

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

19 Sept 2018

**Getting *closer* to thinking about life and death through
arts engagement festival in Chong Pang**

BOTH SIDES, NOW is an initiative that aims to build end-of-life (EOL) friendly communities using arts-based strategies. It is co-presented by Lien Foundation, Ang Chin Moh Foundation, Drama Box and ArtsWok Collaborative, in collaboration with community partners Yishun Health (Wellness Kampung) and Montfort Care Goodlife!

In 2017, we kicked off the third edition of BOTH SIDES, NOW in Chong Pang and Telok Blangah, adopting an innovative approach that saw the team establishing a multi-year presence in both communities, and engaging residents through performances, workshops and art projects.

Our work in Telok Blangah will continue in 2019, but first, we will wrap up our time in Chong Pang with *CLOSER*, an arts engagement festival featuring art installations created by residents in collaboration with four artists; and *LAST DANCE*, a participatory performance about the legacies we want to leave behind. The aim is to help the community get closer to the often taboo topic of death, start thinking about end-of-life issues and decisions, and to have conversations with loved ones on their wishes and plans.

Says BOTH SIDES, NOW Artistic Director Kok Heng Leun: “*CLOSER* engages the community through a different approach. Instead of creating artistic work for the community to respond to, the artists designed creative workshops to engage the community, inspiring them to create artistic work to respond to end-of-life (EOL) issues. This process was experiential and intimate, and it not only affected them, but also their families and friends. The artworks created will demonstrate to their peers that one can have honest and truthful expression of EOL issues.”

It is this community-based approach that is key for the BOTH SIDES, NOW team in order for the shift in mindsets towards end-of-life issues, and for action to be taken in terms of having conversations with loved ones and making plans can be sustained. Ultimately, “our relationships with others are powerful levers in bringing about changes in attitudes and behaviours, and why we have invested two years in Chong Pang building a presence, and creating different opportunities and platforms for residents to encounter this topic and each other, within their own family units but also the wider community”, says Ngiam Su-Lin, Co-Producer of the project.

To date, apart from the art-making workshops with seniors, three different performances over the course of a year have been presented to the community, as well as talks and workshops on having end-of-life conversations. All in all, about 10,000 residents would have been reached out to over the course of these two years.



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Sustainability of creating EOL friendly communities also comes in the shape of the collaboration with Yishun Health, and their Wellness Kampung within Yishun which cater to community, as well as their other community health initiatives and programmes. Says Dr Wong Sweet Fun, Clinical Director, Population Health & Community Transformation, at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital: “Arts and health are non-traditional partners and we are very grateful this unusual partnership with BOTH SIDES, NOW in the past few years has allowed us to see EOL issues from another lens and guided us to use different mediums to help residents in the community explore and voice their views on living well to the end. These conversations are invaluable to our work in managing population health and will help us to strengthen our work in the North.”

The presenters of BOTH SIDES, NOW hope these forms of collaborations and intersection of fields will continue, especially when it comes to complex societal issues. Says Lien Foundation CEO Lee Poh Wah: “It’s human to forget, and we need to be reminded, even about the most important things in life. To create new norms, it is important to identify underlying death attitudes and cultural beliefs, and engage the community on these matters over an extended period. Change comes when the community is driving it, and peer influence can shape new attitudes.” Driving the point home, Ang Ziqian, founder of Ang Chin Moh Foundation says: “It is important with community outreach programs to be at different locations in Singapore. In doing so, it allows different groups of people in different geographical locations to see, hear, feel and touch meaningful programs that can help manage their approach and outlook towards grief, dying, death and funerals – a destiny that is pre-arranged for everyone.”

CLOSER is on from Sept 19 to Oct 7, at various locations between Blk 108 and Blk 115 Yishun Ring Road. For details, please refer to:
bothsidesnow.sg/whatson-arts-Installation.html

For media queries, please contact:

Amanda Leong
amanda@dramabox.org
6324 5434

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[Annexe A](#)

PROGRAMME DETAILS

CLOSER

We all know that death is part of life. Since it is part of our existence, why avoid it? Why not try to learn more about it? Why not get closer? Come explore these questions with us, as we wrap up our time in Chong Pang.

19 Sept – 7 Oct 2018

1) Participatory Performance *LAST DANCE*

100 days after a man's death, his family, friends and even strangers gather to remember the life he lived. Through dance, stories and conversations, we move closer to understanding the legacies we want to leave behind, for our loved ones and for ourselves.

Co-created by Kok Heng Leun, Chong Gua Khee, Muhammad Muazzam Bin Amanah & Rei Poh

Dates & Language of performance:

19 & 21 Sept 2018, English

20 & 22 Sept 2018, Mandarin

7.30pm – 9.30pm

Basketball court next to Blk 109 Yishun Ring Road

2) Public Art Installation

What will your legacy be? For the past year, a group of seniors in Chong Pang has been working with four artists – Han Xuemei, Alecia Neo Jasmine Ng and Shirley Soh – to explore this question, and to create artworks that reflect the experiences, values and relationships that are close to their hearts. Discover their creations by exploring this neighbourhood trail, and find out what they would like to share with us about living and dying.

19 Sept – 6 Oct 2018

Various locations between Blk 108 to Blk 115 Yishun Ring Road



Annexe B

ABOUT ART WORKSHOPS

Four Singaporean artists worked with 23 senior residents of Chong Pang over the course of almost a year to emerge final artworks that are a reflection of the seniors' journey with exploring end-of-life related topics and its significance to them. Some seniors participated across the artists' workshops and contributed more than one artwork to the public art installation. There are about 50 artworks in the form of photographs, films, blankets and installations exhibited in Chong Pang over a 3-week period.

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

Workshop	Resident participant and their story
<p>AKAN DATANG <i>Led by film-maker Jasmine Ng</i></p> <p>Chong Pang seniors attended film-making workshops, and shared stories about loved ones who have passed away, and their own hopes and fears about death. They re-imagined and acted out scenarios, which were filmed for <i>CLOSER</i>.</p>	<p>Susie Ng</p> <p>The vivacious Susie is a cancer survivor who says she has always been open-minded about discussing EOL matters. In this workshop, she shared a story about the last day she spent with her mother before the latter passed away. "I have always regretted not giving her a hug that day," Susie says. With a fellow workshop participant acting as her mother, Susie re-enacted this scene and was finally able to give her 'mum' a hug. "I felt much lighter after that." Taking part in BOTH SIDES, NOW activities over the past year has also helped her to talk to her husband, children and grandchildren about EOL decisions.</p>
<p>TO CHERISH AND TO HOLD <i>Led by artist Shirley Soh</i></p> <p>Chong Pang residents made blankets that express what they hold dear, and the legacy they wish to leave behind, as well as blankets created after contemplating the end of life and how to come to terms with death.</p>	<p>Tan Lu See</p> <p>Lu See first started making such blankets when she was a young mother, learning how to piece fabric scraps together from friends. Through this workshop, she mentioned, "In the past, I thought art meant paintings, not things like this." Because of this experience, she decided to talk to her two sons about issues like medical care if she falls ill, her last rites, and how she hopes they will remember her when she dies. "It's good to prepare for these things and leave instructions. That way, the children won't argue over what to do."</p>



<p>KINDLING <i>Led by artist Alecia Neo</i></p> <p>Chong Pang residents participated in a series of workshops where they spoke about aging, living and dying, love and grief, wishes and regrets. Through the act of posing for a studio photograph, they performed cherished memories. Like murals, these portraits become part of the heartland's void deck landscape.</p>	<p>Chow Bee Lian</p> <p>A staff of the Wellness Kampung, Bee Lian found learning basic photography skills at the workshop a lot of fun. With the digital camera she was given as part of this project, she decided to photograph the elderly aunties who set up makeshift stalls and collect cardboard scraps around Chong Pang Market. "I have chatted with them while they were taking breaks at the hawker centre, and some of them said they wanted to keep working because they were afraid they would die earlier without something to do every day. Another auntie said her wish was to save enough money so she could have a grand funeral," Bee Lian shares. "I wanted to photograph them because I think they are very brave and independent women."</p>
<p>THE GIFT <i>Led by arts practitioner Han Xuemei</i></p> <p>"If this was the last gift you were to leave behind in your life, what would it be?" This was the question senior residents of Chong Pang contemplated in this art-making project. Through facilitated conversations and activities, participants relived precious memories of people who impacted them profoundly, and made choices about what to leave behind. These thoughts were eventually crystallised in their respective gifts.</p>	<p>Louis Tan</p> <p>Louis is an avid collector of coins and stamps, and part of his extensive collection was inherited from his late father. Photographs of these items form part of his 'gift', which also includes photos of his late mother's antique rosewood furniture. She had passed away not long before he signed up for this project, and he had been her primary caregiver. "I had never given any thought to what to do with whatever belongings I have, but this experience has started me thinking," he says. "Now, some idea of what to do in future."</p>

Annexe 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 EOL topics and engaging residents through participatory arts activities, installations, and dialogue sessions. From 2014 to 2016, we continued our outreach by visiting 50 senior centres across Singapore. We returned in 2017 with a multi-year presence in Chong Pang and Telok Blangah. Look out for more activities in Telok Blangah in 2019.

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.



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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, facilitate learning and exchanges through a community of practice, build capacity of practitioners through 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.

WELLNESS KAMPUNG

www.ktph.com.sg/wellness-kampung

Wellness Kampung is an initiative comprising a network of three wellness and care centres for residents in the north. Wellness Kampung provides a suite of health and social programmes, creating a support network for residents to inspire each other to adopt healthier lifestyles, in a close-knit 'kampung' setting.

These include wellness and active ageing initiatives like healthy cooking demonstrations, daily morning exercise and recreational activities, health screenings to keep our residents physically, socially and mentally active, and care services such as day care and rehabilitation to enable frail elderly to age-in-place within the community.

Launched as a partnership between Yishun Health, St Luke's ElderCare and Nee Soon GROs, Wellness Kampung aims to shift healthcare beyond the walls of the hospital and into the community.

Artists:

HAN XUEMEI

Xuemei is an arts practitioner who is curious about the possibilities of participation in artistic processes. She is keen on creating conditions and frameworks within which people exercise agency and make choices that deliberately intervene in their lives and disrupt their routines. Currently a resident artist with Drama Box, her most recent exploration *MISSING: The City of Lost Things* (2018) is a 4-hour introspective experience that invited the audience to participate in a journey to re-encounter lost connections.



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ALECIA NEO

Alecia's artistic practice raises questions about the kinds of individuals who are valued by contemporary society, by exploring the relationships between people, their identities and contexts. Her debut site-specific project, *Villa Alicia* (2011) investigated the fragility of memory, through the transformation of the private home of late Singaporean feminist Dr. Nalla Tan, into a public gallery; demolished shortly after the exhibition. She has developed projects in Malaysia, Taiwan and Singapore centering on communities living with blindness since 2012, exploring how meaning and narratives are translated in the absence of sight. She is also Artist Lead for Brack, an arts platform for socially-engaged artists and their projects.

JASMINE NG

Jasmine is a filmmaker who tells stories across platforms – from film to television, to theatre and site-specific installations (*Eating Air*, *SHIRKERS*, *Afterlife*, *Lonely Planet Six Degrees*, *FUTURE FEED*, *IPS PRISM*, *In The Silence of Your Heart*). She has served on many film juries and pitch panels in Singapore and in the region, and as executive producer and creative consultant on many films. As a film lecturer, she has taught at local and regional institutes and arts centres, and has served as a mentor for the National Arts Council's Young Artists series and SilverArts programme for seniors.

SHIRLEY SOH

Shirley's art practice began with ceramics, and now spans various mediums. She is interested in how individuals, the community, the economy and the environment interdependently connect in constantly shifting – but often not benign – ways. Her work has been featured in the Singapore Biennale, the Singapore Night Festival and can also be found in the Botanic Gardens Downtown MRT station. She currently lectures part-time at LASALLE College of the Arts.

