

ARTS & AGEING FORUM

Engaging Seniors in a Digital Era



1 - 13 SEPTEMBER 2020

SESSION 1

2 September 2020

3:00pm – 4:35pm (Forum)

4:40pm – 5:30pm (Networking via Breakout Rooms)

The Arts & Ageing Forum provides a platform for artists, social service practitioners and policymakers in the ageing sector to gather and share best practices in how the arts can enhance wellbeing and social connectivity amongst seniors.

In this edition, speakers from the UK and Singapore will share insights on approaches to digital arts engagement for seniors. We hope the sharing will raise the level of practice in this field.



PRESENTATION 1

Lockdown, Lockout and Logged Off: Will older people and care homes improve their access to the internet following the pandemic?

As we stepped into April 2020, Equal Arts' creative ageing programme ground to a halt. All care homes closed to non-essential staff and independent living older people were restricted to their own homes with all culture and community facilities closed.

Were care homes in a position to utilise live-streamed creative activities? Were older people living in their own homes able to access the huge array of online resources made available throughout the pandemic? How can we address the digital divide?

Speaker



Douglas Hunter

Chief Executive, Equal Arts (UK)

Douglas graduated from Northumbria University in 1988 with a degree in Fine Art, winning the Spectator & Adam Painting Award in 1993 and exhibiting in Europe and the USA. Throughout this time Douglas delivered creative activities with older people and joined Equal Arts in 1999. He has led the development of key initiatives including the £2m HenPower programme, implementing Creative Age in numerous flagship arts venues nationally and developing a suite of training courses promoting innovative approaches to creative ageing.

PRESENTATION 2

Key Learnings from Digital Arts Project for Seniors

When senior-centric activities were suspended, and our arts and culture venues closed, we saw our arts community rethink and consider different modes of engagement in reaching out to audiences and participants.

The National Arts Council worked closely with artists and social service agencies in the has piloted Digital Arts Projects (DAP) initiative, to explore how seniors can be engaged in the arts through digital means. From June to August 2020, seniors stayed creative, co-created art works with artists and strengthened bonds with their peers.

TOUCH Community Services, Marcus Tan & Rachel Lee from ScRach MarcS, and Swee Yean from Erudite Stories share insights from recent experience in the DAP towards incorporating new modes of engaging seniors in future collaborations between the arts community and social service sectors.¹

Overview of Projects

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| <i>Project Title</i> | Classics are Gold by ScRach MarcS (Marcus Tan and Rachel Lee) |
| <i>Social Service Agency</i> | Fei Yue Community Services (The Arts Market) |
| <i>Art Form</i> | Dance |

Mode of engagement

- Zoom and pre-recorded tutorial videos to introduce dance moves to seniors
- 1-1 phone chats with the participants to understand their learning progress
- WhatsApp to set up group chat with participants

Project was well-received by seniors and Zoom was a useful platform for seniors and ScRach MarcS to meet, introduce themselves, and build rapport before moving to remote engagement. Rachel and Marcus' warm personalities also made the sessions lively and enjoyable for seniors to attend.

Overview of Projects (cont'd)

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| <i>Project Title</i> | Treasures of the Heart: Stories of objects that bring meaning to our lives by Erudite Stories (Wong Swee Yean, Dolly Leow, Jane Lau, Krupa Vinayagamoorthy) |
| <i>Social Service Agency</i> | TOUCH Community Services (TOUCHpoint@ AMK433) |
| <i>Art Form</i> | Storytelling |

Mode of engagement

- Zoom to conduct storytelling project
- The project included a pre-engagement session to on-board seniors who were unfamiliar to Zoom, and this proved helpful
- Seniors were assigned breakout rooms to encourage them to speak in their native language/mother tongue, supported with a facilitator in each room, which spurred seniors to express themselves more comfortably on this new platform

The project was effective in creating a space for seniors to share their stories.

1. Fei Yue Community Services (The Arts Market) and artists Ng Xi Jie and Justin Loke were also part of the Digital Arts Project for Seniors. Erudite Stories also comprised Dolly Leow, Jane Lau and Krupa Vinayagamoorthy. NAC extends our gratitude to all involved in the collaborative project.

Speakers



Rachel Lee & Marcus Tan

Dance Artists and Educators, ScRach MarcS

ScRach MarcS is the duo Rachel and Marcus. They are both established dancers in the Singapore street dance community and are constantly pushing the boundaries of their artform. Their goal is to connect street dance to the masses and make it easily accessible their unique style. They are also one of the only robotic/mannequin performing duos in Singapore. www.scrachmarcs.com



Wong Swee Yean

Storyteller, Erudite Stories

Swee Yean is a full-time storyteller and has been involved in the storytelling scene both in Singapore and in Asia. She is currently the President of the Storytelling Association (Singapore) and has performed commissioned works for museums and festivals. Besides performing, Swee Yean has taught storytelling skills to a wide age range from children to elderly. Storytelling not only entertains and educates, it is an effective communication tool to build trust and community bridges.



Chai Hui Min

Senior Programme Executive, TOUCH Community Services

Hui Min plays a lead role in partnering stakeholders to run programmes at TOUCHpoint@AMK 433 that keep residents physically and mentally well. Prior to joining TOUCH, she spent 15 years in the private sector before making a career switch to the community care sector. Hui Min is currently pursuing a Masters in Gerontology and applies her knowledge and passion in the arts to inspire residents to harness their talents as they learn alongside artists.



Sharda Harrison

Artistic Director, Pink Gajah Theatre

Sharda is a performer, theatremaker and theatre educator. She graduated from LASALLE College of the Arts with a BA (Hons) in Acting in 2009. She is currently pursuing her MA in arts and pedagogy practice, also at LASALLE College of the Arts. Sharda has acted with a range of local theatre companies as well as international theatre collaborations. In 2013, she founded her own theatre company, Pink Gajah Theatre, which performs mainly fringe works and serves as a platform for artists to create and showcase their own works. Sharda part time lectures at both LASALLE College of the Arts and Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. She appears on Television as a co-host for Channel 5's Talking Point.

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