indexes* through Facebook and Twitter provides a new way of experiencing Post-Museum. The work shows how Post-Museum's diverse activities, community building efforts and cultural practice are inter-connected. By showing these connections, the audience could potentially understand and participate differently when they visit Post-Museum physically. Therefore, based on these considerations, I disseminated *Server Foundation: Indexes* through Facebook and Twitter.

In addition, I also presented *Server Foundation: Indexes* on a website. The website was

different from Facebook and Twitter because it was not limited to the fixed web format enforced by the social media sites. In that way, the Indexes were presented in a more fluid manner as webpages could be designed to suit each kind of indexes. The website presented the *Server Foundation: Indexes* in a different visual experience. While the website did not link directly to the social media network of Post-Museum, the website was promoted through Post-Museum's social media network. As discussed, there was a possible third format. *Server Foundation: Indexes* is stored in a hard disk and DVD media. I mentioned that the physical storage devices and media can be seen as sculptural forms from Minimalist art. Therefore the sculptural object (hard disk storing the indexes) could be exhibited and even possibly sold while retaining its functionality and documentation qualities.

Process of Indexing

I will provide the framework of indexing Post-Museum in this section. Post-Museum is a 'networked collective', it occupies a physical and ideological space and also works on projects both in its premises in Little India and internationally. Therefore, Post-Museum and its activities are very extensive. In *Server Foundation: Indexes*, I have presented the work in the role of 'co-creator', collaborator and participant within the 'networked collective' model of Post-Museum. In this way, I have worked through materials gathered since the forming of Post-Museum and my interactions with these activities and the Post-Museum practice within the 'networked collective' model of Post-Museum. Hence, the value of *Server Foundation: Indexes* occurs through the 'framing' of these activities and negotiations which I have managed on a day-to-day basis in the operations of Post-Museum.

Server Foundation: Indexes has indexed the following:

- 1) Documentation in the form of photographs, video, reports, blog entries, Facebook statuses and Tweets which were disseminated by Post-Museum. These materials were Post-Museum's interactions with the public and its community.
- 2) Indirect remnants relating to Post-Museum, in the form of relics, blog entries, comments, media reports, photos, videos, research materials, reports, Facebook statuses and Tweets. These materials have come from Post-Museum's community and the public's interpretation of Post-Museum.

- 3) Artworks made through Post-Museum in the form of sculptures, paintings, drawings and videos. The works were the results of the re-materialisation of the ephemeral process in collective work.
- 4) The *Really Really Free Market* series where the process, social interactions and the instalments of the markets were indexed. By relating all these components of the *Really Really Free Market* series, the viewer gains a more comprehensive view of the project.
- 5) *All Together Now* where the process, social interactions, materials on civil society and the artworks were indexed. Drawing these components together, the viewer gains a holistic view of the project.

Server Foundation: Indexes through indexing provided a space for me to engage in the reflexive process of compiling/reading/responding to both the experiences of the team of Post-Museum, its community and the cultural space (physical and ideological) which Post-Museum has developed since its inception. In addition, it also shows the cultural activist motivation of Post-Museum's practice which aspires towards art's potential in creating an interstice in Singapore's Renaissance, in the hope of creating an open and liberal Singapore. Lastly, the project addresses the research question by showing creative strategies which Post-Museum employs in response to the context of Singapore's Renaissance.

Conclusion

Like the work of The Artists Village and Koh Nguang How discussed in Chapter 4, my work is informed by a cultural activist motivation which addresses the role and strategies of the artist in Singapore's Renaissance, in a context of Singapore undergoing a rapid cultural development led by the Singapore Government. However, this process of opening up and liberalisation is at best slow or at its worst can be interpreted as 'gestural'. In my own practice, I have adopted the position of the strategists and have often engaged in collective work which attempt to work out creative strategies and tactics in dealing with the cultural condition shaped by Singapore's Renaissance.

My artistic practice engages in the mode of a collective art practice which challenges modernism's notion of authorship and authenticity. At the same time, such practices are also often perceived as more political or social rather than an aesthetic engagement. Therefore, the collective art practice and the cultural activist motivation further complicates my artistic practice in Singapore's Renaissance. The cultural activist motivation is not fully appreciated in Singapore due to the lack of literature and research on art groups, collective and collaborative practices. In addition, there is a tendency to depoliticise art in Singapore where art is seen as an aesthetic practice and not engaging in social or political issues. This chapter further addressed the third question of 'What are the strategies that artists/cultural activists employ in Singapore's Renaissance?'.

In answering this question, I presented my work with Post-Museum, a cultural space which I co-founded in 2007. Post-Museum is a creative response to the cultural condition in Singapore's Renaissance where there is increased government-led cultural development efforts, a lack of community-led independent initiatives and the arts failing to engage with society despite the arts sector's increased visibility in Singapore. In this way, the forming of Post-Museum has a cultural activist motivation which is shared by the co-founders. One of the most prominent strategies adopted by Post-Museum is the positioning of the arts within a broader framework of cultural work.

Under this definition of culture, Post-Museum formed a community which includes cultural workers from the arts, researchers and civil society. With the community, Post-Museum provides a platform and space for these cultural workers to produce and present activities at its physical premises in Little India, Singapore. This has resulted in diverse programming of its activities and attracting diverse audiences. Hence, Post-Museum belongs to the 'networked collective' model and represents a physical and ideological space with a co-constitution of the arts and civil society in Singapore.

While most of Post-Museum's activities take place in its physical premises in Singapore, Post-Museum has also presented its projects internationally. I have highlighted two projects in this chapter to illustrate how they provided a space to frame Post-Museum's cultural practice and further defined its strategies which would propel Post-Museum's work in Singapore. The *RRFM* series by Post-Museum, staged in Singapore, Fukuoka and London, offers a gathering space for diverse participation in a utopian marketplace. The *RRFM* series is a strategic platform in providing an autonomous space in an authoritarian country like

Singapore while serving as an important space for independent and creative social action. *All Together Now* used art structures to build a platform to bring NGOs and activist groups in Melbourne together, reflecting Post-Museum's interest in civil society in Singapore and allowing Post-Museum to experience NGO and activist work outside of Singapore. *All Together Now* also proposed a different strategy for Post-Museum where the social interactions with the NGOs and activist groups in Melbourne were 're-materialised' into artworks. This process of 're-materialisation' of an ephemeral art practice was also discussed in my own practice as a kind of 'studio' practice and Koh's work *When Photographs Become Drawing* in Chapter 4. This process created a space to reflect upon these ephemeral processes, thereby allowing a reflexive process which can further define the artistic practice and devise new strategies and knowledge on the role of the artist/cultural activist.

In outlining the artistic practice of Post-Museum, we are faced with the inherent challenge of representation within the cultural context of Singapore's Renaissance as there is much difficulty in understanding collective work like Post-Museum and its cultural impact. This brings the chapter to my practical investigation project *Server Foundation: Indexes*. This creative project followed the same trajectory of this thesis in defining the strategies of the artist/cultural activist in Singapore's Renaissance. *Server Foundation: Indexes* attempted to index Post-Museum in a reflexive process. The 'indexing' examined the connections between Post-Museum's activities and reflections. Finally the project offers a 'compression' of these connections in the form of 'indexes' and was disseminated virtually through a website and social media platforms Facebook and Twitter. While the project focused on the creation of virtual objects, the 'indexes' were stored on physical storage media. In this way, *Server Foundation: Indexes* was presented as sculptural objects in its physical form of a black box (hard disk storage) or a metallic column (DVDs). Hence, the project shows a viable creative strategy in Singapore's Renaissance where it offers new knowledge in understanding an integrated practice of 'community-led cultural development' a.k.a. cultural activism and art production while drawing together the diverse and complex collective activities of Post-Museum. Through understanding Post-Museum and its cultural activist motivation, we can evaluate its cultural impact in building an independent co-constitutional space within a broader definition of culture work. *Server Foundation: Indexes* is a comprehensive documentation and storage of Post-Museum's cultural work. At the same time, the work provides new knowledge on such community-led initiatives in cultural development. This knowledge on the creative process of such artistic practice is useful in the field of aesthetics, urban planning and cultural planning.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

I began this thesis with a brief introduction of the cultural context of Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy. The move towards the Knowledge-based Economy signals a change in the way the arts and culture is being perceived and positioned in Singapore. Hence, this highlights my first and second research questions: 'How has the role of the artist changed in the era of the Knowledge-based Economy in Singapore?' and 'How has the cultural context changed because of Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy?'. I also introduced my motivation of understanding the work of fine artists who have a cultural activist motivation in their practice and defined my area of research. At the same time, parallel to my thesis, I introduced my practical research work, *Server Foundation: Indexes*, which indexed the work of Post-Museum, and through it, shows the artistic strategies of the artist/cultural activist in the context of Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy. These address my third research question: 'What are the strategies that artists/cultural activists employ in Singapore's Renaissance?'

In this concluding chapter, I will revisit the research questions raised at the start of this thesis. I will summarise the main points raised in each chapter and show how they address the research questions. Finally, I will discuss the contributions of my research constituted by the thesis and practical work.

Summary

In order to understand the significance of Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy, it was important to provide an understanding of why economic development is so important in Singapore. In Chapter 2, I provided a brief overview of industrial developments in Singapore, using the timeline proposed by economist Andrew LS Goh which showed the different phases of industrial development that Singapore has experienced since the 1960s: From *Labour-Intensive Industrialisation* in the 1960s, to *Export-Oriented Industrialisation* in the 1970s, to *Cost-Competitive Industrialisation* in the 1980s, to *Enterprise-Development Industrialisation* in the 1990s and a move towards the Knowledge-based Economy from 2000. As a result of these economic transformations, Singapore has become economically successful over a short span of four decades.

Singapore's economic success is often attributed to the ruling party, People's Action Party (PAP), who came to power in 1963. While economic success has provided Singaporeans with economic stability and material gains, it also forms the ideology of 'pragmatism' which PAP uses to rationalise the 'pragmatic' method of governing Singapore. It is within this ideology that PAP has rationalised making unpopular decisions and policies where citizens are expected to make self-sacrifices for the greater national interests. Thus, in the name of the national 'survival' rhetoric, PAP extends its control of Singapore beyond economic policies as it rationalises the changes in areas of education, union laws and civil society to create an environment for strong economic growth. Hence, economic success in Singapore is highly political as it maintains the political legitimacy of PAP as the ruling government.

Although previous economic successes relied heavily on MNC investments in Singapore, in the late 1990s, Singapore saw MNCs relocating to cheaper cities like China, India, Malaysia, Vietnam and Indonesia. Towards the end of 2000, the Singapore government understood that Singapore was not in the position to compete on cost-competitive locations and decided to change its economic directives towards encouraging growth towards the Knowledge-based Economy. Previous economic directives saw PAP crafting policies which encouraged conformity in the people in order to create political stability to attract MNCs to Singapore but with the Knowledge-based Economy, the Singapore government now faced the challenge to re-invent Singapore. With the Knowledge-based Economy, Singapore government needed to create an environment which can attract creative people to work in Singapore and at the same time encourage its people to be innovative and creative. In that sense, Singapore needed to change its image of a sterile and boring authoritarian state into a vibrant global city of the arts. This meant that Singapore needed to re-engineer its very basic fundamental ideology and the outlook of the people in order to create the right environment for the Knowledge-based economy to succeed.

With the new economic directive, Singapore has begun upgrading its infrastructure and hardware to support the Knowledge-based Economy but has yet to focus on the 'software' of the nation to address the lack of an innovative and creative Singapore. In addition, Singapore was not the only country which was trying to transform itself into the Knowledge-based Economy. Under these conditions, the Singapore government introduced the master plan of Renaissance City Plan (RCP) which was introduced in phases, first with the Renaissance City Report in 2000, followed by Renaissance City 2.0 in 2002 and Renaissance City Plan III in 2008. The RCP articulated most clearly the new vision for Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy with its aim to make Singapore a vibrant global city of the arts,

and in turn, Singaporeans into Renaissance Singaporeans and Singapore into a Renaissance Nation where the value of arts and culture is woven into the people's lives. Therefore the RCP represented a moment when the fine arts community under the umbrella of the arts and culture, was included in PAP's ideology of 'pragmatism' and was used to play an active and important role in economic development. This addressed the first research question of how the role of artists has been changed in the era of the Knowledge-based Economy in Singapore.

In Chapter 3, I continued to analyse the Singapore government's involvement with the arts and culture, answering these research questions: 'How has the role of the artist changed in the era of the Knowledge-based Economy in Singapore?' and 'How has the cultural context changed because of Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based economy?'. Starting from the 1989 Report which continued with the RCP, the Singapore government became ever more entrenched in cultural development. This is evident in government-led initiatives increasing funding through cultural policies and building of infrastructures and institutions for the arts, while at the same time, Singapore underwent a process of opening up and liberalisation. This chapter defined Singapore's Renaissance to be a period of government-led rapid cultural development to open up and liberalise Singapore, thereby changing the cultural context in Singapore. The chapter continued to investigate how the cultural context in Singapore's Renaissance affected the fine art community.

In light of the transformation of Singapore, the cultural policies have been criticised to be more economically motivated than cultural. I showed that the subjugation of the arts within the Creative Industry model created a problematic framework for the fine art community. The positioning of fine art together with the Design and Media industries led to fine artists being evaluated by the same quantification criteria. Under this model, fine art was absorbed into the economic logic and the aesthetic dimension of art was sidelined. The liberalisation and opening up of Singapore has also been criticised as 'gestural' as the Singapore government remained cautious of 'disruptive' works and through National Art Council (NAC) and Media Development Authority (MDA) has exercised nuanced control over the outcome of these works. Therefore, the liberalisation and opening up of Singapore was limited and a slow process. This produced a tendency of the depoliticisation of art and promoted a climate of self-censorship in art institutions. I argued that this kind of cultural climate showed that the Singapore government's efforts in promoting the arts to be half-hearted and a form of selective grooming. Therefore, this answers the question: 'How has the role of the artist changed in the era of the Knowledge-based Economy in Singapore?'

Although the role of the artist seemed important within Singapore's Renaissance, his role was directed towards economic development, while although the cultural context has improved with more resources and infrastructure for the arts, selective grooming has stunted the growth of the arts. This addresses the question of 'How has the cultural context changed because of Singapore's move towards Knowledge-based Economy?'.

In this chapter, I also began to answer the third research question: 'What are the strategies that artists/cultural activists employ in Singapore's Renaissance?' by raising examples of community-led initiatives which showed individual artists and art groups contributing towards cultural development. These initiatives have existed before the increase in government-led cultural development in the 1990s. Within this context of community-led cultural development, I have highlighted that some fine artists including myself have in our practice assimilated a cultural activist motivation where we engaged in activities of curating, organising, writing and arts administration. While Singapore's Renaissance offered more resources and infrastructure for the development of art, there are conflicting views on cultural development from the arts community as observed from my position of an artist/cultural activist. Some artists or art groups have responded to these conflicting by engaging in a form of cultural activism.

In Chapter 4, I continued to answer the third research question: 'What are the strategies that artists/cultural activists employ in Singapore's Renaissance?' by highlighting the work and artistic practices of The Artists Village and Koh Nguang How, who showed cultural activist motivations. The chapter shows their artistic strategies in relation to the cultural context of Singapore's Renaissance. It is noted that with the increase in exhibition spaces and venues, there has not been enough emphasis on the development of the discipline of arts criticism and art history. Although this issue has been raised by artists like Ho Ho Ying in the 1960s, the lack of knowledge to appreciate the arts continue to persist. This suggests that the artist's role was to produce artworks to fill up the exhibition spaces for cultural consumption. Under these conditions, the cultural activist motivations were often sidelined as there was a tendency of depoliticisation of art as the cultural context of Singapore's Renaissance had an emphasis on the exhibition of tangible art works, rather than the critique, contemplation or appreciation of what art might communicate about society. Although The Artists Village and Koh Nguang How have been recognised for their art, their cultural activism motivations have often been sidelined in these circumstances. I argued that their cultural activist motivations, which are important in shaping a kind of practice which is both practical and potentially critical, have been overlooked.

In the study of the collective entity of The Artists Village, I showed how the cultural activist motivation has shaped its practice. Motivated to seek out physical spaces for artists in land-scarce Singapore, The Artists Village created the first artist colony in the kampung. The artist returning to the kampung brought The Artists Village into the public's eyes and thus allowed the group to promote new forms of experimental art like performance art and installation art. The emergence of The Artists Village ushered in a period of experimentation in art and was crucial in the development of contemporary art. After it lost the physical space of the kampung, The Artists Village's adapted the strategy of seeking physical space for art into also seeking ideological spaces. This was reflected in the new leadership of the group in 2000 where it underwent a process of negotiations with the Singapore government in staging projects in public spaces. The Artists Village's strategies in its practice contributed to the creation of physical spaces, ideological spaces and the redrawing of OB markers in Singapore.

Koh Nguang How's cultural activist motivations was reflected in the forming of his archive which contains art-related materials which are rare or already lost to the public. Koh developed a strategy of 'artist-researcher' which allowed him to invoke the 'archive' in his artworks. This resulted in using his archive as materials in the creation of artworks. By showing his private art archive, Koh questions the state of the Singapore government's art archive and creates opportunities for others to learn of its contents, thereby giving the archive visibility and enabling it to remain relevant.

This chapter answers the question: 'What are the strategies that artists/cultural activists employ in Singapore's Renaissance?' by showing the strategies of both The Artists Village and Koh. The cultural activist motivations are integral to the practice of The Artists Village and Koh and I argue that if these motivations were excluded in the reading of their work, we would be missing the point. As shown, the strategies they employed are not limited to the conflicting views of cultural development in Singapore's Renaissance but are responses to practical constraints in cultural development. Importantly, they also propose a ground-up community-based vision of cultural development which should be considered in Singapore's Renaissance. Therefore, the research of the cultural activist motivations of artists and art groups provided in this chapter will be a valuable resource for cultural policies and aesthetics in Singapore.

In Chapter 5, I continued to address the research question: 'What are the strategies that

artists/cultural activists employ in Singapore's Renaissance?' through the discussion of my own artistic practice and works, particularly focusing on my collective art practice and the work of Post-Museum. In relation to Singapore's Renaissance, I have adopted a strategist position where I engage in collective work which attempt to work out creative strategies and tactics propelled by my cultural activist motivation to move towards a more open and liberal Singapore.

I highlighted the challenges of working in the mode of collective art practices as such practices challenges the notion of authorship and authenticity in relation to modernism's ideals on art. Collective art practices are also perceived as more political or social rather than aesthetic. Therefore a collective art practice and the cultural activist motivation further complicate the view of my art practice in Singapore's Renaissance. In addition, there is a tendency to depoliticise art in Singapore where art is limited to an aesthetic engagement and not likely to engage in social and political issues. From providing an understanding of the difficulty that the artist/cultural activist faces in Singapore's Renaissance, I addressed the research question 'What are the strategies that artists/cultural activists employ in Singapore's Renaissance?' by presenting my work with Post-Museum, a cultural space which I co-founded in 2007.

I showed that Post-Museum is a creative response to the cultural condition in Singapore's Renaissance where there is an increase in government-led cultural development efforts, a lack of community-led independent initiatives and the arts failing to engage with society despite its increased visibility in Singapore. One of the most prominent strategies adopted by Post-Museum is the positioning of the arts within a broader framework of cultural work. Under this definition of culture, Post-Museum has formed a community which includes cultural workers from the arts, researchers and civic actors. Post-Museum provides a platform and space for this community to produce and present activities in its physical premises in Little India, Singapore. This produces a diverse range of activities which potentially engage beyond art audiences. Therefore under this framework, Post-Museum belongs to the 'networked collective' model and represents a physical and ideological space with a co-constitution of the arts and civil society in Singapore.

In addition, Post-Museum also presented its projects internationally and I have highlighted two of them in this chapter. The *RRFM* series has been staged in Singapore, Fukuoka and London and offered a gathering space for diverse participation in a utopian marketplace. The *RRFM* series is a strategic platform in providing an autonomous space in an authoritarian

country like Singapore and also serves as a space for individuals and groups to engage in further collective social action outside of the marketplace. *All Together Now* used art structures to build a platform to bring NGOs and activist groups in Melbourne together. The interest to engage with NGOs and activist groups in Melbourne reflects Post-Museum's interest in civil society in Singapore. The project brought a diverse group of NGOs and activist groups together and allowed Post-Museum to experience NGO and activist culture from a global perspective. Another strategy employed by Post-Museum was the 're-materialisation' of the social interactions with the NGOs and activist groups in Melbourne into artworks. This strategy allowed a reflexive process in art making which transformed a range of ephemeral activities into concrete artworks. This created a reflexive space to further define the artistic practice and device new strategies and knowledge on the role of the artist/cultural activist. Analysing both these international projects, I showed that they provided the space to frame Post-Museum's cultural practice and further define its strategies of working within the context of Singapore's Renaissance.

Lastly, this chapter also proposed my creative work *Server Foundation: Indexes* which aims to answer the research question: 'What are the strategies that artists/cultural activists employ in Singapore's Renaissance?'. This project investigated the strategies of the artist/cultural activist in Singapore's Renaissance through the making of a creative work. *Server Foundation: Indexes* attempted to index the activities of Post-Museum. The 'indexing' examined its activities and my reflection on them thus showing the connections between the activities and its ideology. Finally, the project offered a 'compression' of these connections in the form of 'indexes' and was disseminated virtually through a website and social media platforms Facebook and Twitter. The project consists of virtual objects but the 'indexes' are also stored on physical storage media, which could be presented as sculptural objects like a black box (hard disk storage) or a metallic column (DVDs). In that way, virtual objects were 're-materialised' into artworks.

To answer the research question, *Server Foundation: Indexes* is a creative strategy responding to Singapore's Renaissance. Firstly, it deals with the difficulty of representing the collective work of Post-Museum as the 'indexes' draw a diverse range of activities together and show how they connect to Post-Museum's ideology. Although it cannot show every detail and every connection, it is a comprehensive model of representation. The 'indexes' also provides comprehensive knowledge in understanding an integrated practice of 'community-led cultural development' a.k.a. cultural activism and art production and studies the work of an independent co-constitutional space for artists, researchers and civic actors in Singapore's

Renaissance. Lastly, the project used a collection of materials from Post-Museum and its community to create an artistic work which could be presented online and offline. This proposes a new method and strategy of art making in Singapore's Renaissance.

Outcome and Contributions

In answering the research questions: 'How has the role of the artist changed in the era of the Knowledge-based Economy in Singapore?' and 'How has the cultural context changed because of Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy?', my thesis has established that Singapore's move towards the Knowledge-based Economy resulted in a significant change in the role of artists and the cultural context. Under the Peoples Action Party, the Singapore government introduced the master plan RCP, which led Singapore to undergo a process of rapid cultural development and liberalisation. Singapore's Renaissance through the RCP showed the determination to transform the basic ideology of Singapore to make its people more creative and make culture become more relevant to its people.

However, my thesis has shown that, like everything in Singapore, the Singapore's Renaissance is motivated more by economic than cultural reasons. Although the artists are considered important in the era of the Knowledge-based Economy in Singapore, their role is framed by and limited to playing a part in Singapore's economic success.

My thesis also pointed out that while there are increased government-led cultural developments in Singapore's Renaissance, artists have also established community-led cultural development initiatives. Artists including myself have engaged in activities of curating, organising, writing and arts administration, which are motivated by what I term the cultural activist motivation. This motivation is often assimilated into their artistic practice and I argued that it is an important factor to consider when looking at the work and artistic practice of these artists/cultural activists, as it shapes and provides a unique character. However, under the Singapore's Renaissance, the cultural activist motivation is often sidelined as there is a tendency to de-politicise the meaning of art as a process, and privilege physical artworks, as opposed to what those artworks might mean or communicate. Although the arts and culture is increasingly more visible and positioned more prominently in Singapore, community-led cultural development is slowly decreasing as such initiatives face constraints on resources, and under Singapore's Renaissance, there seems to be no space for their growth. I argued that community-led cultural development and these cultural activist

motivations are important for building a vibrant art scene, and cultural development should not be left entirely up to the government planners.

In answering the research question: 'What are the strategies that artists/cultural activists employ in Singapore's Renaissance?', my thesis highlighted the work of The Artists Village, Koh Nguang How and Post-Museum. In addition, my practical investigation *Server Foundation: Indexes* also addressed this research question through the making of a practical work that 'indexes' of Post-Museum. The analysis of the practice and strategies of artists/cultural activists in Singapore showed creative responses to Singapore's Renaissance and developed knowledge to provide a more in-depth understanding of such practices. Both the thesis and practical investigation provided a framework to understand the practice and strategies of the artists/cultural activists, and from this, we can understand the cultural impact of their work in the development of art in Singapore.

As pointed out earlier, as there is not much research available on the work of artists/cultural activists in Singapore, my thesis and practical investigation offers an insight into such practices and artistic strategies. Therefore, the knowledge developed from my thesis and practical investigation may be useful for other artists and researchers working in the field of contemporary art. The knowledge is also an important contribution to the lack of art history and art criticism in Singapore.

Lastly, the study of the practices and artistic strategies of the artists/cultural activists in Singapore's Renaissance should not be seen simplistically as a position of resistance. The artist/cultural activist should be seen as engaging in a creative act which is responding to his cultural context. Cultural activism is motivated by the need to establish another reality in Singapore's Renaissance as the Singapore government's cultural ideal does not include the cultural activist's vision. I hope this thesis has provided an understanding of the different motivations behind government-led and community-led cultural development initiatives. I argue that it would be unconstructive to see them as conflicting ideologies. Community-led cultural developments represent a vision from the ground-up and these visions of artists/cultural activists exist to remind us that there are alternatives. In the case of Singapore's Renaissance, art should not be limited to economic development and should not be constrained by political agendas. Such an environment stunts the growth of art in Singapore and leads the arts and culture to have diminished social value in Singapore. I argue that the vision of Singapore's Renaissance should be broadened as the development of art does not lie solely with the government but with all the stakeholders. I hope that in this

way, my thesis and practical work can be an important resource in the field of cultural and urban planning in Singapore and internationally.

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Appendix A: Main Recommendations of the 1989 Report of The Advisory Council on Culture and The Arts (MITA 2000, Annex A)

1989 Recommendations	Remarks
<p>1. <u>Organisational Improvements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Singapore National Arts Council to spearhead the development of the arts in Singapore. • Establish a Literature Board to raise the tempo of literary activities in Singapore and to develop our four literatures. • Establish a National Heritage Trust as the sole authority on heritage matters to co-ordinate the preservation of the different dimensions of our heritage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The National Arts Council (NAC) was established as a Statutory Board under MITA in 1991. Its mission is to help nurture the arts and to develop Singapore into a vibrant global city for the arts. ➤ The promotion of literature is subsumed under the ambit of the NAC. ➤ The National Heritage Board (NHB) was established as a Statutory Board under MITA in 1993 to spearhead the promotion of Singapore's artistic, cultural and historical heritage. In addition, the Preservation of Monuments Board (PMB) was transferred to MITA in 1997 to encourage greater sharing of resources between PMB and NHB in heritage projects and public education.
<p>2. <u>Improvements in our Education System</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a comprehensive arts education system similar to that for academic and technical education. • Improve the quality of arts education in the schools and implement an Arts-in-Education programme to allow students to participate in and appreciate performances/exhibitions. • Develop a tertiary arts education system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Some headway has been achieved, especially at tertiary level. ➤ NAC launched the Arts Education Programme (AEP) in 1993. The AEP aims to promote an awareness and appreciation of the arts among students and to cultivate an arts audience base. The AEP reached out to some 200,000 students, or 44% of the student population in 1998. ➤ Government has accepted the main recommendations of The Committee to Upgrade LASALLE and NAFA (1998) to recognise LASALLE and NAFA as polytechnic-level institutions and to develop a degree-awarding Institute of the Arts at the NUS.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more overseas scholarships for talented Singaporeans aspiring towards careers in the fields of arts and heritage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ NAC, in collaboration with private-sector organisations such as Shell, provides some 120 scholarships and bursaries annually for the arts. NHB also offers some training awards to build up their in-house professional expertise.
<p>3. <u>Improvement of Cultural Facilities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct a new performing arts centre at Marina Centre and upgrade existing theatres. • Build a modern National Library on Queen Street and four additional branch libraries in Hougang, Tampines, Yishun and Woodlands. • Assist arts groups to obtain rehearsal and working facilities. • Proceed with the development plans for the National Museum to provide for a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fine arts gallery in the former St Joseph's Institution (SJI) - children's museum in the former Tao Nan School - history of Singapore museum - Southeast Asian / natural history / ethnology museum - people's gallery - upgraded storage and conservation facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Esplanade – Theatres on The Bay is scheduled to open in 2002. Drama Centre, Kallang Theatre and Victoria Theatre underwent some upgrading works. ➤ Following the Library 2000 Report in 1995, the National Library Board (NLB) was formed to spearhead the development of Singapore's public library system. NLB's development plan provides for one National Reference Library, five regional libraries and eighteen Community Libraries. The plan is now being implemented and will be completed in 2003. ➤ NAC's arts housing scheme provides premises to house arts organisations at subsidised rates. It currently provides more than 26,700 sq metres of floor area for 56 arts organisations and 26 visual artists. ➤ Under the NHB, the National Museum has been redeveloped as the Singapore History Museum, the former SJI now houses the Singapore Art Museum, while the Asian Civilisations Museum is at the former Tao Nan School with a second wing being developed at Empress Place. NHB has also developed a 6,000 sq metres storage and conservation facility at Jurong.

4. Greater Promotional Efforts

- Government and private sector to install more works of art in public places.
 - Simplify entertainment licensing procedures to encourage private efforts at organising shows.
 - Make the arts more accessible to Singaporeans by organising a wider range of activities and courses.
 - Government to nurture deserving cultural groups through grants and other appropriate assistance schemes.
 - Implement a sustained programme for the commissioning, documentation and promotion of original Singapore works.
 - Mass media to increase and improve their coverage on Singapore arts and culture, and to make a special attempt to give balanced coverage to all forms of the arts that comprise our collective heritage.
- There has been a greater consciousness of the value of installing art pieces and sculptures as part of our urban environment. Examples include the sculptures at UOB Plaza and the Roy Lichtenstein pieces at Millenia Tower.
 - Some procedures have been simplified. The Singapore Tourism Board facilitates dialogue between the Association of Concert and Event Managers and the Public Entertainment and Licensing Unit (PELU) on reviewing licensing requirements. More can be done in this area.
 - NAC promotes a range of arts programmes such as Concerts-in-the-Park and Poems on the MRT as part of their outreach strategy.
 - NAC currently has a limited budget of some \$3 million each year to provide grants and assistance to arts groups.
 - NAC has a number of programmes that fulfill these purposes. NAC has also initiated efforts to promote Singapore works overseas. However, more needs to be done in these areas.
 - Local media have generally improved their coverage of Singapore arts and culture. Passion 99.5, a dedicated radio station for the arts was launched in Dec 1997. Arts Central, a dedicated programming belt for the arts on TV, was launched on 30 Jan 2000. More needs to be done, particularly in improving the standard of arts commentary and criticism in the media.

Appendix B: CURRICULUM VITAE OF KOH NGUANG HOW (as of Aug 2010)

Personal Particulars

Name : **KOH NGUANG HOW** 许元豪
 Address : Block 116, Yishun Ring Road, # 08 - 645.
 Singapore 760116
 Telephone : 65 – 67585008
 E-mail : *kohnguanghow@yahoo.com.sg*
 Date of Birth : 9 Aug 1963
 Nationality : Singaporean
 Occupations : Artist/ Art Researcher

School Attended

1980 - 1982 Nanyang Junior College, Singapore

Professional Courses Attended

1989 (3 months) Thailand. *The Training Course in Preventive Conservation of Museum Objects,* organised by SEAMEO Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts,
 1990 (3 months) Thailand. *The Training Course in Documentation of Non-Print Materials on Culture,* organised by SEAMEO Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts,

Work Experience

1985 Oct to 1992 Feb **Curatorial Assistant**, National Museum Art Gallery, Singapore (promoted to **Assistant Curator** in January 1992)
 1997 Oct to 1999 July **Part-time Curatorial Assistant**, Singapore History Museum, Singapore
 1999 Sep to 2000 March **Researcher-in-Residence**, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan
 2000 Nov to 2001 April **Commissioned Researcher**, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan
 2001 Jan to 2001 Dec **Researcher**, Asian Art Quest, Internet Fair Japan 2001
 2001 Mar to 2004 **Co-Instructor in Schools' Art Education Projects**

Year	School	Medium
2001	<i>Bishan Park Secondary School</i>	<i>Sculpture</i>
2001/2002	<i>Siglap Secondary School and East</i>	<i>Relief</i>

	<i>Cluster Schools</i>	<i>Printmaking and Sculpture</i>
2002	<i>Fuhua Secondary School</i>	<i>Sculpture</i>
2003	<i>CHIJ St Nicholas Girls' School</i>	<i>Sculpture</i>
2004	<i>Dunman High School</i>	<i>Sculpture</i>

2002 to 2006 **Part-time Art Teacher** (Relief Printmaking),
Waseda-Shibuya Senior High School, Singapore

Selected Project Work

- 1996-1997 Coordinator,
The Birth of Modern Art in Southeast Asia: Artists and Movements,
A Supporting Event of the Asian Development Bank 1997 Annual Meeting,
Fukuoka, Japan
- 1999 Co-curator with Masahiro Ushiroshoji,
The Documentation of Tang Da Wu and His Works: 1970-1999,
The Commemorative Exhibition for the 10th Fukuoka Asian Culture Prizes,
Fukuoka, Japan
- 2000 Coordinator,
Asian Art Festival: A Commemorative Event for the First Anniversary of Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan
- 2002 Curator,
Remembering The Samsui Women: A Mixed Media Exposition,
NOKIA SINGAPORE ART 2001, National Arts Council and Singapore Art Museum,
Ying Fo Fui Kun, Singapore
- 2002 Researcher/Co-curator with Toshiko Rawanchaikul,
Nanyang 1950-1965: Passage to Singaporean Art, ***Fukuoka Asian Art Museum***,
Fukuoka, Japan (Part of ASEAN-Japan Exchange Year 2003), (7 Nov 02 – 14 Jan 03)
- 2003 Coordinator,
Asian Art Festival 2003: A Commemorative Event for the Fourth Anniversary of Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan
- 2004 Exhibition Designer,
Eye é City: A Visual Account of the Last 24 hours of 2003,
Nomadic Eyes Collective, [ARTrium@MITA](#), Singapore
- 2005 Owner of Collection /Coordinator,
Singapore Art Archive Project @ p-10 (Jan-July)
- 2005 Co-Curator with p-10,
Blossoming of the Pomegranate: Documenting 30 Years of Chng Seok Tin's Art
- 2006 Coordinator,
Evolution of Kim-chiam: From Dried Lily Bud to "Rolling Red Dust" (1980-2006)
- 2006 Co-Curator,
Imprints of the Past: Remembering the 1966 Woodcut Exhibition, National Library,
Singapore
- 2007 Co-Curator,
Wonders of Golden Needles, Huayi-Chinese Festival of Arts, Jendela Gallery,
Esplanade-Theatres by the Bay, Singapore

- 2007 Coordinator,
Red Dust (a dance theatre based on lyrics and sculpture installations by Chng Seok Tin)
by VAN BODY THEATRE, M1 Singapore Fringe Festival 2007, at Gallery Theatre, National Museum of Singapore.
Presented by Very Special Arts Singapore and VAN BODY THEATRE (Taiwan).
- 2007 Researcher on Cultural Medallion recipient Chng Seok Tin,
National Library Board Online Repository of Artistic Works (NORA) Project, Singapore
- 2007 Researcher,
Picturing Singapore 1955-2005: An Archival Perspective, a parallel event to exhibition
Archive in Motion: 50 Jahre/Years documenta, 1955 – 2005, The National Museum of Singapore
- 2010-2011 Researcher/ Coordinator,
Chng Seok Tin Retrospective Exhibition 2011
NAFA Galleries, Singapore

Residencies

- 1994 (Oct – Nov) *Artist-In-Residence at Artists Unlimited*, Bielefeld, Germany
- 1999 Sep
to 2000 Mar *Researcher-in-Residence*, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan
- 2004 (Mar – April) *p-10 Residency Programme*, p-10, Singapore
- 2005 (Jan – Jun) *Singapore Art Archive Project @ p-10*, p-10 Residency Programme, Singapore

Solo Exhibitions

- 1990 *Monuments For Trees*, The Substation, Singapore
- 1992 *Raw Images*, The Substation, Singapore
- 1994 *White Autumn*, Artists Unlimited, Bielefeld, Germany
- 1995 *A Tea Ceremony*, The German School, Singapore
- 2004 ***ERRATA: Page 71, Plate 47. Image caption. Change Year: 1950 to Year: 1959; Reported September 2004 by Koh Nguang How***, p-10, Singapore
- 2005 ***Errata at NUS: Exploring Singapore Art History***, a new version of the ERRATA show in 2004, co-organised by p1-0 & University Scholars Programme, National University of Singapore, at NUS Central Library. (2 to 16 March)
(The show is accompanied by a series of presentations and workshops)
- 2005 ***Errata: Page 71, Plate 47. Image caption. Change Year: 1950 to Year: 1959; Reported September 2004 by Koh Nguang How***
Presented by the Singapore History Museum and Curated by p-10 (15 Aug – 25 Sep)

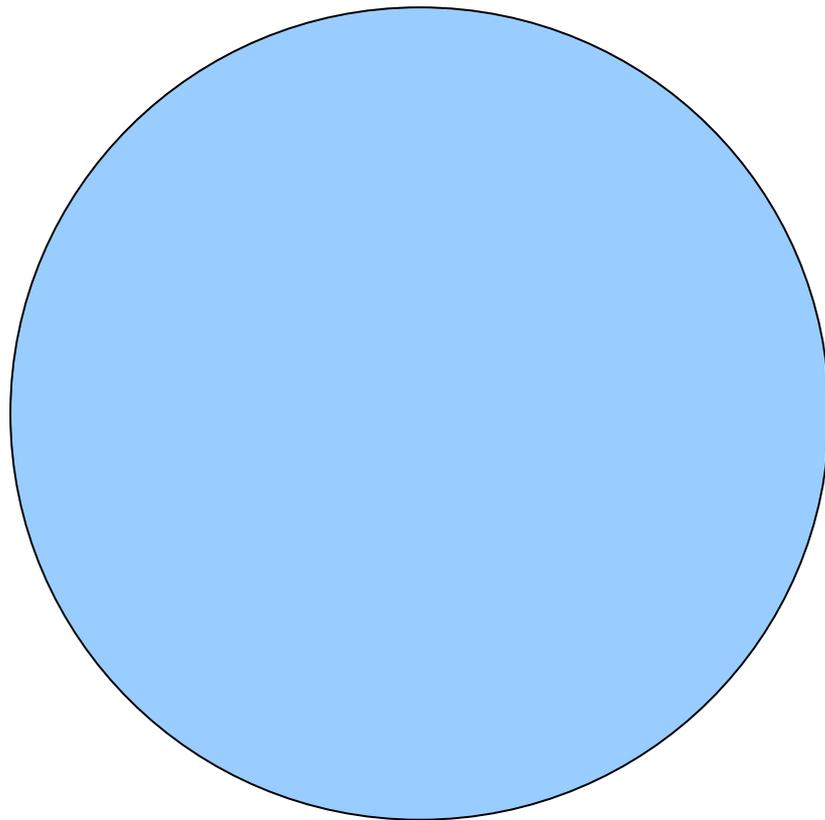
Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1988 *Figurative Art by 6*, Midpoint Gallery, Singapore
- 1989 *The Artists Village 2nd Open Studio Show*, The Artists Village, Singapore
The Happenings - The Artists Village Exhibition,
Nanyang Technological Institute Hall 5, Singapore
The Happenings II - The Artists Village Exhibition,
National University of Singapore, Singapore
The Drawing Show, The Artists Village, Singapore
- 1989 - 91 *Contemporary Art In Singapore: Where East Meets West*
Travelling Exhibition to The Tropen Museum, Amsterdam;
Deutsche Banks in Germany; The Hunterian Gallery, University of Glasgow
- 1989 - 90 *The Time Show - 24 Hours Continuous Performance Art Show*,
The Artists Village, Singapore
- 1990 *QU Art Support Group II - The Artists Village Show*,
Qu Artspace, Hong Kong
- The CARE Show - Concerned Artists For The Environment*,
The Artists Village Show,
Singapore Festival of Arts Fringe 1990
- The Arts For Nature -*
Exhibition Commemorating World Environment Day, Singapore Baha'i Women
Committee, The Empress Place Museum, Singapore
- 1991 *Many In One: Twenty Five Years of Art in Singapore*,
Travelling Exhibition in The United States of America,
National Museum, Singapore and The Meridian House, Washington DC
- The Tree Celebration*, The Substation, Singapore
- A Sculpture Seminar*, National Museum Art Gallery, Singapore
- 1992 *ARX 3 - The Third Artists' Regional Exchange*,
Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Western Australia
- The Space*,
Singapore Festival of Arts Fringe and The Artists Village,
Old Hong Bee Warehouse, Singapore
- Performance Week*, Gallery 21, Singapore
- 1993 *The New Journey to the West: ESPACE 3356*,
(Singapore Artists in France), The French Festival,
The Substation Gallery and Raffles City Atrium, Singapore
- Sense Yellow -*
A Collaboration Project between Thai, Singaporean and German artists,
Concrete House, Bangkok
- 1994 *Toxicity: Community In Hazard* (International Fax Art)

- Concrete House, Bangkok
Departures, The Substation, Singapore
- 1995 *Shift of Time - A Cultural Exchange Exhibition*,
 German School, Singapore
- 1996 *Tour de Art Lah!* - The Artists Village Show
 Singapore Festival of Arts Fringe 1996
- 1998 *Second Nature: Cityscapes of Singapore -
 An Exhibition of Singapore Contemporary Art*
 Central Plaza, Hong Kong; Singapore Art Museum and
 The Provisional Urban Council of Hong Kong
- 1998-99 *Imaging Selves*, Singapore Art Museum Collection Exhibition Series,
 Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
- 2000 *Box Museum 2000 Fukuoka*, art-networking event, Singapore, London,
 Fukuoka
- 2002 *Remembering The Samsui Women: A Mixed Media Exposition*,
 NOKIA SINGAPORE ART 2001, National Arts Council and Singapore Art
 Museum,
 Ying Fo Fui Kun, Singapore
- 2003 *Eye é City: A Visual Account of the Last 24 hours of 2002*,
 Nomadic Eyes Collective, [ARTrium@MITA](#), Singapore
- 2005 *Situation: Collaborations, Collectives and Artist Network from Sydney,
 Singapore and Berlin*
 Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
- 2008 *The Artists Village: 20 Years On*, Singapore Art Museum & The Artists
 Village, Singapore Art Museum and 8Q@SAM, Singapore
- 2009 *Drawing as Form*, The Artists Village show, Sculpture Square & The
 Artists Village, Sculpture Square, Singapore

Appendix C: *Errata* Catalog with an Essay on the Project by the Author

CD – ROM with PDF file



**Appendix D: *Really Really Free Market Series (2009-2011)*
by Post-Museum**

Singapore Really Really Free Market (since February 2009)
Show Room, Post-Museum



Free hair cut services, 2009, Personal photograph by author.



Participants looking at the free books section, 2010, Personal photograph by author.



Participants who heeded the call to help 'free' the hose from its plaster encasing, 2011, Personal photograph by author.

Fukuoka Really Really Free Market (5 September – 23 November 2009)

4th Fukuoka Triennale at the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum

Fukuoka, Japan

Triennale Website: <http://faam.city.fukuoka.lg.jp/FT/2009/en/info.html>

Project website: <http://server-foundation.org/frrfm>

Review: <http://www.artlink.com.au/articles/3341/4th-fukuoka-asian-art-triennale-japan>



Supporting team of Kyushu University students led by Professor Keio Fujihara to set up the Free Market in at B-Cafe (a non-profit community space) in Hita Prefecture, 2009, Personal photograph by author.



Fukuoka Really Really Free Market supporting team of Kyushu University students led by Professor Keio Fujihara to set up the Free Market at B-Cafe (a non-profit community space) in Hita Prefecture, 2009, Personal photograph by author.



Fukuoka Really Really Free Market at the Tenjin Central Park, Installation view, 2009, Personal photograph by author.



Fukuoka Really Really Free Market at the Tenjin Central Park: Live Calligraphy Performance, 2009, Personal photograph by author.



Fukuoka Really Really Free Market at the Tenjin Central Park: Free Nail Painting Service, 2009, Personal photograph by author.

London Really Really Free Market (14–15 May 2010)

No Soul for Sale at Tate Modern Turbine Hall

London, UK

No Soul For Sale Web: <http://www.nosoulsforsale.com/2010>

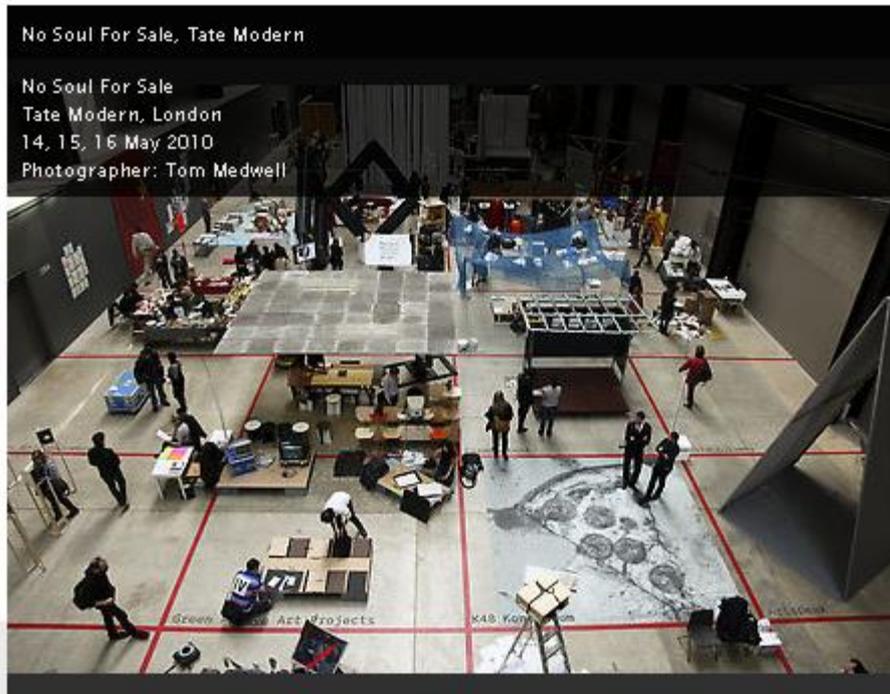
Post-Museum website: <http://www.post-museum.org/lrrfm/index.html>



Volunteers in Singapore making the floormat to demarcate the Free Market space, 2009, Personal photograph by author.



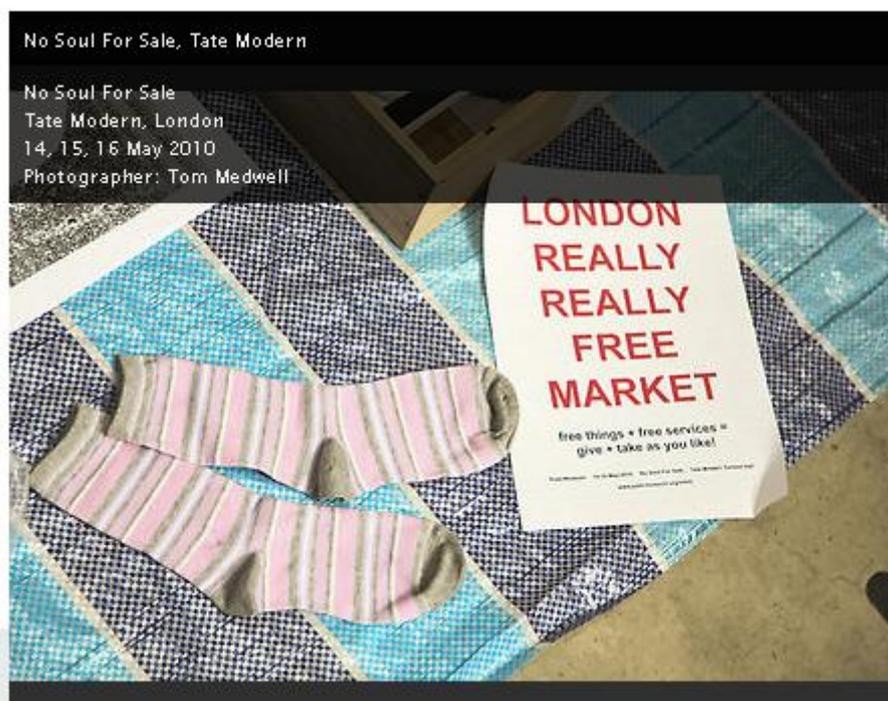
Detail of floormat to demarcate the Free Market space, 2010, Personal photograph by author.



No Soul For Sale: exhibition overview, 2010. No Soul For Sale. <http://www.nosoulsale.com/2010>. (accessed December 15, 2010)



London Really Really Free Market Installation view at No Soul For Sale, 2010. No Soul For Sale. <http://www.nosoulsale.com/2010>. (accessed December 15, 2010)



London Really Really Free Market: detail view, 2010. No Soul For Sale.
<http://www.nosoulforsale.com/2010>. (accessed December 15, 2010)

Appendix E: Singapore Really Really Free Market Survey 2009 conducted by Heather Chi

Timestamp	Do you feel it is important for Singapore to have a Really Really Free Market? Why, or why not?	What impact do you think 'social exchanges' like the RRFM could have on Singapore society?	Is it important that the RRFM is located in Post Museum/Little India? Why or why not? Where else might be a good venue?	What do you enjoy most about the RRFM experience? What have you found most memorable?	Have you contributed anything to the RRFM before? Is there something you would be interested to donate or do?	The RRFM in Two Words?	Contact Information
11/1/2009 18:27:30	I think it is good for Singapore to have RRFM chapter because this can be used as a medium to cultivate the spirit of giving and sharing; recycle and reuse. I find that these values may be lacking and many skills are overly commercialised and tagged with high price. Does that mean that people who cannot afford the price are not allowed to enjoy quality service? It will be sad that if our society is to turn out this way completely.	At the moment, at this scale, I doubt any real impact would have happened. Unless it receives enough publicity and able to gather more people who think alike. I believe there are many other like-minded people just that we have not reach out to them to get them to share our cause yet.	If RRFM aims to have a greater publicity and exposure, then it may consider stepping out of Little India. Not meant to be discriminating but not many 'atas' Singaporeans can stand travelling with so many foreign workers and sometimes 'street-walkers'.	I'm a tarot reader. So for me is that able to provide insight to aid people who are seeking. Fees for tarot reading can be a bit steep in Singapore. Then again, if you charge cheaper, in our line, people may think you're half-past-six. Headache.	I'm a tarot reader.	THUMBS UP!!!	Quek Ser Ming, 26, reach me at quekserming@yahc
11/1/2009 18:34:54	yes. because there shouldn't be a price for everything.	balances out the highly calculative environment that rules most of the time.	location good. good mix of locals, tourists and migrants.	non formal atmosphere.		must go	

Timestamp	Do you feel it is important for Singapore to have a Really Really Free Market? Why, or why not?	What impact do you think 'social exchanges' like the RRFM could have on Singapore society?	Is it important that the RRFM is located in Post Museum/Little India? Why or why not? Where else might be a good venue?	What do you enjoy most about the RRFM experience? What have you found most memorable?	Have you contributed anything to the RRFM before? Is there something you would be interested to donate or do?	The RRFM in Two Words?	Contact Information
11/1/2009 18:52:46	Yes. It provides an avenue for those who wish to practice and partake in alternate forms of exchange from conventional ones	Little if any. These events are self-selecting, and 90% of people who come are Bangladeshis anyway. It would depend on how many new people come, and if their behaviors are changed by the event	Wherever is cheap and convenient - maximum reach at minimum cost will ensure useful sustainability	A few interesting personalities are present	I would be interested to cook some food		Gabriel, 26, 98584932

Timestamp	Do you feel it is important for Singapore to have a Really Really Free Market? Why, or why not?	What impact do you think 'social exchanges' like the RRFM could have on Singapore society?	Is it important that the RRFM is located in Post Museum/Little India? Why or why not? Where else might be a good venue?	What do you enjoy most about the RRFM experience? What have you found most memorable?	Have you contributed anything to the RRFM before? Is there something you would be interested to donate or do?	The RRFM in Two Words?	Contact Information
11/1/2009 19:34:10	Yes it is very important, for us to share and care for one another. our world has become really materialistic and most people are selfish. there are those who are less fortunate than others and it is nice to be able to share with them.	People could become more caring, more understanding and there wouldn't be such a huge gap between the rich and the poor. Also, it could create more awareness for helping those in need. Most people that are asked for help on the street are not bothered to help, and social exchanges like RRFM could help them realize that it is nice to help others in need. Many shop for clothes, etc but never use them and it is such a waste and yet there are also people who don't have any money to buy clothes and wouldn't it be nice to donate some of the clothes one doesn't wear to one that needs it?	Yes because little india is where most of the foreign workers are and they are sometimes less fortunate than the locals. also, it could be nice to have it others places, like a branch. Chinatown could also be an idea, because the Chinese foreign workers mainly gather there. I think it would be nice to have more branches around Singapore, because it is hard for some people to travel there every time.	meeting new people, sharing with others etc	yes i have, i donate my old clothes and like to continue to share my things.	amazing awesome!	name: yi zheng im 19, and contact is 93269005 (mobile) and email is tumtodaflow_gd09 cheers!

Timestamp	Do you feel it is important for Singapore to have a Really Really Free Market? Why, or why not?	What impact do you think 'social exchanges' like the RRFM could have on Singapore society?	Is it important that the RRFM is located in Post Museum/Little India? Why or why not? Where else might be a good venue?	What do you enjoy most about the RRFM experience? What have you found most memorable?	Have you contributed anything to the RRFM before? Is there something you would be interested to donate or do?	The RRFM in Two Words?	Contact Information
11/1/2009 23:45:58	Yes. To increase social awareness about consumerism and the economic powerhouse that make us buy and buy. Without this market, we cannot learn to accept that things can be given to us for free out of the sheer goodwill of others. We won't learn that buying more means creating more waste and in fact taking a free thing from the market makes us buy less yet think through what we would like to take because we won't be taking a whole lot of things due to being mindful over gluttonous feelings.	Create a social space for alternative voices to come and be heard. Create and feel safe sharing with others.	Yes it is a convenient space and brings us into another world all together.	The people I meet.	Yes, books and clothes. I would be interested to donate furniture if I could.	Fucking Awesome!	Sha Najak 25, 91738897

Timestamp	Do you feel it is important for Singapore to have a Really Really Free Market? Why, or why not?	What impact do you think 'social exchanges' like the RRFM could have on Singapore society?	Is it important that the RRFM is located in Post Museum/Little India? Why or why not? Where else might be a good venue?	What do you enjoy most about the RRFM experience? What have you found most memorable?	Have you contributed anything to the RRFM before? Is there something you would be interested to donate or do?	The RRFM in Two Words?	Contact Information
11/1/2009 19:48:51	yes it is important. but essentially it helps the foreign workers more than local singaporeans It seems. high quality of products at the market also helps.	give singaporeans an alternative mode of economy	somewhere in town. try attracting or targeting a different crowd.	the fact that hordes of foreign workers actually cleared all my items within the 4 hours of RRFM. amazing!	clothes, bags, clocks, etc.	interesting concept	
11/1/2009 22:48:09	Not really. Won't the society collapse?	Vibrancy, definitely.	It's a little out of the way. Maybe hold it in NUS so as to spread this idea among undergrads.	Story-telling and tarot-card reading, hands down. It's interesting and super fun to participate in.		Indie fun	Elaine Lim, 21, 96630310

Appendix F: *All Together Now* Project Write up and Captions from exhibition (13-30 May 2010)

All Together Now Post-Museum

All Together Now is Post-Museum's project for 2010 Next Wave Festival's keynote project Structural Integrity.

In our work as an independent cultural and social space, Post-Museum seeks to encourage and support a thinking and pro-active community, and it is our belief that civil society groups are vital to the well-being of communities and contribute greatly to making the world a better place through their work in dialogue, education and direct action.

In All Together Now, Post-Museum brings together several Melbourne-based civil society groups who are currently active in a diverse range of causes. In this project, we examine the positions of civil society groups in the existing societal structure and create new structures for bringing them together in an artistic context.

The central structure in All Together Now is in the form of a circle. The circle is an ancient symbol which is considered divine or perfect by many cultures. In addition, with no beginning and no end, all points on the circle are equal. As such, we have created a circle with the representatives from the participating groups in our group meeting, public action and sculpture to place emphasis on the notion that we are all equally important and crucial in the formation of a perfect society.

All Together Now consists of 5 components: a public action, a video, 2 sculptures and a drawing. The public action took place on 8 May along Bourke St while the other 4 components are presented in the exhibition venue of Arts House Meat Market.

All Together Now was created by Post-Museum (Ong Xiao Yun, Jennifer Teo, Woon Tien Wei) with the participation of The ALSO Foundation, ANTaR Victoria, Green Renters, Joy 94.9, Medical Association for Prevention of War, The New International Bookshop, Next Wave, Project Respect, Sea Shepherd, Urban Seed and The Victorian Women's Trust as well as a team of volunteers.

For more information, see <http://www.post-museum.org/alltogethernow/>.

Supported by



All Together Now Artworks captions:

95mins

Representatives wearing T-shirts from The ALSO Foundation, ANTaR Victoria, Green Renters, Joy 94.9, Medical Association for Prevention of War, The New International Bookshop, Next Wave, Project Respect, Sea Shepherd, Urban Seed and The Victorian Women's Trust.

95mins

2010

25 x 120 x 225cm

Flyers and Booklets from The ALSO Foundation, ANTaR Victoria, Green Renters, Joy 94.9, Medical Association for Prevention of War, The New International Bookshop, Next Wave, Project Respect, Sea Shepherd, Urban Seed and The Victorian Women's Trust.

25 x 120 x 225cm

2010

3mins 50secs

Video

3mins 50secs

2010

155 x 135 x 125cm

Cotton Overalls, Gloves, Socks, Shoes, Thread, Wood, PVC pipes, Newspapers, T-shirts from The ALSO Foundation, ANTaR Victoria, Green Renters, Joy 94.9, Medical Association for Prevention of War, The New International Bookshop, Next Wave, Project Respect, Sea Shepherd, Urban Seed and The Victorian Women's Trust.

155 x 135 x 125cm

2010

210 x 200cm

Marker on Paper

210 x 200 cm

2010

Appendix G: *Server Foundation: Indexes* Website
For the full experience please visit website at:
<http://server-foundation.org/indexes/>

