

Opening Address by Mr Heng Chee How, Senior Minister of State for Prime Minister's Office and MP for Jalan Besar GRC (Whampoa) at the opening of the *In An Echo We Remember* Exhibition

Friday, 7 April 2017, 6.30pm
SOTA Gallery

Ms Lim Geok Cheng
Principal, School of the Arts (SOTA)

Dr Lee Boon Yang

My dear residents from Whampoa

Friends, ladies and gentlemen

My partners from Tsao Foundation

Good evening. It's a wonderful privilege to be able to join you this evening.

2. Let me begin by congratulating all the young artists whose works make up today's exhibition. 10 very talented young artists from SOTA created the collection of artworks that you will see in a moment. I had the privilege of previewing them. It is really wonderful how the works themselves came about, and the stories behind those works. The students were tasked to create contemporary companions to objects owned by the seniors of Whampoa. I am very impressed by the high calibre of their artistic talents in interpreting the stories with sensitivity, and translating them into something tangible.

3. Today's exhibition, *In An Echo We Remember*, was conceived as a Tangible Companions project under *Curating Whampoa*, a community art and heritage project that encourages community engagement and active ageing through the arts, and is part of the Tsao Foundation's ComSA (Community for Successful Ageing) programme, which is also running in Whampoa. Singapore has an ageing population and it is important that we actively seek ways to engage, care and know more about our seniors. Their lives now, their memories and experience of yesteryears.

4. By equipping the seniors of Whampoa with heritage curation skills through sharing of the stories behind their selected sentimental objects, the project hopes that the youth will not only be able to understand the elderly better, but also learn about the shared history and heritage across generations and how these will impact all of us today. We want to encourage interactions so that our seniors will feel more socially included in a society that is rapidly changing in so many different ways.

5. It is heartening to observe how art has helped bridge the generational distance between the seniors and our young students from SOTA. This reflects

the positive power of the arts, something that is able to help build relationships across generations within communities. Art does not have to exist in a vacuum; today's exhibition very clearly demonstrates its potential in making our culture inclusive and accessible to all, and indeed a connecting tool.

6. As we celebrate *In An Echo We Remember* exhibition's opening, let us remember to thank the different groups who have helped make this project possible. I would like to thank Tsao Foundation and Professor Thomas Kong for spearheading *Curating Whampoa* and engaging our seniors in Whampoa in a variety of activities to ensure their wellbeing; and thank SOTA for agreeing to be active participants and our partners in this project and in recognising the importance of engaging our seniors; and the students for approaching the project with an open mind and great heart. I hope that you will continue using art to engage and inspire all of us in time to come.

7. I encourage all of us to take the time to explore each piece of artwork and to travel through the precious stories and memories that each piece of art and artefact represent. I now declare the exhibition open. Thank you, and I wish everyone a pleasant evening.