

Singapore's Quest for 'Cultural Development'

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Independent Curator – Exhibition-
Maker

ART INDUSTRY FORUM: Value
Creation Through The Art Industry

Personal Profile

- Goldsmiths's – BA(Hons) Arts Management (2014)
- The Chinese University of Hong Kong –MA (Dean's List) Cultural Management (2015)
- Winner–Tan Boon Hui Curatorial Prize (2023)
- Curator of 2 Benesse Prize Finalists (2019) & 1 Winner (2016) at the Singapore Biennale
- Curator of over 60 artwork commissions and site-specific adaptations to-date.
- Editor of two books and numerous other essays.
- More than 30 fine art exhibitions curated for commercial, non-profit, and governmental clients.
- Former Singapore Art Museum curator acquiring for the National Collection of Singapore.



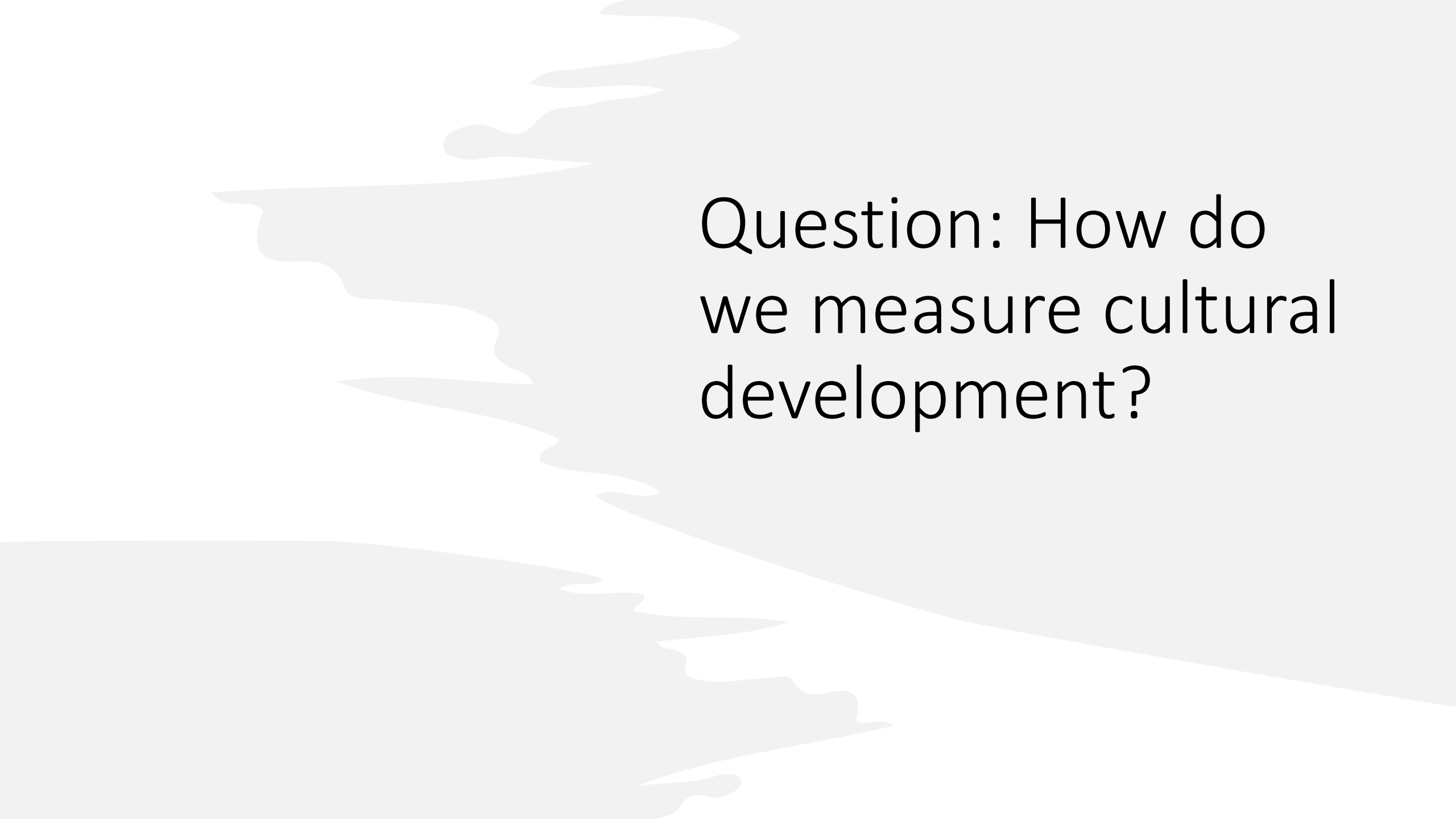
CULTURAL/DEVELOPMENT

CULTURE

1. the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively.
2. the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society.

DEVELOPMENT

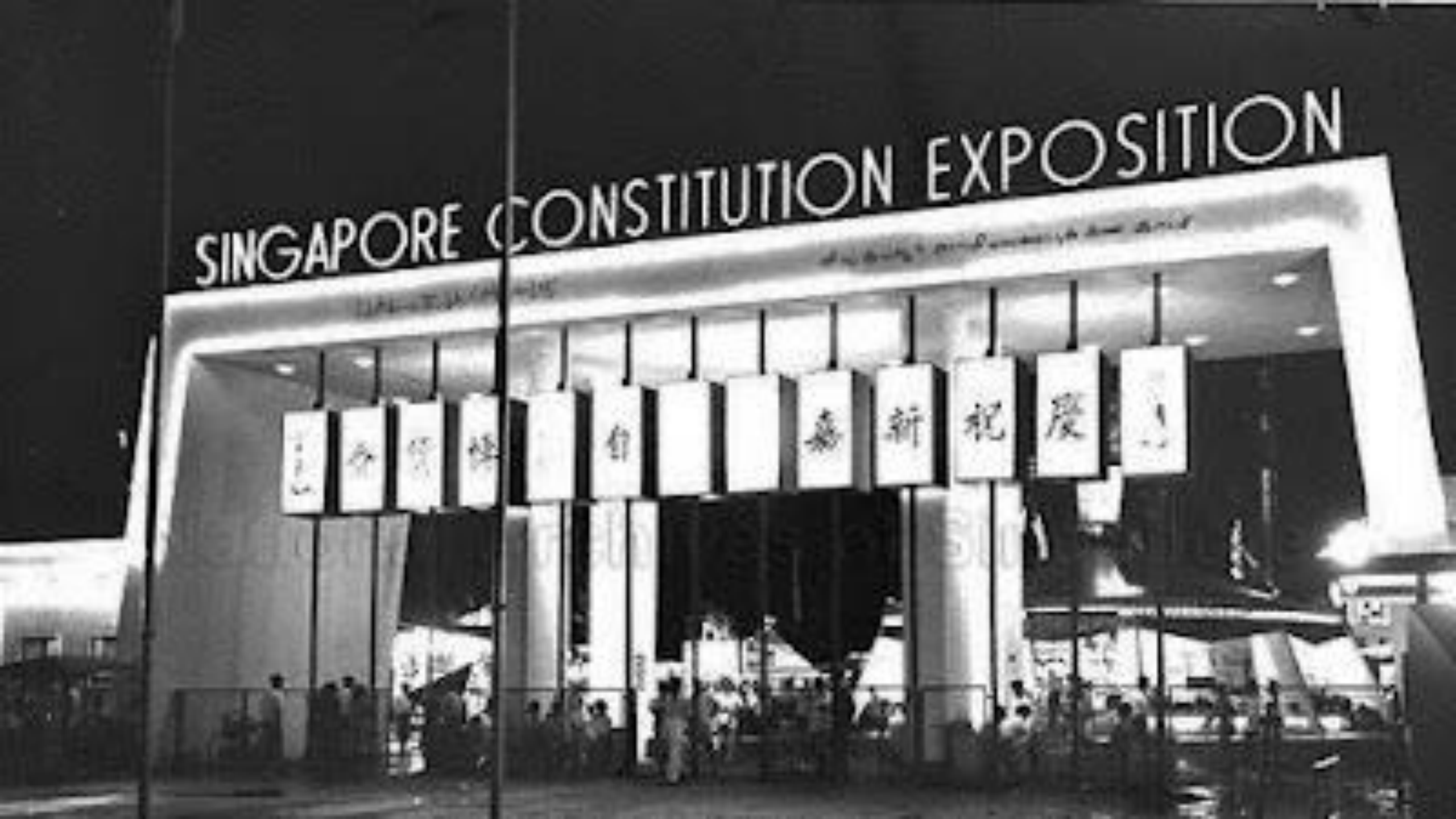
1. the process of developing or being developed.
2. an event constituting a new stage in a changing situation.



Question: How do
we measure cultural
development?

SINGAPORE CONSTITUTION EXPOSITION

慶祝新嘉坡自治





MAJU - LA... SINGAPURA

A Dire Case of Confusion

1965 – 2015?



1819 – 2019?

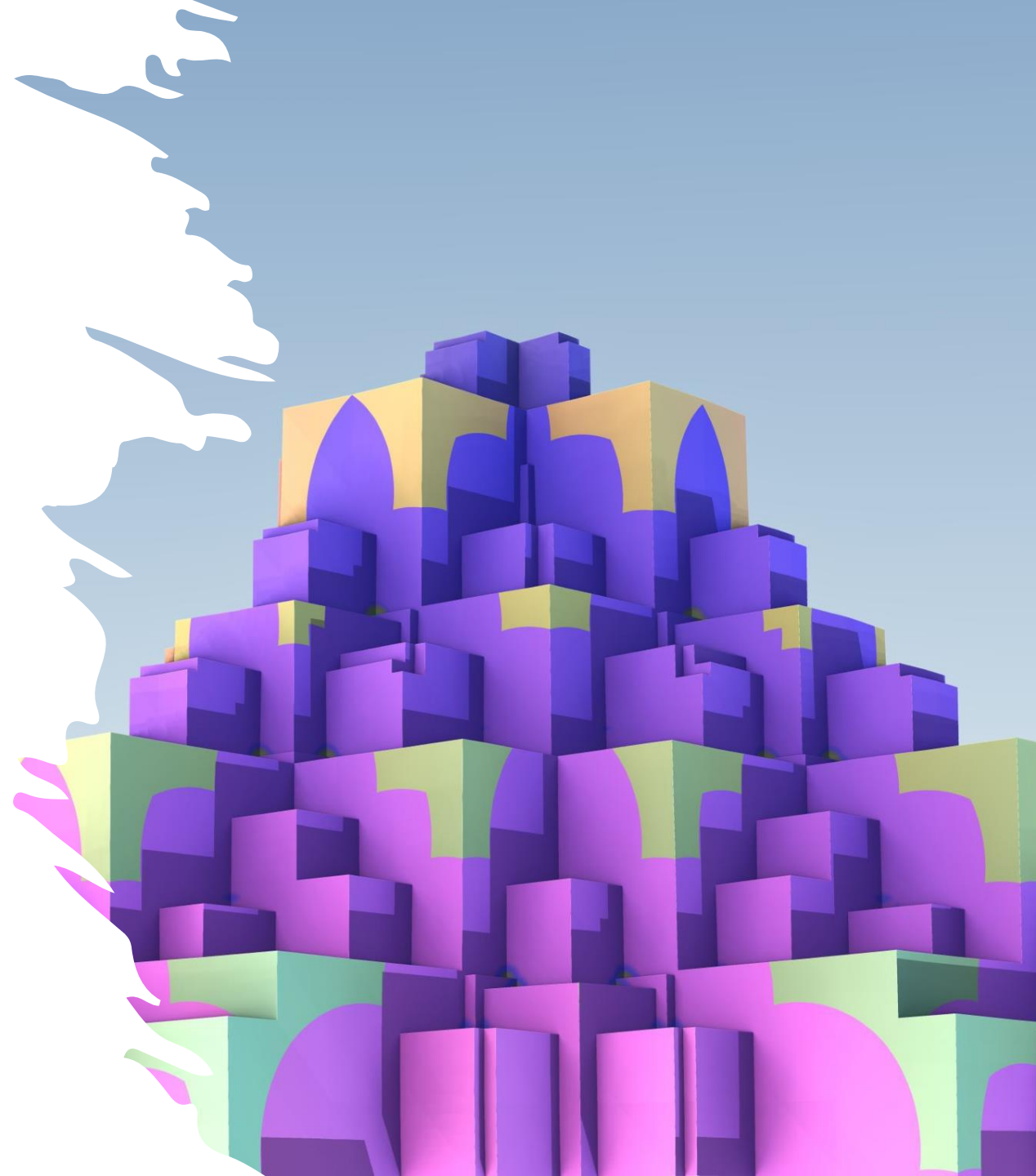


Three Key Cultural Reports that Shaped Cultural Policy and the Contemporary Landscape

1989 – Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts (ACCA)

2000, 2004, 2008 – Renaissance City Report I, II, III (RCP)

2012 – The Report of the Arts and Cultural Strategic Review (ACSR)



Authorship?

ACCA – Special committee formed at the request of the former 1st Deputy Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, and led by 2nd Deputy Prime Minister Ong Teng Cheong.

RCP I – The Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA)

RCP II – The Economic Development Board of Singapore (EDB)

RCP III – The Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA)

ACSR – A team comprising “academics, industry leaders, community leaders, arts and culture leaders, as well as respected and emerging practitioners from the fields of visual, performing and literary arts, heritage, design and media. Included also are high-level representatives from public agencies that have a stake in arts and cultural development.”

Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts (1989)

1. The ACCA was set up in 1988 to examine the state of arts and culture development in Singapore and to realise the vision of a culturally vibrant society.
2. It made a number of key recommendations – improvements to organisational structures, to the education system, to infrastructure and facilities, as well as greater promotional efforts for arts and culture.
3. Tangible outcomes following the report include:
 - I. The establishment of a “world class performing arts centre” – The Esplanade, Theatres on the Bay
 - II. The Singapore Art Museum
 - III. The National Arts Council, National Heritage Board, and National Libraries Board

Renaissance City Report I (2000)

1. Intended as a follow up to the ACCA Report published 10 years earlier.
2. Establishing Singapore as a destination for arts and cultural activities, while retaining a focus on nation building and sense of national identity.
3. The RCP I also began the exercise of benchmarking Singapore to other **“cultural capitals”**
4. Following the publication of RCP I, arts organisations and individuals so a boost to avenues to seek funding for a variety of ends – including artistic productions, skills upgrading and training, and more.

Renaissance City Report II (2004)

1. Focused on reviewing the “economic performance of Singapore’s arts and cultural sector”, while providing a broad strategic direction towards “unleash(ing) the full potential of Singapore’s arts and cultural assets”.
2. Proposal for the adoption of a “creative industries” perspective, requiring statutory boards to adopt a “holistic approach to develop the arts and cultural sector” – namely through entrepreneurship.
3. Tangible outcomes following the report’s recommendations include:
 - I. “Tracking the contribution of arts and culture to the economy in terms of total value added and employment.”
 - II. Major art events to market Singapore to the world. E.g. The Singapore Biennale.

Renaissance City Report III (2008)

1. The RCP III proposed a tripartite strategy of “Distinctive Content”, “Dynamic Ecosystem” and “Engaged Community”.
2. The RCP III was also the first to recognise the importance of ancillary industries necessary to support the arts and cultural ecosystem – essentially the software with respect to the hardware that had already been developed.
3. While RCP III provided perhaps the widest array of recommendations, a large number reiterated the recommendations of the strategic plans that preceded it.

The Report of the Arts and Cultural Strategic Review (2012)

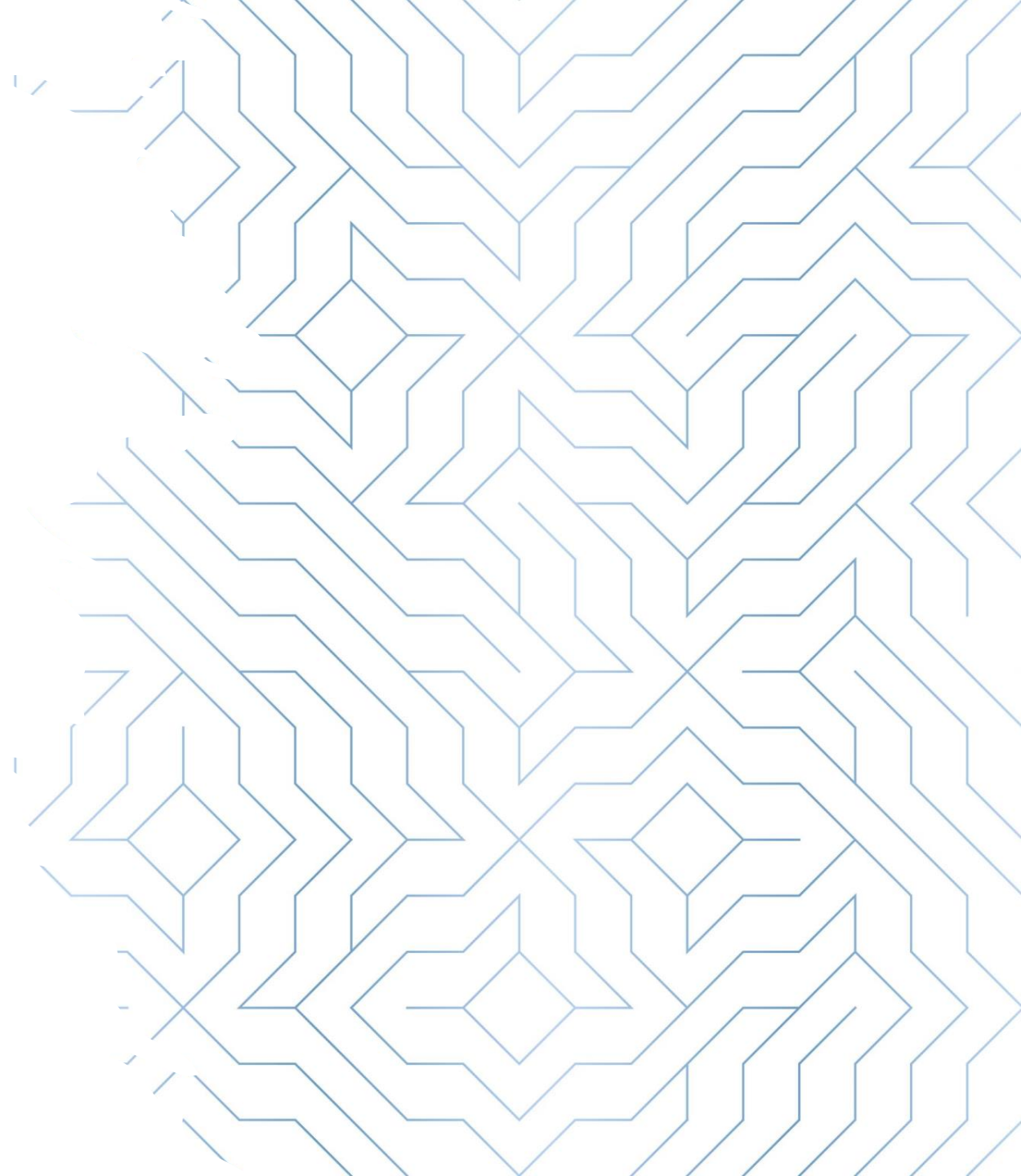
1. The ACSR presented a renewed focus of benchmarking Singapore against other “cultural capitals” again.
 - I. Cities like London, New York, Chicago, LA, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul, Dubai and others were presented as case studies.
2. However, the ACSR reiterated its focus on the next phase of cultural development being towards “our people and society”.
3. Recommendations include:
 - I. encourage development and establishment of private museums.
 - II. Encourage support of art activities and organisations as a part of corporate social responsibility.
 - III. Establish a grant matching scheme.



A Changing Definition of
Cultural Development
Through the Years?

The council believes that efforts to develop culture and the arts in Singapore should be pursued on a tripartite basis by Government, corporate, and civic organisations and the public at large.

ACCA, Cover Letter



It is useful to look at comparative data across cities to obtain a clearer picture of where Singapore stands in terms of **cultural development**. While we are in the top league of cities in terms of economic indicators, we fare less well on the cultural indicators, in terms of talent pool, facilities, activities, audience figures and level of state funding for the arts. We should aim to reach a level of development that would be comparable to cities like Hong Kong, Glasgow and Melbourne in five to ten years. The longer term objective would be to join London and New York in the top rung of cultural cities

RCP I, p. 12



We will seek to integrate arts and cultural development more deeply and pervasively into the economic landscape of Singapore, and to fully harness its multi-faceted influence on our national competitiveness.

RCP II, p. 14



Singapore has been transformed from a “barren wasteland” into an exciting and culturally lively destination. It is recognised as one of the most liveable cities in international rankings, thanks in part to its newly blossoming cultural landscape. Two decades of **arts and cultural development** have produced institutions, exhibitions and performances which feature prominently in international media, with regular coverage in publications such as the International Herald Tribune and Time.

RCP III, p. 8

The Government has been largely responsible for initiating Singapore's cultural development and lifting our cultural scene to its current level of vibrancy. However, the Government cannot sustain cultural development by itself.

ACSR, p. 85



Closing thoughts:

“the creation of a sense of national identity”?



Thank you.