The Substation presents

A Public Square

How public space is contested

‘The spaces around us, the pavements and the parks, the air-conditioned underground pedestrian linkages that are in fact extensions of malls, are all about power—vested interests of corporate and state control.’

— Adeline Chia, A Public Square

Singapore, 9 Jul 2019 — The island-wide Bicentennial project has seen the recent conversion of Armenian Street, into the First Botanic Garden @Armenia Street. Once the haphazard spillover zone for exhibition openings and punk gigs, the street in front of The Substation is somewhat of a historical site of contention. Over the years, the institution has been rejected repeatedly in its attempts to close the street for its own outdoor events; where countless street festivals and commercial events only seem to persist.

Now, with a new park landlord, and renewed intentions of using the space, The Substation embarks on A Public Square—a year-long programme that looks at issues surrounding public space in Singapore. As a public institution, how much claim do we have over the spaces we inhabit? What and for whom are public spaces? On whose terms? Over the course of the year, we grapple with this through a variety of programmes exploring issues such as rights and access to space, marginalised communities, and social mobility.

A Public Square, is the last overarching theme of a three-year curatorial direction that examines the city. The annual thematic centres on artists and field specialists, and aims to shape larger questions about Singapore through the critical lens of the arts.

2017: Discipline the City
How architecture and design are co-opted to organise and control space—and by extension—the city’s inhabitants

2018: Cities change. People die. Everything you know goes away.
How heritage and its discourse shape the city through conservation and nostalgia

2019: A Public Square
How public space is contested

With current Artistic Director, Alan Oei, due to step down at the end of 2019, this year’s programme concludes his vision for the venerable institution. He says, ‘I’ve always imagined The Substation as more than an arts centre; it’s an institution that’s struggled with its public and civic role. We want to contribute to shaping ideas about the role of the arts in public discourse in Singapore. Last year, we collaborated with Singapore Heritage Society but we’ve had a long history of supporting civil society and activism. This year, we want to address how space is produced and contested.’

The slew of programmes address spatial issues in different ways, and starts the conversation by highlighting the—sometimes questionable—ways in which the state produces public space. Through an 11-step, tongue-in-cheek guide to making a space public, A Public Square launches with the Parky McParkface Naming Competition, an online poll referencing the disastrously hilarious outcomes when official bodies look to the public to name their spaces.
The year-long programme opens with *Space Oddities*, a duo exhibition exploring how subcultures navigate regulations and strictures—most often legal and state-driven—to carve out in-between spaces. Open calls and competitions invite the public to engage and intervene in the space around The Substation and the Armenian Street Park.

Next year, during Singapore Art Week, we will restage the seminal 1995 *Space, Spaces, and Spacing* conference. This 2-day event will invite artists, academics, and activists to discuss new possibilities for public space and the public sphere. Alongside this, The Substation will be showcasing seminal Southeast Asian artists who have contested public spaces and censorship within authoritarian regimes.

With the noticeable shift in art providing spectacle for global cities, Oei says that, 'we also have to care about public spaces beyond representation. Public spaces shouldn’t just be images of wholesome, leisure, or consumerist activities. We can work towards an inclusive, public life that is for everyone, not just model citizens.'

'I’m excited because this isn’t just a theoretical exercise. We want to help the park to find its own life. To move beyond a commemorative space for the Bicentennial, it needs to address all the aspirations, claims, and needs of this neighborhood, whether it’s the authorities, businesses, museums; most importantly, it’s the people who walk by and can use it everyday.'
Programme information

*A Public Square*
9 July 2019 - March 2020
Various locations, events, and timings (refer to table below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type of Event/ Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date/ Time</th>
<th>Ticketing/ Website</th>
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</table>
| **A Public Square**     | **Overarching programme** The Substation’s 2019/20 programme that looks at how our physical spaces reflect or extend our ideas and attitudes about the public sphere. From July 2019 to March 2020, join us in building a conversation of inclusive, sustainable, concerned, and critical programmes about issues of public spaces—and spheres.  
- **The Substation’s Guide to Making A Public Square** is a step-by-step programme on how to develop your very own public space. Through the language and layers of parks and squares, the guide examines the process of creating a true space for the public. | The Substation       | 9 July 2019 - March 2020 | Website [https://apublicsquare.sg/](https://apublicsquare.sg/) Programme guide [https://apublicsquare.sg/guide/](https://apublicsquare.sg/guide/) |
| **Parky McParkface Naming Competition** | **Competition** An online naming poll to name the park in front of The Substation.  
- A reference to state renaming and rebranding initiatives, from Marina Bay to Budget Terminal.  
- The competition invites participants to name what does not belong to us—the newly pedestrianised space in front of the building, formerly known as Armenian Street.  
- The most popular entry wins $888.  
- An inaugural plaque engraved with the winning name will be placed in front of The Substation | Microsite            | Competition 9 July - 1 Nov 2019 Announcement 8 Nov 2019 | Online Poll [https://apublicsquare.sg/guide/parky/](https://apublicsquare.sg/guide/parky/) |
| **Concerned Citizens Programme** | **Open Call & Residency** A residency programme on social integration and mobility, where up to five participants will be mentored to bring their works-in-progress or proposals to fruition.  
- The second iteration of the Concerned Citizens Programme is a 5-month intensive mentorship programme led by visual artist Cheong Kah Kit.  
- Co-mentors are Alvin Tan, Nurul Huda Rashid, and Kin Chui.  
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Application Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAD Bar Open Call</td>
<td><strong>Open Call</strong>&lt;br&gt;An open call offering venue support and honorariums for projects responding to issues about public space.&lt;br&gt;● Applicants are invited to submit a proposal highlighting how it explores the theme in a critical and interrogative way.&lt;br&gt;● Each applicant is allowed to submit up to three proposals.&lt;br&gt;● Selected proposals will get $1,500 to realise their project in The Substation SAD Bar.&lt;br&gt;● There are two application windows:&lt;br&gt;  ○ 9 - 31 July for events from September to December 2019&lt;br&gt;  ○ 1 - 31 October for events from January to March 2020</td>
<td><a href="https://apublicsquare.sg/guide/sad-bar-open-call/">Website</a></td>
<td><a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1azA95qBpeJYRII4E6zQNFsz1VtrVwM6JKYgX6cSof8/edit">Application Form</a></td>
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<td>Space Oddities</td>
<td><strong>Exhibition</strong>&lt;br&gt;A duo exhibition featuring young artists Zhiyi Cao and Divaagar, whose works navigate power relations and cultural difference to carve out alternative spaces for subcultural or marginal communities.</td>
<td><a href="https://apublicsquare.sg/guide/space-oddities/">Website</a></td>
<td><a href="https://apublicsquare.sg/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/SpaceOddities_Web.pdf">Mini catalogue</a></td>
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<td>BlackKajiXtra–Nusasonic</td>
<td><strong>Music Festival</strong>&lt;br&gt;A two-day festival featuring performances by artists like The Observatory, Setabuhan, and Cari Padu, with workshops exploring spaces of the underground.&lt;br&gt;● Jointly organised by The Observatory, Ujikaji, and Nusasonic, a collaborative project</td>
<td><a href="https://apublicsquare.sg/guide/blackkajiextranusasonic/">Website</a></td>
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exploring experimental sound and music cultures in Southeast Asia.

- **Workshops include:**
  - **Cari Padu** (A Public Choir) conducted by Rully Shabara of Setabuhan. A commentary on human pursuit and governance of social structures, the choir will learn vocalisation and collectively devise a work.
  - **Discourse 1**: Music through historicism and cultural referencing
  - **Discourse 2**: Resistance through music: Secular territories of the underground

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| **State of Love and Trust and Stars** | **Event** | 3 Aug 2019 | Free with registration  
State of Love and Trust and Stars** is an offbeat event that aims to reposition and question the concept of the grand national narrative that is our National Day Parade. The parade is the largest public display of a shared national consciousness. But how much of our so-called republic identifies with this uber-celebrated version?  
- A free, one-day, indoor and outdoor, lifestyle event with musical, dance, and theatrical performances, and roving DJs acts.  
- Featuring artists, actors, and musicians such as Rizman Putra, Syimah Sabtu Collective, DJ Itch, Vinyl Heavy, and Syndicate.  
- Curated by Rizman Putra.  
  
| **Exhibition** | 29 - 31 Aug  | 9am - 9pm  | Website  
Inspired by a recent rejection, The Substation commemorates SNF2019 with a celebration of rejection.  
- Applications by open call.  
- Featuring artworks and proposals that have been rejected from prizes, competitions, and institutions.  
- Following the model of the original rejects’ salon in Paris, 1863, all rejected works will be for sale.  
  
| **Competition** | 5 Aug - 9 Sep | Website  
Applicants post a comic strip on Instagram addressing issues of public space and #apublicspace.  
- Comprising a jury of Instagram comic strip artists, such as highnunchicken.  
- Grand prize of $1,000.
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<tr>
<th>Event Type</th>
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<th>The Substation</th>
<th>Date Range</th>
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| Good Review Circle      | **Online art writing initiative**  
A group of five writers post monthly responses relating to issues of public space on The Substation blog.                                                                                                            | The Substation blog | Sep 2019 - Mar 2020 | Website [https://apublicsquare.sg/blog](https://apublicsquare.sg/blog) |
| Propose-a-Parklet       | **Competition**  
Design and architecture studios are invited to propose parklets (pop-up resting areas, each the size of a car park) on Armenian Street Park.  
*Applications by open call.*  
*3 to 4 winning submissions will be realised in the park.*  
| The Substation          | Oct 2019 - Mar 2020  
Open Call Oct - Dec 2019  
Announcement Jan 2019  
Realisation March 2020 | [TBC](#)            |
| Campaign Office         | **Online design initiative**  
In anticipation of the upcoming elections, create your very own electoral campaign with this custom poster generator inspired by a graphic design history of Singapore Elections Ephemera.                                                                                       | The Substation Microsite | Sep 2019 | Website [TBC](#)            |
| Public Art Exhibition   | **Exhibition**  
In conjunction with SAW2020, public and interactive art installations featuring international artists.                                                                                                                                                       | The Substation | 11 Jan - 2 Feb 2020 | Website [TBC](#)            |
| Space, Spaces, and Spacing Conference (TBC) | **Event**  
A conference about public spaces and spheres in the arts, and ‘re-staging’ of the seminal event that was held at The Substation in 1995.  
*Featuring regional speakers and the curator of the public art exhibition*  
| The Substation          | 18 - 19 Jan 2020 | Website [TBC](#)            |

High res images and more information on programme partners can be found [here](#).

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**Note:** The dates and websites provided are placeholders and should be updated with the actual event details.
1. The Substation’s key visual for the year. Through the language and layers of parks and squares, *A Public Square* examines the process of creating a true space for the public.


4. **State of Love and Trust and Stars**, 2019. Curated by visual artist and performer, Rizman Putra, the free and one-day lifestyle event celebrates the National Day Parade in an alternative and offbeat way.
A Public Square.

_A Public Square_ is a year-long programme that looks at how our physical spaces reflect or extend our ideas and attitudes about the public sphere. Public space is always contested. In Singapore, public space and infrastructure is dominated, on one hand, by the logic of capitalism and real estate; on the other, nation-building and the new-fangled language of placemaking.

Our foray into the public begins with the newly pedestrianised First Botanic Garden @ Armenian Street in front of The Substation. We can call this a public space—but what does it mean? Is it a park? A pedestrian corridor? An event space for pop-ups or festivals? Perhaps a public square?

Through a year-long journey with artists, designers, and writers, we explore claims, tensions, and contradictions through our interaction and challenges with the public space in front of The Substation.

For media enquiries, please contact:

Samantha Segar
General Manager
+65 6337 7535
samantha@substation.org

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.
www.substation.org

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