

Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways

Railway Station Design to Showcase Local History and Culture

Purpose

This paper aims to give an account of how local history and cultural elements have been incorporated into railway station design and the way forward.

Looking Back

2. Railway is closely related with our daily living and has become an important part of it. Railway stations were first designed with practical function, then gradually transform into venues displayed with local art, history and cultural elements with a view to bring some colours to our hectic and busy lives.

Design of MTR Stations in 1980s

3. The first MTR line was commissioned in 1979. MTR stations built in those days were practical and functional driven with very limited touch of local characteristics. For example, the navy blue wall tiles of Choi Hung Station were decorated with a border of rainbow colour on the pillars as Choi

Hung in Chinese means rainbow; the dark grey Diamond Hill wall tiles were decorated with silver sparkles. Other stations along the Kwun Tong Line and Tsuen Wan Line follow the same architectural language.

4. In 1985, the MTR Island Line between Chai Wan and Admiralty was opened for service. Chinese calligraphy of station names were applied on the wall panels of station platforms, adding a touch of art for the stations. This concept was later extended to other new railway lines, such as the Tseung Kwan O Extension that opened in 2002.

Art in MTR from 1998

5. The “art in mtr” concept was formally introduced in 1998 upon the opening of the Airport Express. Three art pieces, namely “Flight of Fancy”, “Swift and Safe” and “Birds of a Feather” with a theme of connecting Hong Kong with the world were put up at the In-town Check-in Hall of the Hong Kong Station, the subway links between Central Station and Hong Kong Station as well as the Airport Express Departure Hall of the Tsing Yi Station respectively. Thereafter, live performances, art exhibitions, display of artwork by established and emerging artists, students and young children have gradually been introduced in the MTR system in a systematic manner.

6. Engaging the public and local community in railway community art projects was incepted in the new century. In 2001, Dr Tao Ho, a famous Hong Kong architect and artist, composed an art piece incorporating drawings of over 70 kids featuring various aspects of life and impressions in North Point for a mural display at the North Point Station. Until 2009, over 900 students from 38 primary and secondary schools participated in the community art workshops and their art pieces were installed in Kwun Tong

Station, Ngau Tau Kok Station as well as Tsuen Wan Station. These community art programmes not only promote Hong Kong's community art and allow the commuters to enjoy a large variety of art forms, but also provide an opportunity for local and international artists to showcase their masterpieces. Details of "art in mtr" are listed in the **Annex**.

Bringing natural and district features into the East Rail Line

7. The East Rail Line is the oldest railway line in Hong Kong. Since the rail merger, a special theme entitling "In Touch with Nature" has been introduced to the East Rail Line. It incorporated art and cultural elements into the stations along the line by providing each station with a colourful graphic scheme with corresponding flowers and landmarks of the area.

Looking into the Future

8. With the development of the railway network, railway gradually plays a significant role of Hong Kong's public transport while MTR stations have become part of our daily living. Most of the MTR stations are easily accessible with high passenger flow. We believe that we could further use MTR stations in promoting community art by encouraging active public participation in community art programmes to reflect local history and culture in the stations. This will not only help citizens and visitors to better understand the local history and culture, but also enhance the travelling environment for the passengers.

9. With reference to the experience in the past years, art elements with local cultural and historical favour will be incorporated into MTR stations in

new railway lines as well as existing lines during major renovation works. The communities will be involved in the art programme as far as possible to enhance the connection between the communities and their railway stations as well as incorporate local culture and characteristics into the stations through public participation.

10. The “art in mtr” initiative will be continued with a long term objective to have one unique art piece at each MTR station permanently. While we provide a high level of freedom for the participating artists, we find that some artists often found inspirations from the station surroundings, including the unique character and culture of the community, in creating the art pieces. Art pieces like “Wearing for Collective Memory” by Ms Man Fung-yi at Yuen Long Station and “Home with a View” by Ms Lucia N.Y. Cheung at Central Station are some good examples.

11. Meanwhile, the development of railway network is entering into a new era when the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, West Island Line, South Island Line (East), Kwun Tong Line Extension and Shatin to Central Link are being delivered. After completion of these railway lines, some districts without railway services at the moment like the Western District, Southern District, Whampao, To Kwa Wan, Kowloon City and Kai Tak, etc. will be served by railway network. We will take this opportunity to better reflect the character, history and culture of the communities into the station design of these new railway lines.

Railway lines under construction

12. West Island Line (WIL) is an extension of the MTR Island Line, from Sheung Wan to Kennedy Town via Sai Ying Pun and Hong Kong

University. Construction works of the WIL commenced in July 2009. All three new stations of WIL are located in one of the earliest settlement areas in Hong Kong featuring a substantial historical and heritage interest. More elements will be built in the stations to reflect the rich cultural fabric and heritage of the Western District.

13. Two community engagement programmes, namely “Our Memories of Western District” and “Our Impression of Western District”, have been launched to encourage participation of the community in the development of the artworks to be permanently displayed inside the stations.

14. To feature the unique cultural characteristics of Western District in the three new stations, three panoramic collages of historic scenes will be put up in the concourse of the stations. In May 2010, “Our Memories of Western District” Photographic Competition co-organised by the MTR Corporation and the Central and Western District Council was launched with the support from local community groups. Unique images of the vicinity such as traditional shops in Sai Ying Pun, tree wall at Forbes Street, heritage buildings in Western District, etc. are captured. Outstanding photographs will be selected as the theme picture and put up in the three new stations of WIL permanently. Thereafter, public will be invited to provide photographs that record their memories of the area to form a panoramic collage to enhance the sense of belonging to the railway.

15. “Our Impressions of Western District” is the other community art programme for the WIL to be organised with the Central and Western District Council, Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation and local community groups including the Conservancy Association Centre for Heritage. Workshops will be conducted for young people to let them better understand the local culture

and history before creation of the art pieces. The art pieces will be put up in the lift lobbies of Sai Ying Pun Station and Hong Kong University Station.

16. Apart from a panoramic collage, free standing sculptures will also be placed in the concourse of Kennedy Town Station.

17. The 26-km long Hong Kong Section of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL) is a strategic railway project leading from West Kowloon to the boundary of Hong Kong and Shenzhen. It will connect to the 16,000-km long National High-speed Railway Network. The art programme for XRL is being planned. The MTR Corporation will put up some art pieces of more international flavour at the terminus and piazza, which are located next to the West Kowloon Cultural District, to showcase Hong Kong being an international cosmopolitan.

Railway lines under planning

18. To reflect the community characteristics as well as historic and cultural elements in the station design in other new railway lines, i.e. South Island Line (East), Kwun Tong Line Extension and Shatin to Central Link, the principles stated in paragraphs 8 to 10 above will be followed. For example, special features of the adjoining theme park and art pieces reflecting the history and culture of Aberdeen will be incorporated in the stations of South Island Line (East). Art pieces reflecting the history of Hunghom ship dockyard and Sung Wong Toi will also be incorporated in Whampao Station of Kwun Tong Line Extension and To Kwa Wan Station of Shatin to Central Link respectively.

Conclusion

19. Members are invited to note the past and future development of the railway design in reflecting the historic and cultural elements as illustrated in this paper.

Transport and Housing Bureau

MTR Corporation

May 2010

**Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways**

Details of “art in mtr” initiative

Art in Station Architecture

Following the successful inception of “Airport Express Artwork Programme” in 1998, the art in station architecture programme was rolled out to other railway lines matching with their station renovation programme. Up to May 2010, 34 art pieces created by the artists from Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand and USA have been put up at different MTR stations as part of the station architecture.

Community Art Galleries

2. In 2000, the two footbridges adjoining Lam Tin Station were converted into “community art galleries” for the display of drawings and other art pieces prepared by students of nearby schools and artists from non-profit making groups in the area. The community art galleries have then been extended to other MTR stations. So far, a total of 53 community art galleries have been established in the MTR system and have become highly popular venues for the local community to showcase their creativity.

Roving Art

3. The “roving art” programme features short term art exhibitions at various MTR stations. The programme aims to promote community art by providing a venue for local artists to showcase their two-dimensional and three-dimensional artworks. Organizations in proximity to MTR stations are invited to exhibit their artwork. Around ten exhibitions will be held within the MTR networks each year.

Arttube

4. The “arttube” is a mini art gallery located near Entrance / Exit J of Central Station created to provide a platform for aspiring artists, designers and talented individuals in the creative industries to showcase their works. Since the inception of the “arttube” in 2003, about three to four art exhibitions have been held every year and these will continue.

Living Art

5. To add an interactive dimension into the “art in mtr” initiative, live musical and theatrical performances have been staged at MTR stations in the “living art” programme. The Central Subway of Hong Kong Station has been converted into a performance stage since 2004 for professional artists and amateur performers to demonstrate their artistic talents to the public. Performances are held every Friday evening. Passengers can drop by the “living art” performances to relax and take a break from the stress and pressure of city life.