

PRESS RELEASE

BOTH SIDES, NOW 2019: CLOSING A CHAPTER & CELEBRATING LIVING WITH A PUBLIC ARTS INSTALLATION AND A CARNIVAL IN TELOK BLANGAH

The third iteration of BOTH SIDES, NOW, a community engagement project about end-of-life (EOL) issues, presented by Lien Foundation, Ang Chin Moh Foundation, Drama Box and ArtsWok Collaborative is coming to a close this year.

Our focus in 2019 is on the moment of NOW — how can learning to be fully present in the moment help us to nurture relationships and make plans for the future?

This year, we reached out to the residents of Block 7 Telok Blangah Crescent in our engagement efforts, a culmination of working in Telok Blangah for these 3 years, in collaboration with community partner, Montfort Care. Block 7 comprises 1- and 2-room purchase and rental flats. The community here, similar to other locations in Singapore has complex needs, including social isolation, particularly for seniors who live alone.

Says Artistic Director, Kok Heng Leun: “In trying to engage this community, we found that a conversation about dying well seems pointless if everyday existence is a struggle. Hence, we realised that in talking about a dignified end of life, we have to talk about how to live well now. We have to engage the residents so that they will find beauty, meaning and connection in each and every moment.”

This theme will be explored through a multi-disciplinary arts engagement programme in Telok Blangah from 29 June – 7 July 2019. The event includes a **Place-making Art Project** that resulted from collaboration between Block 7 residents and Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts lecturer, and spatial designer, Wendy Chua and her students.

There will also be **Public Arts Installation**, featuring creations developed by Block 7 residents along with artists Alecia Neo, Jasmine Ng, anGie Seah and Shirley Soh. *For more information on the Public Arts Installation, refer to Annex B.*

In addition, our Carnival from 3 to 7 July at the open field next to SAFRA Mount Faber will reach out to an **inter-generational audience** with specially-curated programmes to kickstart family conversations around EOL, including:

- **Our time together**, a series of activities that borrows from children’s unique perspectives, designed for expression, discovery and imaginings on living and dying. For the young and the young-at-heart!
- **A picnic under the stars**, a variety of participatory arts activities and conversations every night on living well and leaving well



- A **music theatre piece, “Songs for Tomorrow”**, featuring the stories of caregivers, patients and healthcare staff and performed by local singer-songwriter and performer, Inch Chua and other actors
- Previous *Both Sides, Now* performances and creations, including **artworks by Chong Pang residents** made in collaboration with artists, and **Forum Theatre, “EXIT”**

LESSONS LEARNED

“We set out to work in this longer timeframe (2017-2019) in Chong Pang and Telok Blangah because we wanted to develop deeper relationships with residents and partners that would help build EOL-friendly communities. The experience has enabled the team to better understand what this goal entails”, says Creative Producer Ngiam Su-Lin.

“The approaches and concerns are slightly different for different types of communities but ultimately people are willing to connect via the sharing of experiences, hopes and fears if provided with an engaging environment and safe space,” she believes. “Sometimes, the community is more present and ready. At other times, we have to first contribute towards facilitating community building, together with partners on the ground. All in all, there is a lot of potential and possibilities in communities playing a larger role in supporting each other in living well, and leaving well.”

In Telok Blangah, our partner is eldercare centre GoodLife!, which is part of voluntary welfare organisation Montfort Care. During the 2018 staging of participatory performance *Last Dance*, GoodLife! Director, Wang Yu Hsuan remembers being amazed by many residents’ willingness to share the EOL journeys they experienced with their loved ones. “Both the audience and the social workers at GoodLife! received different levels of ‘self healing’ through this process. Thanks to *Both Sides, Now* for uncovering the potential of this community and engaging residents over these three years through many ways.”

FUTURE PLANS

Both Sides, Now was made possible by the partnership of the Lien Foundation and Ang Chin Moh Foundation over the past seven years, and who are the original commissioning Foundations for the project.

Looking back on this shared journey, Lien Foundation CEO Lee Poh Wah reflects: “The use of the arts to engage the community on death started as a bold foray in Khoo Teck Puat Hospital in 2013. *Both Sides, Now* has since spread its wings to several neighborhoods in the heartlands, with a respected track record of sparking ‘die-logues’ over seven years. It has moved a marginalised topic into mainstream corridors of discussion and as a bridge to our unspoken thoughts of death and dying, *Both Sides, Now* offered the rare opportunity for the young and the old, individuals and families, to reflect and express their EOL attitudes and



wishes. The *Both Sides, Now* platform has helped us raise consciousness on EOL matters which increasingly needs to be addressed by today's greying society."

Says Ang Ziqian, Deputy Chairman of Ang Chin Moh Foundation: "Over the past seven years, we have supported this community engagement project that took the messages of dying, death and funerals out into the heartlands. This was uniquely done by active community participation in the installations, videos and performances.

The support from related bodies and governing authorities also illustrates the importance of getting the community to engage in meaningful conversations that help dispel the myths and taboos that surround dying and death. It has been fulfilling for our Foundation to be part of this meaningful effort, and it is my hope that these meaningful dialogues continue over family gatherings, to ease the pain of every family that will lose a loved one in the future."

Looking forward, the *Both Sides, Now* team hopes to continue our community-centric approach in other parts of Singapore. We have also developed a toolkit of arts approaches to having EOL-related conversations and accompanying training for health, social and community care workers and will continue to offer training to more staff.

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ANNEXES

Annex A - Programme details

Annex B - About Public Arts Installation

Annex C - Biographies



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Annex A

PROGRAMME DETAILS

BOTH SIDES, NOW

Living and dying are two sides of the same coin. We've spent the past two years of this community engagement project exploring one side — our fears and hopes about death, which are always linked to the way we approach life. So, in our last year in Telok Blangah, we will also dive into the other side — how to be present in the now, and understand the meaning of mortality.

29 June – 7 July 2019

Free Admission to all programmes!

1) Public Arts Installation

Experience how residents of Blk 7, together with artists, Alecia Neo, Jasmine Ng, anGie Seah, Shirley Soh and spatial designer, Wendy Chua enliven their void deck with their stories, creativity, conversations and desires. Step into the lives of this community through visual and sound installations, films, cooking and eating together.

29 June – 7 July 2019

12pm – 9pm

Void deck of Blk 7 Telok Blangah Crescent

❖ Guided Tours with Artists

30 June and 6, 7 July

12pm – 2pm, 5pm – 7pm

All sessions in English

❖ Puppetry Performance “The Wind Came Home”

29 June (English), 30 June (Chinese)

8pm – 9pm

A heart-warming puppetry performance told from the point of view of a stray cat, about an elderly couple struggling to make end-of-life choices.



2) Carnival

The *Both Sides, Now* Carnival brings individuals, friends, families and community together to enjoy these moments of living, while acknowledging our mortality which is interconnected with others. Through performances, installations, films, and participatory arts activities for all ages*, this Carnival is an enjoyable and meaningful way to connect with ourselves, and those we care about on living well, and leaving well. Bring your picnic baskets, and let's enjoy the moment together!

**featuring a special programme for children!*

3 – 7 July 2019

5pm – 10pm

Open field next to SAFRA Mount Faber

Free Snacks provided! Exclusive *Both Sides, Now* picnic mats for the first 100 audience each day!

Free shuttle bus service to the Carnival from Vivo City Bus Stop (14141), every half hour from 3 – 7 Jul, 4.30 – 8.30pm.

❖ **Participatory Arts Activities**

5pm – 10pm

Reflect on what it means to live well, and leave well with different participatory activities.

❖ **Picnic | Conversations**

5pm onwards

Bring a picnic basket and come enjoy, relax and reflect! A picnic mat will be provided for the first 100 audiences each day. Then join us towards the end of each evening for conversations around the table on living well, and leaving well.

❖ **Our Time Together**

5pm – 10pm

Activities for children and adults to express and discover one another's memories, emotions, views, and imagination concerning living and dying.

❖ **Whispers**

5pm – 10pm

An interactive and immersive space of memories and legacies. Featuring artworks from residents from Chong Pang and artists.

❖ **Music Theatre “Songs for Tomorrow”**

7pm – 7.45pm

Featuring the stories of healthcare workers, caregivers and



patients told through music and song.

Language: English, Chinese, Malay with surtitles

❖ **Forum Theatre “EXIT”**

8.15pm – 9.30pm

A popular interactive play that explores difficult situations and conversations surrounding care, making decisions and respecting the wishes of those we love.

Language: English, Chinese, Malay with surtitles



Annex B

ABOUT THE PUBLIC ARTS INSTALLATION – the workshop process

Four Singaporean artists worked with some of the residents of Blk 7 Telok Blangah Crescent to brighten up their void deck spaces and explore end-of-life related topics and its significance to them. Various forms of artworks such as films, posters, murals and installations are exhibited at the void deck.

Here are the voices of the artists and some of the resident art-makers:

“The issue of dignity came up a lot, this need to be shown respect, this sense of feeling invisible,” says Alecia Neo, who guided them in the creation of artworks. “They talk about the fear of losing their memories, and nostalgia for the past. A lot of them talk about relationships, about wanting to reconnect and restore different relationships in their lives.”

Shirley Soh, whose workshops involved residents cooking their favourite recipes for one another, found that seeking connection was a powerful motivator in this project, for herself as well as the participants. “I think Singapore today is quite segmented, and it's very easy for us to have no interaction with many communities. It's good to get out of your own space.”

Residents who participated in these workshops echo her sentiment. Madam Masfubah Dawood, who offered her home as the venue for Shirley's cooking sessions, enjoyed getting to know her fellow residents. “I learned a lot from everyone, and I hope we can continue to meet up regularly and share our recipes and have meals together.”

Retiree Jason Ong, who took part in Alecia's workshop, says he found the experience very thought-provoking. “I hope the upcoming event will also be a way for us to get to know residents from other estates, and find out their thoughts on thinking about the future.”

Jasmine Ng, who captured portraits of the residents, has been working with *Both Sides, Now* since 2013. She says: “In all the time that I have been working with *Both Sides, Now*, I've realised that every person we interact with has his or her own way of looking at this topic of death and dying, life and living. Sometimes there can be a lot of levity and joy in it, and that's when you realise the complexities in a topic like this.”

anGie Seah, who led residents in a series of vocal and movement exercises that sought to provide empowering experiences that could transform the mundaneness of everyday life, enjoyed teasing out the participants' responses to the experience. “I cannot teach them what art is, because art contains so many possibilities. I love it when they can justify what we did in their own way.” The residents' experiences have been captured and will be installed, including soundscapes from 2 residential homes.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC ARTS INSTALLATION – the artworks

Restore

By Alecia Neo

Restore offers artworks and experiences of reimagining what is valuable to us, and invites people in the neighbourhood to reconnect with each other.

Inspired by the idea of an alternative shop space in the neighbourhood, Alecia invited residents to create personal posters, expressing a wish or issue they'd like to explore. These posters evolved into many different participatory artworks, seeking to make visible the diverse assets in the community. Can we reframe how we see the problems of old age? How do we "fix" what's broken? How do we acknowledge the value and equal status of those who are the least welcome?

Present/Portrait

By Jasmine Ng

We are familiar with portraits - the passport photo we can never seem to get right, that candid snapshot as a keepsake, that last official picture used when we pass on.

Our neighbourhood friends came to our void-deck studio to pose for a video-portrait. We focus on the moments before and after the shutter clicks - sharing about how we want to present ourselves, why we choose this moment to capture for the forever, and for whom?

In framing this process of solo portrait-making, we take stock and celebrate the little moments in the now of our lives.

Life mOvements

By anGie seah

Inspired by the Chinese characters *huo dong*, where *huo* is to live, and *dong* is to move, this project asks participants to rediscover their environment through the aural expression qualities of the familiar and the mundane, and reinvent the meaning of the everyday for themselves.

In the void deck series, seniors come together to exercise physically and exorcise mentally, to enhance and promote synergy, alertness and general well-being.

In the home series, residents are led by anGie to express their personal life stories through sound and voice projections, where the home becomes a sound recording space.

From the void deck to homes of residents, a collective effort to create introspective dialogues through the expression of sound, objects, voices and

body gestures is made.

Remember, to Eat

By Shirley Soh

Food comforts and gratifies in company as well as in solitude. But as we age, our taste and olfactory senses decline, and our appetites can wane. Food becomes more a sensory memory than a culinary adventure. If a person lives alone, cooking often discontinues. Yet, the emotions around food and its associations with people involved in our lives remain as vivid.

This cooking series looks at food as a remembrance of a person's life and asks people to select recipes they would like to be remembered by. Not only have they selected their favoured recipes, they also show how to cook the dish.

For bios of the artists, please visit: www.bothsidesnow.sg/about-creative-team



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Annex C

BIOGRAPHIES

BOTH SIDES, NOW

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BOTH SIDES, NOW began in 2013, with an immersive arts experience at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital. In 2014, we reached out directly to communities in Khatib and Toa Payoh by staging shows about end-of-life related topics and engaging residents through participatory arts activities, installations, and dialogue sessions. From 2014 to 2016, we continued our outreach by engaging 50 senior centres across Singapore. We returned in 2017 with a multi-year presence in Chong Pang and Telok Blangah.

LIEN FOUNDATION

www.lienfoundation.org

The Lien Foundation is a Singapore philanthropic house noted for its model of radical philanthropy. It breaks new ground by investing in innovative solutions, convening strategic partnerships and catalyzing action on social and environmental challenges. The Foundation seeks to foster exemplary early childhood education, excellence in eldercare and effective environmental sustainability in water and sanitation.

ANG CHIN MOH FOUNDATION

www.acmfoundation.sg

Ang Chin Moh Foundation is an independent, non-profit organisation. The Foundation aims to enhance the perception of death and bereavement among the public, uplift the deathcare profession with education and training, and advance philanthropy in this area. The Ang Chin Moh Foundation also champions and preserves the heritage of funeral and bereavement services in Singapore.

DRAMA BOX

www.dramabox.org

Founded in 1990, Drama Box is a non-profit company known for creating theatre that inspires dialogue, reflection and change. A big part of Drama Box's work is in bringing theatre to the community so that everyone can have the means to access and participate. By shining a spotlight on marginalised narratives and making space for the communal contemplation of complex issues, they seek to tell stories that provoke a deeper understanding of Singapore's culture, history and identity.

Drama Box is a recipient of the National Arts Council's Major Grant 2017-2020. They are also a member of the Singapore Chinese Language Theatre Alliance.

ARTSWOK COLLABORATIVE

www.artswok.org

ArtsWok is an arts-based community development organisation that connects communities by harnessing the power of the arts to create dialogue, invite social participation and build bridges across difference. They work with multidisciplinary teams to design and implement community-based arts projects, present an annual youth theatre festival, build capacity through a community of practice and an action-learning programme, as well as conduct research and advocacy in the field of arts-based community development.

ArtsWok Collaborative Limited is a recipient of the National Arts Council's Major Grant for the period from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2021.

GOODLIFE! A PROGRAMME BY MONTFORT CARE

<http://www.goodlife.org.sg/>

GoodLife! belongs to the network of programmes under Montfort Care, a voluntary welfare organisation (VWO) committed to improving the lives of individuals, families and the community facing transitional challenges. Founded upon the premise that good health, good mind, good family, good friends and good community lead to good living, GoodLife! aims to help our seniors achieve a better quality of life in their golden years.

Since its inception in 2002 in Marine Parade, GoodLife! has expanded its eldercare services to include multiple centres in the eastern and southern part of Singapore, with plans for further expansion in the pipeline. Our senior wellness centres in Marine Parade, Bedok, Telok Blangah, Kreta Ayer, Yishun and Toa Payoh adopt a holistic approach to active ageing by organising activities that address the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of our seniors.



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