

LEE LIMING  
PROGRAMME IN  
AGEING URBANISM

# Camera-ready for Ageing

## Arts and Culture for Seniors<sup>1</sup>

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Research has shown that there are cognitive benefits for older people who take up photography. The sustained mental challenge from continuously working to improve skills in the craft may enhance memory function and visuospatial processing.

Taking photos and sharing them on social media sites may promote mental health and wellbeing by keeping older people connected with others interested in photography as well as friends and family.

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<sup>1</sup> This is an evolving database. We will be adding more examples and cases over time.

*Seniors Exploring Photography, Identity and Appreciation (SEPIA), Museum of Photographic Arts (MOPA) – San Diego, California, USA*

SEPIA is a dedicated programme for seniors and comprises three primary components: creative photography courses, art talks and interactive museum tours. The initiative aims to promote older persons engagement with the arts and their community through art-based dialogue and photography. Since its inception in 2010, more than 1,000 visitors have participated annually.

Each component of the programme is coordinated between the museum, local community partners and senior service providers. Funding is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts and other grants. Seniors and organisations do not pay to participate. Staff and independent, third-party agencies evaluate the programme on an ongoing basis through the use of surveys, observation, attendance records, press reviews and interviews.

Box 1 describes each component of the programme.

### Box 1: SEPIA Initiatives

#### Digital Photography Course

- Course designed to introduce seniors to digital cameras and artistic photography techniques.
- Sessions are approximately 2 hours in duration and held each week over a four week period.
- Sessions comprise a short instructional component followed by a hands-on practical component.

#### Outreach Tours

- One-off, 45 minute art presentation (by museum staff) and group dialogue are held in long-term care facilities.
- Photographs from MOPA's permanent collection are shared and discussed.
- Presentations are interactive and focus on building art appreciation skills, visual literacy and confidence for self-expression.
- Seniors are encouraged to develop personal interpretations of each photograph and to participate in discussions about the photographs.

#### Museum Tours

- Docents lead tours through MOPA's current exhibitions and encourage tour participants to express their appreciation for the exhibited art.

- Some tours are designed specifically for people living with dementia and Alzheimer's disease.
- Museum docents receive training on how to engage people with dementia from the Shiley-Marcos Alzheimer's Disease Research Center and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.
- Tours are based on active participation and tour participants are encouraged to analyse and discuss the photographic works.

Source: Seniors Exploring Photography Identity and Appreciation (SEPIA), <http://www.creativeaging.org/creative-aging-program/6362>, Accessed 20 March 2017; For Adults and Seniors, <http://www.mopa.org/experience/adults>, Accessed 20 March 2017.

### *Arts4Life: The Art of Digital Photography, Cuyahoga Public Library – Strongsville, Ohio, USA*

The Art of Digital Photography programme was held in 2015 at a public library in the USA and ran for 8 weeks. The programme was open to adults aged 55 and above and was facilitated by a local teaching artist. The objectives of the programme were threefold: 1) increase mental engagement, skills, and appreciation of the art form; 2) promote social interaction; and 3) foster greater library patronage among the senior community.

Every Thursday morning, the programme participants gathered to receive instruction on technical and artistic techniques in digital photography. Then, they were assigned homework and sent on field trips where they practised their skills. The programme culminated in a photography showcase and reception.

Box 2 highlights key points in the planning and development of the programme.

#### **Box 2: Planning and Developing a Photography Programme for Seniors**

##### Research

- January 2014: the library collected feedback from older patrons to gauge their interest and preferred art forms. Photography was identified as a desired art form that was not a current programme offering at the library.

##### Marketing

- January 2015: marketing activities for the photography programme were launched 3 months before the series began.
- A brochure, posters and digital media slides were used to promote the programme within the library.
- An Arts4Life website, email blast (to library members), and press releases to local newspapers and community

members helped to promote the programme outside the library.

### Budgeting

- The programme was funded through a sponsorship grant of USD2500 (~SGD3500).
- A major portion of the budget was used to hire a professional photographer as the programme instructor.
- Residual funds were spent on the photography showcase and reception, which included large prints of participants' work.

### Programme Activity

- The activity space was set up in a classroom-style setting with AV equipment.
- Participants received handouts, name tags and attendance sheets weekly. Light refreshments were provided.
- Library staff were present during each class to assist the instructor.
- Extra guidance was given to less tech-savvy students on how to email homework assignments and use photo editing software.
- Participants were asked to complete evaluation forms about the programme at the end of the course.

Source: Arts4Life: The Art of Digital Photography, <http://www.programminglibrarian.org/programs/art-s4life-art-digital-photography>, Accessed 20 March 2017.

## *Photovoice: Everyday Whampoa, Tsao Foundation & Photovoice SG – Singapore*

In December 2016, the Tsao Foundation launched Curating Whampoa, a two-year community art and heritage series which seeks to empower senior residents in the neighbourhood by encouraging them to share their personal histories and stories. Photovoice: Everyday Whampoa was one of the projects. It was organised in collaboration with non-profit organisation, Photovoice SG.

For five weeks, 12 senior residents received lessons on basic camera skills. They were paired with volunteers who mentored residents as they photographed their neighbourhood. Residents chose their own themes and picked subjects related to their interests. One resident photographed calligraphy, while another snapped pictures of flowers in the public corridors of housing blocks. At the end of the project, each participating resident submitted a series of photographs narrating their individual stories of Whampoa.

Sources:

D C Park, J Lodi-Smith, L Drew, S Haber, A Hebrank, G N Bischof, & W Aamodt, (2014) The Impact of Sustained Engagement on Cognitive Function in Older Adults. *Psychological Science*, 25(1):103-112; Seniors Exploring Photography Identity and Appreciation (SEPIA), <http://www.creativeaging.org/creative-aging-program/6362>, Accessed 20 March 2017; For Adults and Seniors, <http://www.mopa.org/experience/adults>, Accessed 20 March 2017; Arts4Life: The Art of Digital Photography, <http://www.programminglibrarian.org/programs/arts4life-art-digital-photography>, Accessed 20 March 2017; Tsao Foundation - Our Projects, <http://tsaofoundation.org/what-we-do/comsa/curating-whampo/our-projects>, Accessed 20 March 2017.