

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 5, 2021

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PAO
ARTS CENTER

Pao Arts Center Launches New Public Art Campaign “We Are More”

Across MBTA, City of Boston, and other Digital Assets, Artwork Gives Voice to the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community As They Stand Up to Harassment and Violence



(BOSTON, MA – May 3, 2021) – In honor of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May, Pao Arts Center brings Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya’s *We Are More*, a public art campaign that celebrates the resilience and diversity of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community to Greater Boston. Pao Arts Center worked with the MBTA, City of Boston, Orange Barrel Media, and GBH to have Phingbodhipakkiya’s work appear on digital billboards in 80 locations across Greater Boston during the month of May. The campaign gives the AAPI community a powerful voice, responding to the stereotyping, harassment, and violence that has become increasingly severe amidst COVID-19.

Bringing these artworks to Greater Boston exemplifies Pao Arts Center’s mission to celebrate and strengthen the AAPI community through access to culturally relevant art, education, and creative programs. **Director of Pao Arts Center, Cynthia Woo** said, “We are excited to have Phingbodhipakkiya’s work here to uplift our community, challenge stereotypes about Asians that are at the heart of anti-Asian violence, and let the Asian community know that they belong here, too.”

"In Boston, we are working together to stop Asian hate and to celebrate the cultural and historic contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in our city and across the country. Generations of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have enriched Boston’s history and are helping create our future. I

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am proud to showcase *We Are More* across our city and to celebrate our AAPI community." says **City of Boston Mayor Kim Janey**.

Reggie Ramos, MBTA Deputy Director of Pilots and Innovation and Yanni Poulakos, MBTA Director of Strategic Partnerships said, "The Authority has been intentional in creating set-aside space for PSAs and customer communications through all of its vendor-managed platforms. This type of campaign has a place; this is about seeing and recognizing our riders for who they are and their lived experiences in a way that is inclusive: Ultimately, this is about visibility and holding space for diversity."

"Showing this work in the T and on our city's streets, especially in Chinatown and beyond is so important, because Asians and immigrants are taking public transportation and going to frontline, essential jobs," said **Ben Hires, Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC), CEO**. "This is where incidents of racism and hate are taking place. We want our community to feel safe and supported and to inspire bystanders to stand up against hate in the case something takes place in front of them."

As the fastest-growing immigrant population, Asian Americans often struggle with the "perpetual foreigner" label and many have felt confined by narrow archetypes like the straight A student, the exotic seductress, or the diseased refugee. *We Are More* directly addresses and denounces systemic racism and xenophobia at its root, through piercing questions, poignant messaging, vibrant colors, symbolic imagery, and portraits of defiant and proud Asian American and Pacific Islanders.

To inform this campaign and celebrate the full diversity of the AAPI community, Phingbodhipakkiya is collecting stories from Asian American and Pacific Islanders across the U.S. that highlight the incredible range of experiences, languages, traditions, and cultural practices. These stories will be featured online at [MoreThan.Art](https://www.morethan.art) in conjunction with this public campaign.

"Asian Americans have not been given space to express the full range of our feelings and identities. For decades, we have had little media representation – our faces were used as props, villains, or background characters. *We Are More* makes clear that we will no longer tolerate the narrow box that has defined us. We have been cursed at, pushed, spat on, stabbed, kicked, shot, and killed. We have been blamed for a pandemic we did not create, a crisis that has caused tremendous damage to our community. We will no longer bury our pain in silence, and we will not be cowed by bullies or bigots. We are here to speak. We are here to stand. We are here to stay," said **artist Amanda Phingodhipakkyia**.

This project is generously funded by the Boston Foundation, Nancy Wang Adams & Scott A. Schoen, Kevin Chang, and Schweizer Foundation for Arts and Innovation.

ABOUT PAO ARTS CENTER

Pao Arts Center (paoartscenter.org @paoartscenter) was established in 2017 as a visionary program collaboration between Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC) and Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC). Located at 99 Albany Street in downtown Boston, Pao Arts Center is Chinatown's first arts and cultural center.

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Pao Arts Center represents the belief that investing in arts, culture, and creativity are vital to the health and well-being of individuals, families, and vibrant communities. Through its innovative approach, Pao Arts Center empowers creativity, connection, learning, and support.

ABOUT AMANDA PHINGBODHIPAKKIYA

[Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya](http://alonglastname.com) (alonglastname.com @alonglastname) is a multidisciplinary artist, educator, and activist. As artist-in-residence with the NYC Commission on Human Rights, Amanda's art series celebrating the resilience of the AAPI community, "I Still Believe in Our City", reached millions in New York City and worldwide through her Atlantic Terminal billboard, subway domination, and social media amplification. In the wake of the Atlanta shootings in March 2021, art from the series appeared on the cover of TIME magazine. From large-scale murals, augmented reality (AR) experiences, 3D printed sculptures, and interactive installations, Amanda makes the invisible, visible. She has explored microscopic universes, familial memories, and the power of collective action, challenging viewers to rethink the world around them and revealing the often-unseen depth, resilience, and beauty of communities of color. Her work has been shown at the Cooper Union, Google, the Sorbonne, and recognized by The New York Times, Fast Company, and the Guardian. She has received support from the Sloan Foundation, the Café Royal Cultural Foundation, and the Jerome Foundation and her work is part of the permanent collection at the Goldwell Open Air Museum. Earlier in her career, Amanda worked as a researcher studying Alzheimer's Disease at Columbia Medical Center and received her MFA from Pratt Institute. She is currently working on FINDINGS, a national mural series celebrating women and science, in partnership with the Heising-Simons Foundation.

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