Singapore, 11 Dec 2018 — In June, The Substation launched its programme season with a call issued to anyone who had something to say about local heritage. This topic, typically helmed by interest groups and heritage enthusiasts, was presented in the form of two competitions on social media to encourage a broader range of voices, and appeal to the millennial generation. The first was a creative writing prize on Facebook; and the second, was a short film competition on Instagram. The Substation is pleased to conclude the year by announcing the winners of the two competitions.

The First Prize of $3,000 for Utterly Changed. The Substation Writing Competition has been awarded to Diana Rahim, the editor of Beyond The Hijab, a blog sharing stories of Singaporean Muslim women, for her essay [Losing Farther, Losing Faster]. The Grand Prize of $1,500 and a round trip to a German city, supported by Goethe-Institut Singapore, for BIG4ENBLOC: The Substation Insta-Film Competition has been awarded to Nadarajan Rajendran (@rajipoo), a visual journalist, for his video interview titled Unsettled on a resident of Golden Mile Complex.

The decision for the writing competition, jury chair, acclaimed poet, and current Head of English at the Nanyang Technological University, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr. Boey Kim Cheng asserts, was not an easy one. “Altogether, the response was fabulous, a total of 62 entries, each with a unique story or take on the theme of change, and the judges all enjoyed the diverse genres and styles. We each had our favourite, and were delighted by the varied, clever, and refreshing responses. But there could only be one winner.”

Dr. Boey describes Rahim’s piece, [Losing Farther, Losing Faster] as “a thoughtful, cogent, and deeply felt essay that engages with the themes of change, nostalgia, and heritage in a complex, mature, and beguiling way. Its meditative pacing is beautifully crafted, the lyrical reflections braided delicately with personal narrative and critical commentary. The voice, skilfully composed from the cadenced movement of the prose and the subtle modulations in theme, is layered with loss, anger, yearning, and love, so clearly evident in the opening movement:

“Everywhere, we live with this violence. Everywhere there are ghosts. It is as if our unpoetic government has taken Elizabeth Bishop’s poetry to heart: “The art of losing isn’t hard to master; / so many things seem filled with the intent / to be lost that their loss is no disaster.”

The essay explores the theme of change and loss in a poignant and compelling register, and with its depth of thought, its exacting look at the changing landscape and loss of loved places, goes further than the other entries in ringing the changes on the theme of change.”

In the case of the short film competition, which was presented in collaboration with the Singapore Heritage Society and supported by Goethe-Institut Singapore, the decision was unanimous. Out of a
sizeable 94 entries, Nadarajan Rajendran’s interview of a resident of Golden Mile Complex, which is currently slated to go en bloc, stood out.

Jury chair and Vice President of the Singapore Heritage Society, Dr. Chua Ai Lin describes Rajendran’s work as, “A polished, concise and coherent work, this piece stands out as the only one which engages deeply with the personal experience of someone directly affected by the issue. An interview provides narration that reveals a complex range of emotional and practical responses to the prospect of Golden Mile Complex’s en bloc sale. Strong visuals are well-chosen to complement the interview and provides an insider perspective of different spaces within the building, for example, showing the interviewee’s shop from the inside looking out or within the private space of his home, in addition to key architectural features of Golden Mile Complex. The film is finely-crafted within the limitations of the 40-second framework, telling a complete story using tight pacing, without feeling abrupt or rushed.”

Other winners include Max Pasakorn and Ruizhi Choo, who won the Second and Third Prizes of the writing competition. In keeping with the ethos of social media platforms, People’s Choice Prizes for each competition were awarded to Rolinda Onates Espanola and Anthea Ng Yuan Zhi (@nemosocool) who snagged the most likes on Facebook and Instagram respectively. However, the decision for most likes on Instagram was not a straightforward one, due to the need to authenticate likes. Of their decision, jury chair Dr. Chua Ai Lin says, “After lengthy deliberation and a series of online audits, the panel decided to disqualify entries that were submitted past the final deadline, as well as entries belonging to accounts under suspicion of gaining likes and followers through inorganic methods.”

To tie-in with the forthcoming programme in March 2019, a prize giving ceremony will be held at The Substation’s SAD Bar on 23 March 2019, from 2pm. The Substation’s 2018/19 programme season Cities change. People die. Everything you know goes away. continues next March with The Vanishing, or Time Goes Away, a programme exploring different manifestations of nostalgia in Singapore culture. On the continuing effort to encourage conversation around local heritage and its discourse, The Substation’s Artist Director Alan Oei says, “It’s about making sense of the past so we know what matters in the present and future; all of us have to participate in what, why, and how we remember.”

See the full list of winners and prizes for both competitions here. Read the winning entries of Utterly Changed. The Substation Writing Competition here. Watch the winning entries of BIG4ENBLOC: The Substation Insta-Film Competition here.

High res images and more information on programme partners can be found here.
Low res images
For more information and the latest updates, please visit the following platforms

Website: citieschange.sg
Facebook: @thesubstation
Instagram: @the_substation

Cities change. People die. Everything you know goes away.

The Substation’s theme for 2018 is an exploration of how and why heritage is a political and emotional topic for the public.

This year The Substation will collaborate with artists, academics, and specialists whose works engage with and contribute to the complex conversations around heritage. Programmes explore heritage in its multifarious forms: from landmark architecture and national icons, to the everyday commodification of nostalgia.

The overarching theme is part of a 3-year curatorial direction for The Substation in examining the city. Through annual themes centred on artists and field specialists, The Substation expands, leads, and supports cultural conversations, engaging the public and exposing them to the full possibilities of contemporary art in shaping larger questions about Singapore.
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About The Substation

The Substation is Singapore’s first independent contemporary arts centre. Established in 1990 by the late Kuo Pao Kun, it is known for its pioneering and experimental arts programming. Over the years, The Substation has worked with some of Singapore’s most critically acclaimed artists, writers and intellectuals including Alvin Tan, Goh Boon Teck, Amanda Heng, Lee Wen and Kok Heng Leun. The Substation is a recipient of the National Arts Council’s Major Company Scheme from April 2017–March 2020.
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