

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Very Special Arts Singapore is rebranded to ART:DIS Singapore**

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**13 December 2021**

Charity Very Special Arts Singapore (“VSA(S)”) today announced their rebrand to ART:DIS Singapore (“ART:DIS”), reflecting their strong commitment to take leadership in the disability and arts sector, and building upon their 28-year tradition of empowering persons with disabilities (PWDs) through the arts.

Launching the new brand this morning, Ambassador-at-large and the charity’s founder and patron Professor Tommy Koh said the change underscores our commitment to expand our activities and outreach to the disabled community in Singapore. The new brand will continue to be a network member with the US entity.

“After 28 years of being an affiliate of an American organisation, it is time for us to become independent. With ART:DIS Singapore, we can grow our own identity. We will continue to work tirelessly for the disabled community in Singapore. We also plan to reach out to other similar organisations in ASEAN,” said Professor Koh.

Joining Professor Koh on stage at the The Rice Company’s Auditorium to launch ART:DIS Singapore were Minister for National Development Mr Desmond Lee, who is also the Minister-in-charge of Social Services Integration, ART:DIS’ Chairman Mr Andrew Liew, and ART:DIS’ Executive Director Ms Maureen Goh.

In his speech as the Guest-of-Honour, Minister Lee noted that efforts by ART:DIS Singapore and other partners in the community are crucial in nurturing and building a more caring and inclusive Singapore, which is as envisioned in Enabling Masterplans. Since the first Enabling Masterplan in 2007, government, businesses and community have strived to enable persons with disabilities to pursue their aspirations, achieve their potential, and participate fully as integral and contributing members of society.

“There is still more to be done. The upcoming Enabling Masterplan 2030 will adopt a longer runway of eight years and set meaningful longer-term goals for a more caring and inclusive Singapore in 2030,” Minister Lee added.

VSA(S) was founded in 1993 by Professor Koh as a network member of VSA, the international organisation, to create and provide access and opportunities for people with disabilities through the arts. It has since grown to be one of the leading charities in the arts and disability sector, assisting more than 420 beneficiaries through 240 classes and 25 exhibitions, performances and projects annually.

On the new brand, ART:DIS’ Executive Director Ms Maureen Goh noted: “We have journeyed far with our stakeholders and are grateful for all the support we have received. As VSA(S), we have grown and are ready to step into a leadership position. Our new name thus represents our renewed vision, mission and values, and we are excited to fill up these big new shoes as ART:DIS Singapore.”

ART:DIS Singapore's vision, mission and values are as follow:

- Vision – “where persons with disabilities are empowered through the arts.”
- Mission – “to advocate and create opportunities that empower persons with disabilities through the arts.”
- Values – “We are passionate, open, innovative and part of a community.”

Three new initiatives, reflecting the ethos of ART:DIS Singapore, will be launched shortly:

- The launch of a new pathway, the Emerging Artists programme, which empowers beneficiaries to take charge of their own learning, pursue a career in the arts and stand on their own two feet as independent creatives. By offering dedicated mentorships under the tutelage of veteran artists/educators, shadowing opportunities to receive hands-on learning, and masterclasses to build one's capacity (i.e. project management, financial literacy, marketing and design, artistic conceptualisation, curation etc), students gain critical experience, skills and knowledge to source and secure their own opportunities. At the end of the programme, students in the visual arts track will have the opportunity to organise their own solo exhibition, while those in the performing arts track will be afforded platforms to produce their own film, performance, dance or music piece.
- The second is the opening of ART:DIS' third art space at Bukit Merah. This new centre includes spaces such as a blackbox to germinate and test artistic ideas, a recording studio for production of digital creative assets, and community areas to enable mainstream and disabled groups to exchange knowledge and best practices.
- The third is the introduction of new genre of classes for Foundation level students for a digitalized and inclusive future. These include Digital Art and Animation, Angklung, Contemporary Malay Dance, Puppetry, Hip Hop Dance and Electronic Drums.

ART:DIS' Executive Director Ms Maureen Goh added that the new brand will aim to fill gaps in the arts and disability ecosystem. “Through feedback from our stakeholders, we understand that more can be and must be done. As ART:DIS Singapore, we will therefore increase our efforts in building the capabilities of our beneficiaries, preparing them for a digitalised world, and bridging mainstream and disabled communities for greater collaboration.”

Stephanie Litvak, Manager, VSA Programmes at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts said “We are immensely proud of what VSA(S) has achieved in Singapore for the disability arts sector as a network member of the VSA organisation in the United States. We look forward to ART:DIS' continued growth as our ally in creating a world where people with disabilities can learn through, participate in, and engage with the arts.”

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## **About ART:DIS Singapore**

ART:DIS, formerly known as Very Special Arts (Singapore) (VSA)(S), is a leading charity dedicated to creating learning and livelihood opportunities for persons with disabilities in the arts.

Started in 1993, ART:DIS continues the hard work and sacrifices made by our stakeholders over the past 28 years to organise art programmes, workshops, projects, collaborations, exhibitions and performances for persons with disabilities.

ART:DIS represents the pathways that we create through the arts for persons with disabilities to express themselves, gain confidence and be part of a community that is rewarding.

Through the 3Es – Enable, Empower, Engage – ART:DIS aims to inspire our artists, volunteers, partners and donors to participate in a community that is dedicated to giving back and creating a more inclusive society.