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## Case Study: Asia’s First & Only Sustainable Light Art Festival

By Ken Hickson



*Confession time: I have been very close to this event for the best part of two years. My company SASA was appointed as the sustainability consultant to i Light Marina Bay 2012 to work with URA and Pico. So the case study was written by me and I have also given presentations to event organisations SACEOS and ISES. A very full report was made on the event to URA.*

Sustainability doesn’t mean you have to “dumb-down” an event or make it less exciting. It is possible to demonstrate —as has been shown with i Light Marina Bay —that a major event designed for enjoyment and entertainment, can be managed in a sustainable fashion.

This case study tells the sustainable event story:

The second edition of the highly successful light art festival, first held in Singapore in 2010, i Light Marina Bay 2012 covered 24 days and nights —9 March to 1 April 2012. The festival featured 31 art installations located around the Marina Bay, from both local and international artists, attracting a total of 560,000 visitors.

“Asia’s first and only sustainable light art festival” was presented by Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) with Smart Light and managed by Pico. Sustain Ability Showcase Asia (SASA) was appointed the sustainability consultant for the event, responsible for a rigorous but pragmatic sustainability management process.

With all stakeholders’ commitment, the event was organised with the key objectives of promoting Marina Bay as a forward-thinking, culturally-vibrant, sustainable urban district, as well as to raise and promote awareness of new sustainable lighting technologies to professionals, building owners, tenants and the public.

Drawing on the accepted international standard for sustainable events BS8901 —soon to be ISO20121 —as the primary guide, a sustainability action plan was formulated, focusing on four guiding principles:

- Accessible and inclusive
- Minimisation of negative impact on the environment
- Leaving a positive legacy
- Encouraging sustainable behaviour

In practice, the sustainability action plan involved the four M’s:

- Meeting all relevant stakeholders to achieve maximum involvement and commitment;
- Measuring everything that could possibly be measured in accordance with the agreed objectives and principles;
- Metering, for the first time, the art installations, which were the obvious and visible public features of the festival; and
- Managing all elements of the process and festival with sustainability in mind throughout.

### **Highlight: Art Installations**

As the public and visual face of the festival, the art installations were designed to demonstrate sustainability and energy efficiency to the visitors. Each artist was provided a Recommended Approach for Creation of Art Installations that outlines the energy use, material composition and disposal method for the installation to enable effective management.

Also, for the first time, all 31 art installations were metered for their energy usage, which over the period of 24 nights amounted to 6568kWh —or 3.40 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>equivalent.

### **“Switch Off, Turn Up” Campaign**

A major achievement of the festival was having 47 properties surrounding Marina Bay and beyond join in the energy saving “Switch Off, Turn Up” campaign. This led to a total saving of 210,424kWh —equivalent to 109 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>—over the 24-day period. This was nearly three times the number of properties in 2010 (16 properties) and five times the energy saving (41,377kWh).

The amount saved was more than enough to offset the emissions attributed to the festival, which included the installations, freight, artist flights, and associated emissions from contractors, suppliers and partner events —a total of 80 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e.

The sustainability achievements can be attributed to the time and effort put in to securing the commitment of the various properties to adopt energy saving practices.

Meetings were held with the property managers to explain the festival and campaign objectives to secure their commitment. Walkthroughs of the properties were also done to point out the areas where energy savings can be made.

These were followed by data collection through a detailed template provided by SASA and follow ups were made to check and confirm the figures provided. Information sheets were provided to the properties to educate their tenants on the purpose of the campaign and to encourage participation.

Contacts with the properties were also made throughout the festival period to check on their energy saving exercises as well as to provide feedback. A final check was made at the end of the festival to confirm the energy savings of the properties.

In a post-event survey, 81.8% of the properties indicated that they are “very likely” to participate again, with 15.9% indicating “likely”. 77.3% of properties will also be maintaining some of the sustainability/energy efficiency practices introduced during the campaign, while 52.3% will be introducing additional energy saving measures.

In addition to the sustainability measures taken above, a number of other initiatives were also implemented. These included:

- Workshops and competitions;
- Education and communication;
- Introducing eco products and displays;
- Sponsorship by Power Seraya; and
- Recycling and managing waste.

With all the sustainability measures undertaken through the planning, implementation and management of the festival, i Light Marina Bay 2012 can justifiably be recognised as Asia’s first and only sustainable light art festival, at the same time setting a new benchmark for sustainable events in Singapore by:

- Making a positive contribution to the environment and the community, through energy saving measures and effective use of resources;
- Using the festival as a means to educate and inform all stakeholders and the general public; and
- Demonstrating that it is possible to manage a major event designed for enjoyment and entertainment in a sustainable fashion.

### **2012 Downtown Pinnacle Award**

A few months after the 2012 i Light Marina Bay was held, Cheryl Tay reported in Property Guru (also on Yahoo) and the Straits Times reported on 23 September 2012 that the event had won an international award.

Here's Cheryl Tay's report:

The URA has clinched the 2012 Downtown Pinnacle Award from the International Downtown Association (IDA), in recognition of i Light Marina Bay 2012, Asia's first sustainable light art festival.

Washington DC-based IDA, an international association that promotes vital and liveable urban centres, presented the award to the URA on Saturday, 22 September, during the 58th IDA Annual Conference in Minneapolis, USA.

i Light Marina Bay 2012 featured over 30 unique light art installations around the bay, as well as a host of interactive activities for three weeks. Over 500,000 local and international guests participated in the festival.

Commenting on the award, Ng Lang, Chief Executive Officer of URA noted, "The success of this event is due to the strong support shown by our programme and community partners, sponsors and stakeholders, and we look forward to working closely with them to present another exciting edition in 2014."

He added that the award highlights URA's efforts to make Marina Bay "a vibrant and energetic waterfront destination that the community can enjoy."

The URA won one of two Pinnacle Awards for the Events and Programming category, which recognises organisations for: focussing on programmes and events that improve the image and vitality of downtown with events that promote downtown and attract visitors and delivering projects that communicate the vision, mission, function, and achievements of the downtown or business district association.

"URA's project received this prestigious award for demonstrating excellence in downtown management," said David Downey, President and CEO of IDA.

"Each year the IDA Awards Jury honours the very best programmes and projects in each category to recognise great work and most importantly to set the standard for best practice in our industry. i Light Marina Bay is a wonderful example for all downtowns to emulate."

The IDA Downtown Achievement Awards comprises the Pinnacle and Merit Awards across seven categories for sustainable projects worldwide.