

PRESS RELEASE

NURTURING A CREATIVE CAMPUS THROUGH PUBLIC ART ADVOCACY

The National University of Singapore (NUS) has announced a new **Public Art Initiative**. Officially launched on Friday, 8 April 2022, by Mr Hsieh Fu Hua, Chairman of the NUS Board of Trustees, the Initiative underscores NUS' commitment to deepening the role of public art in holistic, interdisciplinary and broad-based education.



Image Caption: Mr Hsieh Fu Hua (right), Chairman of the NUS Board of Trustees, launching the NUS Public Art Initiative.

The Initiative is led by the **NUS Public Art Committee (PAC)**, comprising NUS faculty and staff, as well as arts professionals and practitioners (See Annex). The NUS Museum functions as Secretariat for the PAC, coordinating efforts in support of the Public Art Initiative.

The NUS Public Art Initiative encompasses three focus areas, namely:

- (1) Encouraging **student and community engagement** with public art on campus
- (2) Engaging in **interdisciplinary collaborations for learning and teaching**
- (3) Enhancing the NUS Campus through **public art advocacy**

Speaking at the launch event held last Friday, Chairman of the NUS Public Art Committee Professor Ho Puay Peng said, "We believe that this initiative augments our NUS mission and culture for innovation and excellence, and that public art has an important part to play in research and academia, as well as student life and well-being." He added, "Our growing collection of 36 public artworks across the NUS campus exposes students to diverse perspectives and visual expressions. We also want to encourage student and community engagement through public art projects, which contribute to broader opportunities for campus participation, empowerment, and learning."



Image Caption: Professor Ho Puay Peng (right), Chairman of the NUS Public Art Committee, speaking at the launch of the NUS Public Art Initiative

“Public art is key to building a sense of place, of shared experiences and community,” said Sharon Tan, Director for NUS Centre For the Arts (CFA). “Every year, we see graduands at our commencement ceremonies taking photographs with the public artworks outside the University Cultural Centre. They are iconic landmarks that tie our alumni back to the University community long after graduation. CFA is honoured to have a role in shaping the visual aesthetic of the NUS Campus environment and through art, spur a sense of shared identity.”

Encouraging Student and Community Engagement with Public Art on Campus

A key avenue for student engagement with public art is the Public Art Internship. The Internship aims to consider objects and concepts from a critical and inter-disciplinary point of view, allowing students to enhance their personal curatorial research, administrative and project management skills. Guided by mentors from NUS Museum, interns learn more about public art, history, heritage, architecture and public art’s role in the built environment. Interns will have opportunities for research field trips and visits to artists’ studios. Commencing in 2021, the Public Art Internship has already seen four students benefiting from the programme.

“My time as an intern has truly been valuable,” said Pia Praptidita Suratman, a current PhD student at the Department of Architecture, and Public Art Intern. “Even though this internship was technically a ‘job’, it was also an intellectual pursuit. I was truly challenged to think beyond.”



Image Caption: Public Art Intern Pia Praptidita Suratman (far left) surveying a location on campus for the installation of a public artwork. This task helped demonstrate how visual drawings are important for communicating to all stakeholders as part of her internship.

The Public Art Internship also provides interns with opportunities to get hands-on with meaningful and varied public art projects on campus. One such project is the **inaugural NUS Student Public Art Competition**, which was commissioned by NUS Centre For the Arts for NUS Arts Festival (NAF) 2022, in collaboration with the Centre for Quantum Technologies (CQT).

Responding to a call for submissions in September 2021 through October 2021 were 64 participants across NUS, who formed teams of 3 to 5, hailing from a range of faculties and schools, such as the College of Humanities and Sciences, Faculty of Dentistry, NUS School of Computing, Yale-NUS College, Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music and the College of Design and Engineering.



Image Caption: Untitled (Ceilings) on-site at the NUS Central Library Forum

A total of 16 proposals were received for the competition, with **Untitled (Ceilings)** by Bryan Chia, Lu Yixin and Mary Ann Ng, emerging as the winning proposal. The team of students and alumni from the College of Design and Engineering received a cash prize of S\$2,000, and were given the opportunity to translate their proposal into an actual public art installation. They were provided a construction budget, and worked with the Curator and Public Art Committee Secretariat, an Artist Mentor, and student volunteers to realise the artwork – which was unveiled at the launch of the Public Art Initiative last Friday.



Image Caption: Mr Hsieh Fu Hua (far left), Chairman of the NUS Board of Trustees, with the team behind Untitled (Ceilings).

The installation comprises a suspended array of magnifying lens sheets that create a kaleidoscope of light and visual possibilities. The multitude of refractions celebrates the value of diversity and multiple perspectives in an increasingly divisive world.



Image Caption: Untitled (Ceilings) features a suspended array of magnifying lens sheets that refract light in a myriad of ways

Engaging in Interdisciplinary Collaborations for Learning and Teaching

Another key focus area for the Public Art Initiative is the use of public art as a platform for interdisciplinary learning and teaching, through collaborations between artists and academics such as engineers, scientists, and technologists, creating fresh perspectives on the arts and academia.

The first of such collaborative efforts is an Artist-in-Residence programme at the College of Design and Engineering (CDE), in partnership with NUS Museum. Held in 2021, this programme saw five artists – Jason Ong, Tan Seow Wei, Debbie Ding, as well as Delia and Milenko Prvacki – working alongside academic staff to conceive and co-develop artistic trajectories of innovation for the development of public art onsite.

One notable collaboration was between Professor Konstantin ‘Kostya’ Novoselov, and artists Delia and Milenko Prvacki. Together with Associate Professor Daria Andreeva from

the Department of Materials Science and Engineering, they explored and tested new materials for public art.

“We see great value in facilitating interdisciplinary collaborations between artists and academia,” said Ahmad Mashadi, Head of the NUS Museum. “We firmly believe that both artists and academics have much to learn and benefit from each other. Beyond the potential for enhancements to our built environment, such collaborations can also benefit academics in providing new ways of understanding and furthering their research specialisations.”

These collaborations can also extend into the classroom. In February 2022, a lino-printing workshop by artist Tan Seow Wei was integrated into part of a Bioanalytics for Engineers module, co-developed by Dr Bina Rai from Biomedical Engineering and PAC Secretariat and Curator, Karen Lim. Through this collaboration, 44 students with limited experience in art gained valuable insights into artistic, social and contextual understanding of biomedical engineering, shaping their learning and impact in society. In turn, the students’ work will be incorporated into Tan’s own ongoing art work.



Image Caption: Biomedical Engineering students trying out lino-printing to visualise protein molecules



Image Caption: Workshop participants proudly display their artwork

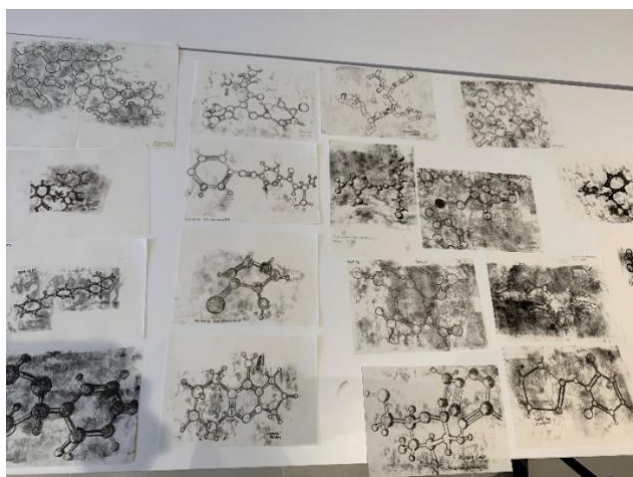


Image Caption: A sample of the artwork developed from the workshop with Biomedical Engineering students

Enhancing the NUS Campus Through Public Art Advocacy

The PAC also manages a Registry of public artworks on the NUS campus, tracking location, provenance, and protection of these artworks, with the individual faculties and departments who had commissioned the works looking into their maintenance and care. Besides existing public artworks, the PAC also sets out NUS' official policy on the acceptance, commissioning, and locating of new public artwork on campus. This effort forms the bedrock upon which the PAC's public art advocacy efforts rests – being able to maintain and grow the collection of public artworks on campus for the benefit of future generations of NUS students, staff and the public.

“Making public art central to campus life paves the way for our university community to connect, bond and belong,” said Karen Lim, Curator at the NUS Museum and Secretariat for the Public Art Committee. “It is the necessary ‘software’ of campus life, which brings out the heart of the community, expressing our dreams, aspirations, shared identity and our common cause. I am glad to have the opportunity to lead this initiative and it is wonderful to see the NUS community embracing this interdisciplinary effort.”

You may download the photographs from this link: <https://nus.edu/3v9LURk>

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ANNEX

About the NUS Public Art Committee

Chairman

Professor Ho Puay Peng, Head of Architecture, College of Design & Engineering

Secretariat

Karen Lim, Curator, NUS Museum

Members

Koh Yan Leng, Vice-President, Campus Infrastructure

Professor Rajeev S Patke, Director, Division of Humanities, Yale-NUS College

Associate Professor Kua Harn Wei, Vice Dean, Design & Environment Dean's Office

Dr Suriani Suratman, Senior Lecturer, Department of Malay Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Sharon Tan, Director, NUS Centre For the Arts

Ahmad Mashadi, Head, NUS Museum

Randy Chan, Zarch Collaboratives Architectural Studio, NUS Alumni

Debbie Ding, Artist & Technologist, NUS Alumni

About NUS Centre For the Arts

Established in 1993, the **NUS Centre For the Arts (CFA)** is Singapore's only full-fledged arts centre within a university setting. CFA offers many opportunities for participation in and exposure to the arts in NUS, with purpose-built arts facilities such as the University Cultural Centre (UCC) and the NUS Museum, to hosting and developing 20 student arts excellence groups. CFA engages NUS students year-round through a range of performances, workshops, and even integrating arts into the curriculum, through collaborations with NUS faculty for various NUS modules.

NUS CFA aims to be a vibrant space for NUS students to experience the arts, and to nurture creative minds and inquiring spirits. CFA is focused on integrating the arts into university life, offering opportunities for discovery, exchange, and action.

Find out more about NUS CFA at <https://cfa.nus.edu.sg>