
Media Release

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Good Design Research extends its support for local designers with funding boost and expanded scope

DesignSingapore Council's flagship initiative is also working with Challenge Statement Partners Grab, Tsao Foundation and Busy Bees Asia to encourage more designers to design for impact through applied research



8 December 2021 – To spur more Singapore-based design firms and designers to design for impact through research and experimentation, DesignSingapore Council has increased its amount of funding and support for recipients in the Good Design Research (GDR) initiative.

Recipients will be eligible for funding of up to S\$50,000 for their projects under the Good Design Research Grant component, compared to S\$35,000 when the initiative first launched. The scope covered under this funding has also been expanded to include non-business operational, rental and manpower needs such as employees' salaries.

Since its launch in March 2020 in the midst of a pandemic year, GDR has seen an increasing interest in design research to create innovative impactful solutions, receiving more than 120 submissions for its three Open Calls so far.

"The Good Design Research initiative has grown from strength to strength since we first launched it. Applied research is fundamental for designers who are seeking to find new approaches and innovative solutions to address the pressing real-world challenges we are facing today. It is a sign of maturity that more Singapore designers are embracing research and coming forward to take up the call to create a better world by design," says Mark Wee, Executive Director of DesignSingapore Council.

Eight projects were selected for the third Open Call, with a majority of them responding to urban issues through initiatives such as inclusive spatial design for persons with disabilities; revival of ageing malls as lively and resilient community spaces; the harnessing of biomimicry for building facades; immersive sonic explorations to build a sense of connection to a city; and the sustainable growth of ground-up community museums.

"We were attracted to Good Design Research because it promises a rare opportunity to marry design and research. Often, research grants tend to be academic and rather narrow in their objectives while design projects tend to be creativity heavy but don't allow the opportunity to indulge in research. GDR is perfect for biomimicry work where a fair bit of research is needed to create innovative designs," says Dr Anuj Jain, co-founder and CEO of bioSEA Pte Ltd.

This brings the total number of GDR projects to 25 currently. With the increase in funding and support, the initiative hopes to see more designers apply for the Good Design Research Grant which will be accepting submissions until 3 January 2022.

In addition to funding and mentorship, GDR applicants have the opportunity to take on real-world design for impact projects by three new Challenge Statement Partners: digital services giant Grab, non-profit organisation Tsao Foundation and early childhood education provider Busy Bees Asia.

These organisations are looking to work with the design community to create solutions for sustainable packaging in food deliveries; age-friendly environments for the elderly in Whampoa; and educational infrastructure and playscapes that integrate and promote sustainability respectively.

“We hope to minimise the impact of packaging on the environment by working with the design industry to tap on design system thinking and its expertise. We look forward to seeing how we can help catalyse transformation for packaging used in food deliveries,” says Pek Hai Lin, Senior Specialist for Environmental Sustainability, Grab.

Designers keen to get a better understanding of design research may visit the on-going GDR Showcase at the National Design Centre where there is a monthly line-up of projects from GDR’s first two Open Calls.

Please see Annex A below for projects from GDR Open Call 3.

More information about the GDR Showcase can be found [here](#).

ANNEX A: Good Design Research Projects from Open Call 3

1. We can design a biomimetic urban environment to reconnect with nature



Dr Anuj Jain of bioSEA Pte Ltd

Project: *The Biomimicry Design Toolkit* by bioSEA Pte Ltd

Research: The modern built environment is heavily dependent on energy-consuming and carbon-emitting technologies to achieve comfortable indoor conditions and maximise liveability. Natural organisms such as termites, on the other hand, are able to thrive in their living environment through passive means while producing no waste. Focusing on building façades as a pilot, bioSEA's design toolkit aims to present nature's best ideas to achieve thermal comfort in the tropics through the approach of biomimicry.

Impact Area: Environment

2. We can design immersive sonic experiences to tell stories of our urban surroundings



Lim Shu Min (left) with GDR project partners Laura Miotto and Ramesh Krishnan

Project: *Sonic Walks – Discovering the City through Sound* by Lim Shu Min

Research: What are the possibilities of using audio experiences to facilitate our discovery of the city? How might location-aware technology be used to tell site-specific stories about Singapore? This project will explore both the technical and experiential aspects of developing an immersive sonic experience, supported by a study on the impact of sound and walking in relation to digital technologies, and how it can enhance the community's relationship to space and the city.

Impact Area: Communities and Culture

3. We can extend the lifecycle of horticultural waste through design



Shirin binte Rafie (right) with GDR project partner Liz Liu

Project: *The Upcycled Tree Project* by Shirin binte Rafie

Research: A significant amount of horticultural waste is generated from roadside tree maintenance and local production practices in Singapore. The Upcycled Tree Project looks into extracting colour pigments from such plant waste before it gets burnt for energy production. The project also hopes to promote the use of environmentally friendly botanical paint alternatives over petroleum-based acrylic paints, which negatively impact the ecosystem when disposed into the water system.

Impact Area: Environment

4. We can design away social isolation among seniors



Sim Hao Jie (far right) with GDR project partners Tan Hwee Xian, Glenda Yeo, Naomi Toh, Oh Peng Ho and Ethan Lim

Project: *Senior Active Force SG (SAFSG)* by Sim Hao Jie

Research: While most seniors want to stay active and be part of a community, they may lack motivation, confidence and know-how. This project looks into the barriers that our seniors face, and common difficulties organisations and communities encounter in engaging them. It seeks to establish a framework to facilitate seniors in adopting an active lifestyle within the community, where they are empowered to stay fit, make friends and impact society.

Impact Area: Communities and Culture

5. We can redesign malls to be lively, sustainable and resilient spaces



Calvin Chua of Spatial Anatomy Pte Ltd

Project: *Reconceiving the Future of Malls in Singapore* by Spatial Anatomy Pte Ltd

Research: There was already an urgent need for malls to evolve due to changing retail patterns and shifting demographics before the pandemic. With safety, social distancing behavior and sustainability being key issues today, how can malls foster a sense of holistic well-being among its visitors while upgrading its infrastructure with circularity in mind? Through typological, environmental and cultural analysis, this project examines how tired malls can be revived as community assets that showcase best practices for healthy and sustainable design.

Impact Area: People and Organisations

6. We can design inclusive spaces for persons with autism



Trecia Lim

Project: *Empathy Box* by Trecia Lim

Research: A lack in knowledge and understanding of the needs of a person with disabilities inhibits designers from creating a truly optimal, inclusive space. This project seeks to create an inclusive design toolkit set to enable users to adapt and personalise designs for persons with autism through an empathetic design journey. It aims to enhance the quality of spatial design for persons with disabilities, by deepening our capacity to design well for a more inclusive Singapore.

Impact Area: Communities and Culture

7. We can design innerwear for persons with limited mobility to provide more comfort and dignity



Elisa Lim of Will & Well LLP

Project: *Intuitive and accessible undergarments that improve personal care and hygiene by Will & Well LLP*

Research: Persons with disabilities face physical and intellectual challenges in donning and doffing undergarments, and may encounter discomfort during the dressing process, or from the garment itself. Through studying the complexity and experience of the dressing process, this project aims to create a complete suite of apparel solutions with an inclusive underwear collection. It hopes to empower the underserved by enabling them to dress more independently, thereby improving physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

Impact Area: Communities and Culture

8. We can design cultural spaces to be accessible, inclusive and sustainable



Kwek Li Yong of My Community

Project: *Design Thinking in Community Museums* by My Community

Research: Community museums have sprouted across Singapore in the past decade. However, there are teething issues concerning accessibility, sustainability, inclusivity and funding. My Community intends to review funding models, investigate the impact that current community museums are making, and work with partners to understand the effect of design thinking on such ground-up museums. It will further design a framework for these cultural spaces to promote social cohesion, and foster a sense of identity and connectedness within local communities.

Impact Area: People and Organisations

About Good Design Research

Launched in March 2020 in the middle of a pandemic, the Good Design Research (GDR) initiative underscores the importance of how design backed by deep research can make a true difference – building deep domain knowledge and solving the challenges faced by societies and cities. This initiative empowers designers and design enterprises in Singapore to find their unique value proposition in designing for impact through research and experimentation, supported by a wide network of knowledge partners.

About the DesignSingapore Council

DesignSingapore Council's (Dsg) vision is for Singapore to be an innovation-driven economy and a loveable city through design by 2025. As the national agency that promotes design, our mission is to develop the design sector, help Singapore use design for innovation and growth, and make life better in this UNESCO Creative City of Design. The Dsg is a subsidiary of the Singapore Economic Development Board. For more information, please visit www.designsingapore.org.

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