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of Pandemic in Malaysia



How are the arts adapting to the #NewNormal"? Well over 11 months into the global pandemic, this series presents experiences and stories of #resilience, #adaptation, and success from the arts sector to the Covid-19 pandemic, with particular focus on arts & disabilities, artists residencies and arts funding.

In this article, Nicole Chang Shu Fun depicts the public funding for arts in Malaysia during the current pandemic. The article focuses on the funding initiatives tailored for the arts and cultural sectors by the government's cultural agency, namely CENDANA (Cultural Economy Development Agency). The article describes CENDANA's team endeavour in supporting the arts and cultural practitioners and the collectives towards building a resilient art and cultural ecosystem in Malaysia.

Funding the arts is vital towards sustaining a vibrant and accessible art scene in a country. It becomes even more critical in times of pandemic. The lockdown and physical distancing measures implemented in Malaysia have threatened the sustainability of its arts sector. Art activities and initiatives are cancelled, postponed, or scaled-down to limit physical contacts towards curbing the spread of COVID-19 among communities. Art practitioners, the collectives and art organisations are challenged to continue to create, showcase, market and promote arts. As the government's cultural agency, [CENDANA](#) (Cultural Economy Development Agency) launched a recovery package to support Malaysian artists and cultural practitioners since April 2020. In July, CENDANA received an additional allocation of RM10million from the government under the *PENJANA Plan for the Creative Industries*. Such allocation further supported CENDANA's budget for funding initiatives, focusing on performing arts, visual arts, independent music and craft.

CENDANA's Funding Initiatives for the Arts and Cultural Sectors

Having PENJANA's allocation, CENDANA launched 5 new recovery initiatives in July and August 2020. That expands its list of available funding programmes to support Malaysian arts and cultural practitioners to survive the pandemic.

No	Funding Programmes	Launched
1	Visual Arts Showcase	April 2020
2	Visual Arts Inspire	
3	Create Now	
4	Independent Music	May 2020
5	Performing Arts Presentation	July 2020
6	Art in The City Public Art Commissioning	
7	Arts Organisation Resilience	
8	Arts Venue Recovery	
9	CENDANA Crafts Industry Choice	August 2020

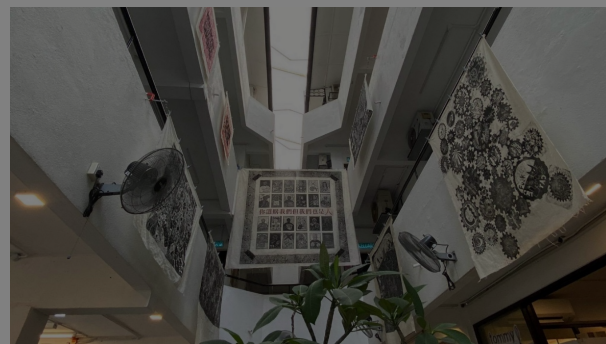
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The *Performing Arts Presentation Funding Programme* offers up to RM30,000 per project to support and facilitate the creation, development and promotion of Malaysian-made shows.



A performance funded by Performing Arts Presentation Funding Programme (Photo courtesy of CENDANA)

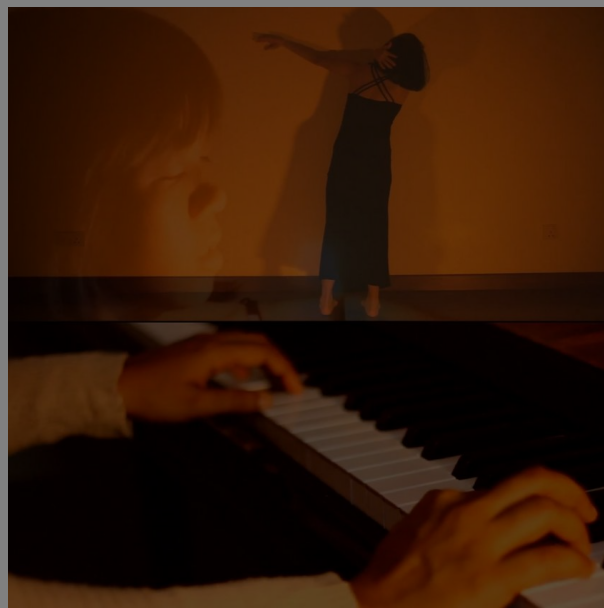
For visual artists, **Visual Arts Showcase Funding Programme** funds up to RM30,000 per project. It supports showcases of contemporary visual expression at independent, alternative or experimental art venues. With an attempt to support experienced visual artists to further enhance their creative capacity, **Visual Arts Inspire Funding Programme** grants applicant up to RM15,000 for a research excursion within Malaysia or Southeast Asia. Additionally, the programme funds the applicant up to RM30,000 for a follow-up exhibition after the excursion.



A CENDANA funded visual arts showcase (Photo courtesy of Backroom KL & CENDANA)

The **Independent Music Funding Programme** funds projects of creation and adaptation of Malaysian independent music content up to RM30,000 each. For the craft industry, **CENDANA Crafts Industry Choice** recognises Malaysian skilled artisans, crafters, especially the producers of traditional arts and crafts by incentivising up to RM30,000 per individual/collective. It attempts to preserve Malaysian traditional and endangered skilled trades. As an initiative to reconnect communities with cities through art, **Art in The City Public Art Commissioning Programme** commissions Malaysian artists up to RM100,000 per project, to create public artworks or curate community art-based programmes for public art engagement in public spaces within Malaysian cities.

Towards reaching the wider audiences in the new normal, CENDANA launched **Create Now Funding Programme** to support and encourage practitioners in performing arts, visual arts, independent music and craft towards digital adoption. It offers grants up to RM 1,500 per individual and RM 3,500 per collective/arts organisation to support artistic development and presentation of ideas via digital platforms.



A virtual collaborative piano-cum-dance performance funded by Create Now Funding Programme (Photo courtesy of CENDANA)

Besides funding the practitioners in the presentation and development of artistic contents, CENDANA offers funds to facilitate recovery of arts organisations and arts venues. The ***Arts Organisation Resilience Funding Programme*** funds up to RM150,000 per organisation for 12 months towards supporting the arts organisation's resilience and sustainability. Next, by offering RM35,000 grant per venue for six months, the ***Arts Venue Recovery Funding Programme*** attempts to support art venues and art organisers towards sustaining their art events/ programmes in the new normal.

Among all, CENDANA Crafts Industry Choices received the most applications while the programmes for visual arts sector received the least applications. Izan Satrina Mohd Sallehuddin, the founding CEO of CENDANA explains,

"Comparing with others, visual arts sector is considered more established. In opposite, traditional artisans and crafters, especially those living in rural areas are in dire need of support to sustain their living."

CENDANA Team Strives to Ensure Sustainable Art & Cultural Ecosystem in the New Normal

"In total, we have received about 1500 applications. With support from PENJANA's allocation, we managed to approve 632 (42%) applications, which is still below our target. Our target is 70%. We do our best to ensure the sustainability of the ecosystem. Adapting to the new normal, we hope to see art and culture remain relevant among our communities." Izan explains.

Despite having limited manpower, the CENDANA team strives to perform its responsibility as a national funding agency for the arts and culture. The team conducted online forums to promote the available programmes and provide consultation for applications. Once a project is funded, the team monitors the project milestones through progress reports. Upon completion of the project, the team attempts to document, showcase and promote the project through CENDANA's platforms. CENDANA looks forward to the Year 2021's allocation from the government.

"We hope to extend the outreach of our funding to wider scopes and larger groups of society. We attempt to support more traditional art and cultural practitioners towards preserving and sustaining our traditional arts and cultural heritage," Izan declared her new year resolution.

While the country's economic sectors are under pandemic pressure, public funding for the arts becomes critically important towards supporting the sustainability of this vulnerable sector.


Nicole Chang completed her PhD research about the contribution of arts in local economic development. She looks into the role of visual arts in the public domain towards place-making a creative city. She investigates the role of stakeholders' partnership in driving art ecosystem towards making an art city / creative city as an urban development strategy. Currently, Nicole is a freelance consultant, actively involved in project-based writing and research about local

is a freelance consultant, actively involved in project based writing and research about local place-based initiatives in creative place-making for urban revitalisation and place branding. She writes and research for both the private commissioned projects as well as government funded projects.

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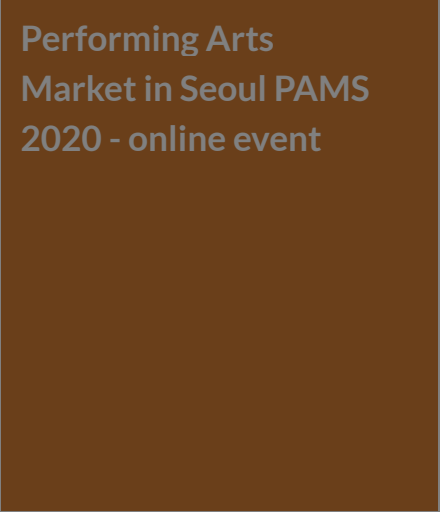
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