

Night-time fun at the museums

Join the revelry in the arts and heritage civic district during the Night Fest starting tonight

Rachel Chan

Look forward to a feast for both the body and the soul, tonight and tomorrow evening in Armenian Street.

The three-lane street in the middle of the arts and heritage civic district will be closed from 8pm to 2am as part of this year's Night Festival.

Instead of traffic, there will be death-defying dances and street art performances as well as hawkers dishing out local food such as muah chee and curry puffs (see story below).

In the previous four years, Stamford Road was closed for the festival, allowing revellers to spill across the street from the National Museum to the Singapore Management University Green where most of the live performances took place.

This year, however, the Land Transport Authority advised the festival organiser, the National Heritage Board, to keep one lane in Stamford Road open for buses.

Ms Angelita Teo, director of festivals and precinct development for the board, said the organisers decided it would be very "resource intensive" to close Stamford Road, hence the decision to focus on Armenian Street instead.

"We would be left with only 1.5 lanes even if we close Stamford Road as we still need to let buses pass through. This would pose programming challenges in utilising such a narrow strip," she added.

The closure would also allow smaller players in Armenian Street to take part in the festival.

Select Books, for example, is staying open till 10pm and Rillette Bar in French restaurant Le Bistrot du Sommelier will also be open till late.

Timbre, a bar outlet at The Substation, is anticipating a full house this weekend as it did the previous weekend, when the first part of Night Festival was staged.

Mr Ben Low, music and marketing executive for Timbre Group, said: "We had a lot of people come in for drinks after the festivities. There was still a queue from 10.30 to 11pm and we saw about 30 to 40 more people pack the bar until midnight."

Festivalgoers should also peek into the Vanguard Building where London artist Li Cassidy-Peet and Singapore artist Terry Wee will stage Night Painting:



A media preview of La Argentina, where a crane holds a dancer as she spins and whirls through the air.
 ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Cast In Light, where they will explore and interact with the office-like interior.

Indie arts centre The Substation is getting in on the act too as its annual Septfest kicked off last night. It has taken part in the Night Festival since 2008, but this is the first time that the event has coincided with Septfest.

Thanks to the expected late crowds, it will extend its gallery opening hours until midnight so that festivalgoers can see the sound art installation exhibition by artist Joel Ong.

Substation artistic director Noor Effendy Ibrahim said: "The closure of Armenian Street is a great opportunity for The Substation to enhance its presence at this year's Night Festival by bringing some of our events outdoors.

"For the first time, we'll be staging outdoor performances by local bands in front of The Substation building. This is in addition to having performance artists mingle with the public on the road, along with light and video projects on the street."

Singapore visual artist Justin Lee, 48, will be among five roving artists in The Substation area. He will mingle with the audience in an unexpected way, as part of his performance Walking With Strangers, from 7.30 to 8.30pm.

He said of the road closure: "I think it's a bonus to the arts scene because the artists get to mingle with the audience on the main road, in the public space. It opens up people's minds to new adventures and broadens their understanding of art-making."

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