

# Artful Parenting

## October's Edition

### Exploring Potential: Designing the Future with Youths



Nur Hidayah is a design-educator engaged in furthering design thinking and education in Singapore and Southeast Asia. Prior to joining LASALLE, Nur Hidayah worked in a full portfolio of design communication systems ranging from copywriting, design and art direction projects across major industry segments. This coupled with extensive teaching experience of more than 18 years, Nur Hidayah has been instrumental to the transformation of Faculty of Design into a leading faculty for Southeast Asia.

A deep believer of the inter-connectedness of design aesthetics, education and industry, Nur Hidayah has initiated several collaborative partnerships with various design institutions. She presented a research paper at the Ubuntu International Design Symposium 2011 in Seoul, which covered The Role of Design Education. With faculty staff members, she has worked on developing design capability programmes with communities in Asia and investigating issues on social enterprise for a more inclusive design culture. She has led the research and study of design cultures in contemporary Asian cities between Singapore, Seoul, Shanghai and undertaken the Global Design Initiative involving five international universities to look at design as a research tool.

Over the years, her excellent interpersonal and management skills have enabled her to inspire many students. Her vision and foresight have helped nurture these students into leaders that have contributed to the Singapore creative landscape. Under her leadership, the design programmes have achieved great success at regional and international design competitions and showcases, including D&AD Student Awards, The Crowbar Awards, Red Dot Awards and Graduate Fashion Week in London.

Today, Nur continues to serve as an expert on various boards in Singapore including the National Gallery Singapore (current), National Parks Board (current), Singapore Note and Coin Advisory Committee (Monetary Authority of Singapore)(current) and member of the Design Education Advisory Committee, DesignSingapore Council, Singapore(current).

How did you begin working with youths and what was the draw for you?

I started my teaching career at a young age. I was 24 years old and I realised that I enjoyed sharing and exchanging ideas with students. I worked on different projects in collaboration with different groups and felt that I worked well with young people and share the same aspirations, passion, enthusiasm and also understand their fears and frustrations. Some of those students I taught in the past are now some of my good friends and to see them grow and become successful has been a great motivation for me over the years.

What have you learnt from your creative practice that also applies in your teaching journey?

There are no short cuts in life and I believe that hard work pays off. Given the proliferation of social media, it may seem like it is easy to be famous and successful. I have seen examples of the best students shining and reaping fruits of their labour with time, effort and believing in themselves. It is always heartwarming to see how they overcome different challenges and hurdles and build on their personal experiences by making mistakes and learning from them.

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With the proliferation of social media and the democratisation of creating societal narratives, more youths have begun speaking up on a wide range of social issues, such as climate change, local and overseas politics, human rights violation and the Me Too movement.

As your work speaks a lot to shaping the future through inclusive design, has these threads of discourse impacted the way you teach, interact and guide your students? How has it been impacted?

Artists and designers have become agents of change and it is important to position the role of art and design in sustaining cultural and social practices today. In the Faculty of Design at LASALLE College of the Arts, we bring important themes and topics to be part of these conversations by embedding them in our curriculum. The process has been exciting and interesting. When our students work on such issues, they can contextualise these to their understanding and their personal beliefs.

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Back in June, there was a big discussion sparked by a Straits Times article about artists selected as the most non-essential job within the context of a pandemic. How did you and your students react to this article and were there any further conversations sparked?

During that period, we were in a challenging time battling the pandemic and its effect on society. As expected, the article drew very interesting debates and discussions, some of which were fuelled by emotions. It is difficult not to be affected and I think it probably drew enough attention to the role of artists and designers during a difficult economic situation.

I cannot stress enough about how important the role of artists and designers are now more than ever. We continue to contribute to the cultural and social roles which are important vehicles to strengthen relationships between different sectors and the community at large. These will become increasingly complex challenges. As a society we have to be open, inclusive and allow for diverse views, only then we can overcome things together and drive meaningful change.

The Gallery's experimental youth programme, named Kolektif, has officially inducted its pilot batch of members in June 2020 and they are currently working on their projects for the 2021 edition of Light to Night. What advice would you have for anyone who wants to work with youth? What advice do you have for parents who have children interested in pursuing the arts?

For me, dreams and ambition become real with creative discovery, personal awareness and experience. It is important to be allowed space and time to explore different activities. It is also great to experiment and try new things and experiences regardless of your age.

For parents who have children interested in the arts, it is important to have conversations with your children on their interests and passion. It may not always be what you want to hear but it is important to still listen. I have a 17-year-old son myself and from my personal experience, the more I become open to listen and talk, the more my son feels confident with his views, thoughts and ambitions. I realised I do not always know everything about his world but I want to be a part of it. We have to allow for safe spaces to converse more given the current climate and immersing in the arts is a great opportunity to learn about yourself and learn about others.