

# Program Overview:

## Curated Conferences

Meeting Point 2024

### 1. What is a Curated Conference? How does this program work?

To “confer” means to consult together, to deliberate and exchange opinions. MCH is interested to honor to the concept behind *conferencing*, and create an opportunity for two small groups to come together, to consult each other on a certain topic, to exchange ideas and finally to transmit their exchanges to a wider audience.

Each conference will involve 4-6 participants, whose ‘act of consulting together’ will take place over a 6-month period, followed by 3 months to prepare and share the outcomes from your consultations with a public audience. The groups will include participants from different Asian countries, and with different personal and professional backgrounds – but with a shared interest in the topic that they will confer on.

Each group’s conference will be guided and supported by a curator, who has been invited to the role by MCH. The curator will help the group to shape their discussions, and then to prepare to share their findings from their conversations at 2024 Meeting Point on Art & Social Action in Asia. The sharing might be a panel presentation, a roundtable, a workshop or an artistic creation. That will be up to the group.

The group will do one sharing virtually, and one sharing in-person in Hanoi. The content for both sharings can be the same, but the format can be adapted.

To recap, the program consists of:

- 2 groups of 4-6 members, guided by a Curator
- Each group ‘conferences’ about one theme
- The conferencing takes place online, with roughly six sessions between June and December 2023
- In March, the groups will share the reflections and directions for their conferences to a wider audience at the MCH Meeting Point on Art & Social Action in Asia
  - Groups will share once to a virtual audience, and once to an in-person audience
  - Groups are expected to attend the in-person program of Meeting Point in Hanoi
  - Preparation for these sharing sessions will be done virtually by the groups during January & February 2024

### 2. What is Meeting Point?

Every 18-months, MCH arranges a *Meeting Point* for people concerned with arts and social action in Asia.

The theme for the next meeting point is Perspectives from the Grassroots. There will be a virtual program, a series of local gatherings, and a main in-person program which will take place in Hanoi between March 21st and March 23rd, 2024.

More information about *Meeting Point* will be released in the next few weeks.

Please [follow MCH on social media](#) or check [our website](#) for updates. In addition to the curated conferences, there will be other ways to get involved, and people will also be welcome to come to the meeting point even if they aren't already participating in a related program.

### 3. Who are the curators?

As mentioned above, each group is guided and supported by a Curator. The Curators for the 2024 conferences are:

#### **Phloeun Prim (Cambodia)**

*Life Cycles of Grassroots Cultural Organizations in Asia*



Phloeun is the Executive Director of Living Arts International. He started his career as a co-founder of a vocational training program called 'Artisans d'Angkor', teaching young artisans in rural areas to develop skills in traditional handicrafts, and creating a marketplace for their work. In 2010, he became Director of Cambodian Living Arts. In the last decade he has led the transformation of [Cambodian Living Arts](#) (CLA) into Living Arts International, initiating policy-driven, collaborative and transnational cultural actions, inspired by the resilience of arts communities in post-conflict contexts. MCH and CLA are both initiatives of Living Arts International.

#### **Kathy Rowland (Malaysia/ Singapore)**

*Hitting Pause: Examining Purpose & Practice*



Kathy Rowland is the co-founder of ArtsEquator, a charity dedicated to supporting and promoting arts criticism with a regional perspective in Southeast Asia.

Kathy has worked in the arts for over 25 years, running arts and culture programs and arts media platforms, with a special interest in artistic freedom of expression.

#### 4. What are the topics for the conferences?

Each curator has come up with a starting prompt for their group's conference. Please review the information below to see the themes and questions they are curious to discuss.

### **Life Cycles of Grassroots Cultural Organizations in Asia**

*Curated by Phloeun Prim*

Grassroots organizations play a vital role in the ecosystem of the arts in Asia. But where do they come from? And what is needed to help them not just survive but thrive? In this conference, we will explore the life cycles of grassroots arts organizations in the region, and look at what it takes to sustain them and the people behind them.

We will explore the characteristics, the challenges and the needs of organizations as they adapt at different stages. Often organizations begin as a start-up project, driven by passion and aspiration, and fundamentally shaped by the character of the person, or the few individuals, behind the initiative. At some point they transition to becoming something collective, and sharing ownership; to formalising and maybe even institutionalising the work. A later stage will be transitioning from short-term focus on funding and survival, to long-term vision and strategy. Not every organization makes it through all these phases. So if yours hasn't or is just beginning, you can still contribute to the discussion!

Through our conference we want to reveal experiences from the grassroots in the arts sector in Asia. From the conversations and case studies from the participants' experience, we will uncover common challenges and needs, and shared directions for the future.

Discussion questions will include:

- How does it feel to bear responsibility for a growing organization?
- What are the different decisions you have to face and how do you decide how to navigate them?
- How do you build an organisation beyond its founder?
- What are the influences in the ecosystem that shape, and constrain, how arts organizations develop?
- How do you keep your organization relevant?
- Differentiating your personal purpose and the mission of your organization

## **Hitting Pause: Examining Purpose and Practice**

*Curated by Kathy Rowland*

The desire to effect social change through art motivates many practitioners across Southeast Asia. Arts groups and individuals are creating –works, which directly or indirectly, address gaps in their communities. --

More often than not, the problems they want to alleviate demand urgent attention. At the same time, the Southeast Asian arts sector itself suffers from limited resources. There never seems to be enough funds, time, skills and opportunities to fully implement ideas, no matter how innovative they may be.

In such an environment, activities are often designed to solve immediate needs. Practitioners get caught in a cycle of servicing their stakeholders, moving from one programme cycle to the next. Burn-out follows.

There is little time leftover to investigate the root causes of the problems facing their communities. Upon scrutiny, some activities, no matter how impactful, are palliative rather than restorative.

Hitting Pause: Examining Purpose and Practice will be a safe space for arts groups and individuals to interrogate their own organisations, programs, activities, and ideas, as well as those of their fellow participants. It is an exploration about individual practices through a process of sharing, listing and co-learning.

Yet, its larger aim is to try to identify the key questions that everyone in the sector needs to stop and ask themselves before getting caught in the next cycle of service.

Discussion questions will include:

- How have the problems we identified at the start of our journey changed?
- Are we focusing on the right things? Or is it time to make some changes to our practice?
- Do the resources we pour into our projects match the impact achieved?
- What is our most valuable skill set? Is it the same skill set we use the most?
- Is being active the same as being effective?
- What are the structures and systems that constrain our progress?

## 5. Target participants

To be eligible to participate in a curated conference you must:

- Be interested in the topic and willing to engage in exchanging ideas with people from different professional and cultural backgrounds to you
- Be active in the arts and cultural field
  - This could be as an artist, an administrator, researcher or any other kind of practitioner
  - If you do not work directly in the arts and cultural field, that's fine but you need to show an active, ongoing connection through your work (professional or otherwise) with the arts
- Be available to make time for roughly 6 sessions with your group between June and December 2023
- Be available to work virtually with your group during January and February 2024 to prepare what you would like to share at the Meeting Point
- Be available to join the Meeting Point in Hanoi between March 21st-23rd 2024 (all costs covered by MCH)
  - Arrival 20th March
  - Final preparation and group work 21st March
  - Meeting Point program 22nd<sup>l</sup> and 23rd May
  - Departure 24th May
- Be able to speak and understand enough English that you can have a meaningful conversation with a peer about the issues raised up in the prompts
  - Your English does not need to be perfect, and it definitely doesn't need to be academic or technical, but you do need to be willing and able to express yourself and share with others in your group
- Be willing to use online platforms for discussion (if you need technical or logistical support for this, or training, then MCH can do our best to help)
- Be a citizen of an Asian country

## 6. Selection criteria

The criteria that the Curators and MCH will use in selecting the conference Fellows will include:

- Adherence to the eligibility criteria
- Relevance of the topic to the applicant's experience and expertise
- Evidence of interest and enthusiasm to take part
- Extent of experience that the applicant can bring to the conversation and/ or the uniqueness of the perspective that the applicant can bring to the conversation
- Having a diverse range of experiences and perspectives among the group (considering factors such as countries, artistic disciplines, professional practice, years of experience)
- Extent to which we think participating in the conversation can benefit the applicant in addressing the challenges and opportunities they are facing

## 7. Why is there a stipend for this program?

MCH is offering a stipend of \$300 USD per participant as compensation for the time they will invest in the program, and the contributions they will make to the group discussions. The aim of the program is that all participants will benefit from the new networks they build, the personal and professional development they will gain through the curated exchanges, and the experience of participating in Meeting Point in Hanoi.

Please note: For training programs, where the focus of the program is on providing input and resources to address a specific need of the participants, MCH does not offer any stipend.

### 8. How to apply?

To apply please complete [the application form](#) and send it by email to [jennifer@mekongculturalhub.org](mailto:jennifer@mekongculturalhub.org) by April 26th, 2023.

Please make your application related to one specific conference, and only send one application. There is space on the form where you can note if you are also interested in the other conferences.

If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer using the email address above.

### 9. Recap of key dates

Date	Time	Activity
April 12th	5pm ICT - 6pm ICT	Virtual Q&A session for anyone who has questions about the program and the application
April 26th	23:59 ICT	Deadline for applications
May 17 <sup>th</sup> & 18 <sup>th</sup>		Informal interviews with shortlisted candidates
May 22nd		Selected participants notified
June 9th	4.30pm - 6pm ICT	Online orientation for all participants
June - Dec	To be agreed with Curator	Monthly small-group sessions
Jan-Feb	To be agreed with Curator	Virtual preparation for Meeting Point
March 15-16	TBD	Online sharing session at Meeting Point (90 mins per group)
March 21st-23rd (including travel 20th - 24th)		Participation at Meeting Point in Hanoi, including in-person sharing session by each group