15 February, 2021 (Singapore) – Local non-profit arts organisations Sing Lit Station & The Substation present HK-SG Digital Travel Bubble, a new feature on poetry.sg that brings together 16 poets from Hong Kong and Singapore. While Singapore and Hong Kong residents eagerly await the first Hong Kong-Singapore physical travel bubble to open up since the COVID-19 outbreak, the poets have collaborated on a digital poetry experience to transport readers to these twinned cities. The HK-SG Digital Travel Bubble invites poets from both cities into each other’s spaces – to play tourist and tour guide from behind their screens. This project invites audiences to experience both cities with the freshness of a first-time visitor through the eyes of the poets.

Sing Lit Station’s General Manager, Charlene Shepherdson says, “We hope that the HK-SG Digital Travel Bubble provides writers and readers a new way to navigate the wanderlust we are all feeling a year into the pandemic. The pairs were asked to exchange images or a short video of their favourite places in their home countries and write poems reflecting both images. The poems produced are a map of the intimacies of each city: vivid insights into the wistfulness, nostalgia and hope for a time to walk these streets again.”

Poet Daryl Lim Wei Jie shared photographs of a neighbourhood next to Kallang River, “This neighbourhood has been very significant in my life: my maternal grandparents and parents have lived in the area for years, and it’s a site of early settlement in Singapore. My first book of poetry, A Book of Changes, explores the history of the area — it was where early nomadic people lived (the Orang Kallang); it was the site of Singapore’s first gasworks, the Kallang gasworks; and it was where the race riots of 1964 began. It was through telling the history of this area that I discovered a voice that empowered me to also tell my familial and personal history.”

His Hong Kong counterpart, Jennifer Wong, shared photographs of Mongkok with him, “We have lived for many years in Yaumatei, which is very close to Mongkok, and I remember going very often to...
Mongkok with my family. We enjoyed going there for many reasons: there are lots of independent shops selling affordable clothing and home goods, particularly the area near Lady Market Bazaar and Fa Yuen Street near the Mongkok MTR station. We also went there for grocery and food shopping, as the Mongkok wet market offers such fresh meats and vegetables, fruits and dried Chinese goods. Catching a glimpse of the shop sign Pat Chun Sweet Vinegar always reminds me of the classic TV ad song: ‘red egg, pork trotters vinegar, Pat Chun sweet vinegar is the best’.

The two poets along with three other pairs, Zulfadli Rashid & Maheen Haider, Naive Gascon & Sophie Ip and Yeow Kai Chai & Kit Fan, will share their poems at a launch event on The Substation’s Facebook Live on Saturday 20 February 2021 from 3 – 4pm. The other poets in the project include: Marc Nair & David McKirdy, Andy Ang & Antony Huen, Jason Lee & Harini V and Emily Hedvig Olsson & Ang Shuang.

The HK-SG Digital Travel Bubble is a collaboration between three parties: Research Centre for Human Values at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Sing Lit Station, and The Substation. It is presented under The Substation’s sandbox platform which is dedicated to a testing environment for the arts. They embody the spirit of the Substation where it is a Space to Experiment, Fail, Learn and Try Again. https://www.substation.org/sandbox.

Mr Woon Tien Wei, Artistic Co-Director of The Substation shares, “HK-SG Digital Travel Bubble is a reflexive and creative response to the failed attempt to establish a physical HK-SG Travel Bubble. The digital travel cannot replace the physical ones but the project provides a link for some sociality between the poets and readers from both islands. It is important to stay social while remaining physically distanced. The pandemic has revealed a broken world where Art should seek to mend the brokenness of the world by bringing people together and to strengthen their connections with themselves, one another, and the world.”

For hi-res images, bios and other press material, please access the Drive link: tinyurl.com/43ows9ww

About Sing Lit Station: Sing Lit Station (SLS) is a literary charity that seeks to grow the local literary community, and to build a platform for writers and readers to meet. SLS is an Institution of Public Character (IPC) and a recipient of the National Arts Council Major Grant until 2022. http://www.singlitstation.com.

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. http://www.substation.org/.
HK-SG DIGITAL TRAVEL BUBBLE

Synopsis:
While residents eagerly await the opening of the first Hong Kong-Singapore physical travel bubble since the COVID-19 outbreak, poets have taken travel plans into their own (sanitised and socially distanced) hands with the HK-SG Digital Travel Bubble. Co-presented by Sing Lit Station and The Substation, this ekphrastic series pairs together 16 poets for a digital poetry experience that will transport readers between the twinned cities. Playing both tourist and tour guide from behind their screens, ruminate with long-time residents about their favourite nooks and experience the same spots through the fresh eyes of a first-time visitor.

Project Website: http://www.poetry.sg/travelbubble
Launching 15 February 2021

Event Launch Reading
Saturday, 20 February 2021
3 – 4pm
The Substation’s Facebook Live