

Comments on ‘Museum Plus’ for LEGCO Subcommittee on West Kowloon Cultural District Development

Introduction

The proposal from the Museum and Advisory Group of the West Kowloon Consultation Committee is visionary, innovative and sensitive to the latest global critical thinking concerning the future development of museum. From a professional point of view, the concept is outstanding. However, it seems necessary to further explain the concept to the public with a more approachable language.

Despite the uniqueness of the proposal, there is still a strong possibility that the proposed plan will fail during the process of implementation. In order to actualize such creative and unprecedented model of ‘museum’ operation, it is essential to establish an implementation mechanism that is independent, professional, and divorced from any possible conflict of interest.

Proposed considerations

Setting up an effective implementation mechanism is essential for the successful actualization of the proposed plan. The set up should be based on the following principles:

1. Respect for professionalism

After the proposed plan is publicly consulted, the implementation work should be passed to professionals who are familiar with the latest development. The implementation group must be led by professionals, and the selection of these professionals must be divorced from any governmental or party politics consideration to ensure professional independency.

2. Divorced of any vested interest

The promotion of certain types of art works by major museums can always affect the market value of the art works. It is important to ensure that members appointed are divorced from any possible conflict of interest. In order to avoid any possible abuse that might ruin M+’s integrity right at the beginning, a tightly controlled monetary system that involves the ICAC is recommended.

3. Software oriented

The success of M+ relies heavily on critical and creative thinking in museum management and curatorial practice. Our long indifference to nurturing cultural software has put us in a weak position in catching up with the global cultural trend. It is essential to speed up the training of local professionals to meet the future cultural needs. International support would be necessary at the early stage of planning and training.

4. Totality in planning

WKCD cannot exist just by itself. It must be an integrated part of the total cultural vision of Hong Kong. A comprehensive plan of the overall cultural development, including a view of the operation and positioning of the existing public museums, needs to be introduced.

Conclusion

The proposal of M+ provides Hong Kong with a daringly innovative plan that can make Hong Kong a leader in shaping a new model for museum in the 21st Century. Better communication with the public of the thinking behind the proposal is needed. Most important of all, the government needs to ensure that during the implementation process, professionalism is respected, vested interest avoided, and holistic vision introduced.

Oscar Ho Hing-kay (何慶基),

Programme Director in MA Cultural Management Programme,

Department of Cultural and Religious Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong