
State of the arts: How some artists and galleries have banded together in trying times | The Peak Singapore - Your Guide to The Finer Things in Life - Reader Mode

The Covid-19 pandemic hasn't just closed borders around the world: everything from airports to neighbourhood restaurants have been shuttered in various lockdowns around the world. This includes galleries, exhibitions and art fairs – both Art Basel Hong Kong and the flagship Swiss fair have been cancelled due to the coronavirus. Smaller galleries have had to stay closed for months, with many making the switch to virtual exhibitions instead. Some artists and galleries, however, are still trying to keep the fire going.

These can be as simple as a shared vision for the future, or collaborations meant to spur the heart and bolster the spirit. Some have the aim of generating some much needed revenue – the art community does, after all, still need to make ends meet even during a crisis.

Locally, that includes the Sustain the Arts fund by the National Arts Council (NAC), which plans to raise \$10 million by 2022. The fund channels donations from corporations and individual donors to support smaller art organisations, while potentially nurture a culture of giving to the arts. At the same time, the NAC has provided a one-off grant to local artists and arts groups to get their skills upgraded during the Covid-19 outbreak, especially since most performances have been cancelled or postponed.

Meanwhile, these are some of the initiatives and oeuvres that continue to inspire even amid the crisis.

Beyond Crisis by Saype

French artist Guillaume Legros – better known as [Saype](#) – is a veritable pioneer in the land art movement and was named by Forbes as one of the thirty most influential personalities under the age of thirty in the field of arts and culture. For one, he's invented a completely biodegradable paint – which allows him to paint massive frescoes on the ground with a self-developed technique, completely impact-free. That is, ecology-wise: he's since gained international renown for his huge paintings, with his latest project before Beyond Crisis, titled Beyond Walls, reaching around 500 million pairs of eyes.

With an ultimate aim of linking more than thirty countries in the greatest human chain in history, his progress ground to a halt at Country Number Six when the Covid-19 outbreak struck.



Breathtaking natural beauty meets equally breathtaking artwork.

Now, he's painted a little something closer to home in Leysin, Switzerland. Titled *Beyond Crisis* and over 3000 m² in area, Saype's depiction of a young girl's hope for unity, as well as optimistic gaze toward the horizon, speaks for itself. "The work illustrates the universal resilience of humans to fight the virus and draw a more harmonious world," he says on a statement on his website. Though the piece is meant to be a juxtaposition between childlike innocence and encouragement for the world, it tells, we think, a story felt throughout the world about facing the future – bravely, and as one.

Photography for Saype (including featured image) by Valentin Flaurand.

49-people Zoom collaboration by El Seed

[El Seed](#) is a French-Tunisian artist who primarily uses Arabic calligraphy to paint broad strokes of humanity's commonalities and push for unity and peace. That being said, he didn't grow up speaking or writing Arabic, only speaking a Tunisian dialect of it at home: now that he's reconnected to his roots, his works interestingly remain unsigned as he believes in the democratization of art. Recently, he's united 49 different people from all over the world as a form of collaborative artwork – and what better way than through Zoom, the video call application that's become the new normal amid Covid-19?



El Seed took the typical Zoom screenshot and dialed it up to eleven.

Coordinating 49 entrants into a Zoom meeting is challenging enough – ask anyone working from home – but El Seed went a step further by splitting apart a print into 49 parts and assigning them to each of the entrants. Thereafter, he had to act as a “conductor”, arranging them in order to reassemble the original print. Logistics aside, what struck El Seed was the implicit unity of the group. “The best part of it was not the artwork. It was the ambiance, the energy, and the love everyone shared during the call,” says El Seed.

The original print depicts a quote from French novelist Andre Malraux: “Art, is the shortest path from one human being to another human being.” Fittingly, he will sell 49 editions of the original artwork on his website, donating half of the proceeds to a hospital in Tunisia and France.

Sydney-based Sarah Belkner’s haunting performance in an empty gallery.

Together in art

It’s not rare to see artists collaborating – just look at most of the exhibitions or fairs of the past decade – but it is a tad unusual for artists from such a wide variety of mediums to work together. The [Together in Art](#) digital space on the Art Gallery of New South Wales’ website is one such example. More than just a way for artists to keep themselves busy, expect everything from simple home art projects, powerful performances or online exhibitions. Whether you’re more partial to a melancholy violin solo, or art that depicts the storied history of New South Wales, there’s a little something for everyone: works that interest, intrigue or simply inspire.

Seeing as how parts of Australia – including New South Wales – have already begun easing restrictions on travel, the microsite serves

as a timely reminder for how a community has banded together during a crisis. Their oeuvres are immortalised forever in the archives, and would undoubtedly still be as relevant in the future as they are today.