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Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project

Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 11 July 2011

Vision of M+ and its latest development

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the planning and development of M+ (or Museum Plus) in the West Kowloon Cultural District ("WKCD"), and summarizes the views and concerns of the Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project ("the Joint Subcommittee") on the subject.

Background

2. In September 2003, the Government launched the "Invitation for Proposals" ("IFP") for developing WKCD. IFP specified a cluster of four museums with four themes (i.e. moving, image, modern art, and ink and design) and an art exhibition centre as mandatory requirements of the WKCD project. After IFP was discontinued in February 2006, the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region appointed the Consultative Committee on the Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of the West Kowloon Cultural District ("the Consultative Committee") in April 2006 to re-examine the need of the core arts and cultural facilities for WKCD.

3. In May 2008, the Subcommittee on West Kowloon Cultural District Development ("the Subcommittee"), which was established under the House Committee in the Third LegCo to study and follow up issues relating to the development of WKCD, received a briefing from the Administration on its proposed establishment of M+ in accordance with the recommendation in the Consultative Committee's Recommendation Report issued in June 2007. The mission of M+ would *"focus on 20th and 21st century visual culture, broadly*

defined, from a Hong Kong perspective and with a global vision", and "with an open, flexible and forward-looking attitude", M+ would aim to "inspire, delight, educate and engage the public, to explore diversity and foster creativity". Given the breadth of visual culture, it was proposed that design, moving image, popular culture and visual art (including ink art) would be the four initial broad groupings for M+.

4. To make the necessary preparatory work for M+, an interim M+ possessing similar functions as the permanent M+ although in a much smaller scale during the interim period would be established. The interim M+ would be a platform for training of professional staff and providing arts education to the public. It would also conduct research and build up collection with a view to laying a foundation for M+.

5. In its Report issued in June 2008, the Subcommittee raised concerns about the M+ project and set out a series of markers for its planning and development. The relevant extract of the Report is in **Appendix I**. The Administration's response to such concerns and markers is in **Appendix II**.

6. In June 2009, the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority ("WKCD") advised the Joint Subcommittee of its establishment of a Museum Policy and Management Services Department under the Chief Executive Officer of WKCD to undertake the M+ project, as well as the general road map of the planning and development of M+ in **Appendix III**. In June 2010, WKCD appointed Mr Lars Nittve as the Executive Director of M+, and he took up his post in January 2011. Mr Nittve's profile is in **Appendix IV**.

6. According to the Administration, the detailed Schedule of Accommodation for the arts and cultural facilities, including M+, in WKCD, as well as the detailed Development Plan ("DP") for WKCD, would be presented in Stage 3 Public Engagement exercise scheduled for 2011 summer. Taking into account the public's and stakeholders' views collected, the detailed DP would be finalized for submission to the Town Planning Board ("TPB") for consideration. Once TPB agrees to gazette the DP for public inspection, WKCD will proceed with the competitive process of the architectural design of M+ and execute the work plan of M+ and related activities. According to WKCD, M+ will open after 2016 with more than 40,000 sq m floor area, of which 20,000 sq m will be exhibition space.

Past discussions

7. The Joint Subcommittee discussed the planning and development of M+ at its meetings on 14 April and 19 June 2009. Members' views and concerns were highlighted in the ensuing paragraphs.

Planning and development of M+

8. Members noted with concern the arts and cultural sector's criticism against the Administration and WKCDA for the lack of cultural perspective in the planning of M+ and their lack of interest in participating in discussions with the local arts and cultural sector on the WKCD project. There was a view that M+ was a project of huge complexity and beyond the command of government officials. The implementation of M+ would require professional knowledge and expertise advice on the aesthetic framework and type of collections, which were crucial to the design of a museum facility. For the success of the M+ project, it was of utmost importance that a mechanism had to be established to solicit professional views. Members also noted a concern from the arts and cultural sector about how WKCDA would take heed of the local needs in implementing the M+ project, considering that the only curatorial professional in the Museum Committee under WKCDA was a non-local expert from Japan.

9. According to the Administration and WKCDA, WKCDA was tasked to implement the recommendations of the Consultative Committee, which had consolidated the findings of its three Advisory Groups, viz. the Performing Arts and Tourism Advisory Group, the Museums Advisory Group and the Financial Matters Advisory Group, after lengthy consultation with the public, including arts professionals. In view of the constantly changing arts and cultural scene, the stakeholders concerned as well as members of the public would be further consulted on the planning of WKCD. The views so collected would form the basis for the design of the arts and cultural venues in WKCD. The development of M+, including its vision, mission and groupings, had adopted the recommendation of the Museum Advisory Group. WKCDA would explore whether there was any room for the promotion of Chinese culture in M+.

Interim M+

10. Some members urged the Administration to expedite the setting up of an interim M+ to test out the viability of M+ and provide more details about its implementation. The Administration should also consider expanding the theme of M+, as the current one would restrict the scope of its exhibits and could not provide enough attraction for visitors. WKCDA was urged to make use of existing arts resources and work with local arts organizations to take forward the interim M+.

11. According to the Administration and WKCDA, the interim M+ would be launched under the auspices of WKCDA by curatorial professionals recruited to deliver the M+ project. WKCDA would work in partnership with the arts and cultural sector to take forward the interim M+ in the form of roving exhibition in different areas of Hong Kong, with a view to bringing the concept

of M+ to the public. In addition, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department had started to take stock of collections which might be suitable for display under the four initial broad groupings of M+. Based on the recommendations of the Consultative Committee, the collections of M+ would cover historical exhibits/master arts pieces produced in the 20th century as well as contemporary creative artworks of the 21st century. These collections would be gathered from multiple sources including acquisition and donation.

Relevant papers

12. A list of the relevant papers with their hyperlinks at LegCo's website is in **Appendix V**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
8 July 2011

**Report of the Subcommittee on West Kowloon Cultural District Development
("WKCD") on Phase III Study to the House Committee
(issued on 20 June 2008)**

Extract from Chapter VI - Conclusions and the way forward

Careful planning for M+

6.18 On museum facilities in WKCD, the Subcommittee on West Kowloon Cultural District Development ("the Subcommittee") remains doubtful of the prospect of the 43 365 m² M+ in becoming the kind of visual culture institution with the international standing it has aspired to achieve especially during the first few decades of its operation. The Subcommittee notes that the M+ concept, which aims to provide an interactive platform to inspire, delight, educate and engage the public, encourage dialogue, interaction and partnership, explore diversity and foster creativity and cross-fertilization, has not been fully tested in current public museums. The Administration intends to provide the space to facilitate non-conventional display of "visual culture", which includes not only visual art (such as installation, painting, photography and sculpture), but also architecture, design (such as fashion, graphic and product design), moving image (such as film, video and television) and popular culture (such as advertising and comics). The Subcommittee considers that there is a market for the development of visual culture, but the success of M+ does not only lie in what it brings to the public but how to make it happen.

6.19 The Subcommittee shares the concern of some deputations that the entire M+ proposal is still at the conceptual stage. Bearing in mind that M+ would amount to a substantial increase by 52% of the total space provision of all the existing public museums in Hong Kong, and that its total capital costs will amount to \$4.749 billion and 78% of the operating deficit of WKCD will come from M+, there is a need for M+ to proceed in a more cautious manner. Given that the international status of a museum can only be built up over time, the provision of a net exhibition space of 16 000 m² in Phase I may be on the high side. Consideration should therefore be given to whether the implementation of M+ could be deferred until sufficient experience has been built up or be further phased to allow for a more progressive implementation timeframe.

6.20 The Subcommittee is aware that the Administration has no intention to downsize M+ or further phase its implementation. The Administration remains confident that M+ would proceed as planned so long as they could hire the right curatorial team and they could make use of the rich collection on visual culture (over 62 000 items) already acquired and currently kept by Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD"). The Administration insists that further downsizing would hinder the development of M+ into a world-class contemporary cultural and arts institution, making it difficult to realize its vision.

6.21 The Subcommittee is gravely concerned that notwithstanding the huge sum of money injected into the building infrastructure and exhibits, the patronage of M+ might be far below FA's estimates, and in turn it would be even more difficult for M+ to build up its status as a world renowned museum facility. The Subcommittee recognises that the engaging of an international operator to operate M+ so as to benefit from the collection and brand name of these international operators may not be consistent with the "Now" and "Hong Kong" perspectives of M+. Nevertheless, co-operation and partnership with overseas and Mainland institutions would effectively raise M+'s international status in particular in the early years of its establishment and this in turn may help in its long-term growth. Need for building a competent curatorial and management team for M+

6.22 The Subcommittee is not convinced that there is no scope of trying out the new curatorial concept in existing museums facilities. The Subcommittee is rather perturbed by the Administration's explanation which implies that the "innovative" approach of M+ is far beyond the reach of the curatorial expertise and experience of the existing museum professionals engaged by LCSD. The Subcommittee does not consider it sensible to entrust such a huge project entirely in the hands of a head curator no matter how competent he/she is. It is important that this head curator is supported by a large team of competent professional and managerial staff who share the same vision, who know Hong Kong and who are prepared to work under a sound corporate system.

Need for integration with the LCSD museum staff

6.23 The Subcommittee considers that the local museum professionals, the majority of which are engaged by LCSD, should not be marginalized in the course of planning and developing M+. Future co-operation will be extremely difficult especially when M+ needs to make use of the 62 000 items of collection in visual culture currently kept by LCSD. Besides, it would be a waste of public resources if there is no integration between M+ and other public museums, and no sharing of experience and expertise between their staff. It will be for the good of Hong Kong's long-term development if the museum staff in LCSD and other local

museums are exposed to the same kind of curatorial culture in M+. In the circumstances, there should be some established arrangements to facilitate secondment of suitable LCSD staff to the interim M+ so that it can have the first core team to test out the M+ concept at the earliest opportunity and speed up the transfer of knowledge and expertise.

Markers for the planning and development of M+

6.24 Having set out the above observations and concerns, the Subcommittee would like to state its position that it supports the development of a flagship museum facility with a focus on the Hong Kong perspective as this would be conducive to developing WKCD into a cultural hub in the Pearl River Delta or even the Asian region. The Subcommittee is also keen to see the success of M+ and would invite the Administration and the future WKCD Authority ("WKCDA") to give attention to the following matters in taking forward the M+ proposal –

- (a) the Administration should explain to the general public in an easily comprehensible manner what M+ is meant to be, before starting to design and build the M+ infrastructure;
- (b) the Administration should make the optimum use of the interim M+ in North Point not just as a training ground for future staff of M+ but as a temporary exhibition centre for public viewing and for testing out the M+ concept in a smaller scale;
- (c) the Administration should ensure full co-operation between M+ and the existing museums under the management of LCSD by promoting staff integration, such as staff attachment programmes, and putting in place contractual arrangements over the borrowing of collections from existing museums;
- (d) the Administration should encourage current local curatorial staff to take on the new challenges in M+ instead of relying entirely on curators coming from overseas as they may not understand the "Hong Kong perspective" as much as local curators;
- (e) the future WKCDA should conduct more extensive consultation with the museum community before proceeding to establish the management board of M+ and recruiting the M+ staff;

- (f) WKCDA should not adopt Design-and-Build mode of development for constructing M+ and should conduct a design competition if the iconic effect of M+ is crucial to the attraction of quality collections in future; and
- (g) to enhance M+'s position as the major museum icon in Asia, M+ should also work closely with museums in the Mainland as well as those in the Asian region to facilitate exhibition of important collections from these places.

Source:

Report of the Subcommittee on West Kowloon Cultural District Development on Phase III Study to the House Committee

(http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/hc/sub_com/hs02/reports/hs02-rpt080620-e.pdf)

Appendix II

Extract from the summary of concerns raised by LegCo Members in the Third LegCo in relation to the West Kowloon Cultural District project and the Administration's response

(D) Development of M+

Issues/suggestions raised by LegCo Members	Administration's earlier response	Administration/ West Kowloon Cultural District Authority's response (as at 7 September 2009)
(1) Separate design and construction contracts for iconic facilities such as the M+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Kowloon Cultural District Authority ("WKCD") would have the flexibility to decide on the procurement approach for the arts and cultural facilities in West Kowloon Cultural District ("WKCD"). According to the Financial Adviser, even though the design and construction of the facilities were procured in two independent contracts, there would not be significant difference in the construction cost estimates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The major consideration for the architectural design of the museum should be the functions of the museum and the activities to be held there. The curator of the museum, once on board, would draw up well-conceived plans for M+ and consider the most appropriate option.
(2) Downsizing M+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M+ would be developed in two phases to tie in with the overall development of WKCD. As the scale of M+ would be comparable to that of world-renowned museums, further downsizing would hinder the development of M+ into a world-class contemporary cultural and arts institution, making it difficult to realize its vision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An on-going consultancy study on market analysis of the museum commissioned by the Authority would ascertain through market researches the existing and potential audienceship/ clientele of the museum. Based on the findings of the study, the Authority would critically examine the appropriate phasing of development of the museum.

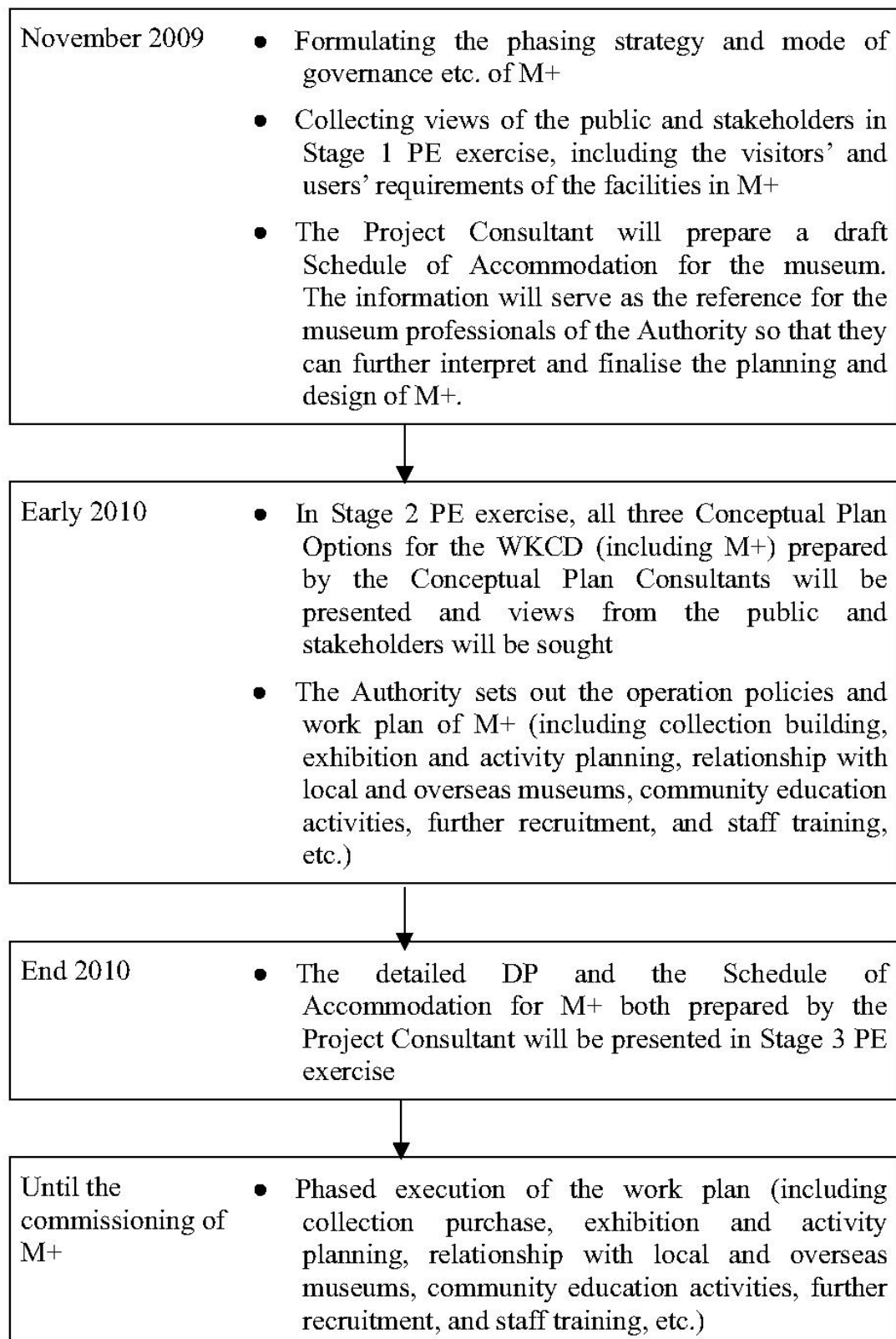
Issues/suggestions raised by LegCo Members	Administration's earlier response	Administration/ West Kowloon Cultural District Authority's response (as at 7 September 2009)
<p>(3) Use of the Interim M+ in North Point as a training ground for future staff of M+ and a temporary exhibition centre for public viewing and for testing out the M+ concept in a smaller scale</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Museum Committee ("MC") established under the WKCDA Board to start preparatory work of M+ did not recommend the site at Oil Street in North Point for setting up the Interim M+ as the original building at the site was too small. If a new building was to be built for setting up the Interim M+, it would be necessary to demolish an existing building next to it and to deal with the land contamination issue so arising. MC would continue to explore other locations and agreed that the Interim M+ should organise activities in different areas of Hong Kong to promote the concept of M+ to the public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives of the Government and the Authority briefed the Members of the Joint Subcommittee on the feasibility of using a site at Oil Street in North Point for setting up the Interim M+ at the Subcommittee meeting held on 27 February 2009. The Authority considered the site not suitable for setting up the Interim M+ because the size of the original building at the site was too small. And if a new building was to be built for setting up the Interim M+, it would be necessary to demolish an existing building next to it and to deal with the land contamination issue so arising. • The team of experts to be recruited by the Authority would come on board by the end of 2009 or early 2010. They would be responsible for organizing activities in different areas of Hong Kong to familiarize the public with the concept of "M+".

Issues/suggestions raised by LegCo Members	Administration's earlier response	Administration/ West Kowloon Cultural District Authority's response (as at 7 September 2009)
<p>(4) Building up collections for M+</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major museums managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") had in place a very rich collection on visual culture which amounts to more than 60 000 items of exhibits. There should be ample room for M+ to make use of these collections in store. The initial capital of \$1 billion assumed by the Financial Adviser would help to build up collections commensurate with the status of M+ upon its opening in 2015. WKCDA would enrich the collection of M+ in an on-going manner with its own financial resources and other sources of funds available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It took a long time to build up the museum's collection, which should be expanded step by step in accordance with the goal and the direction set out for the museum. The upfront endowment provided by the Government had already included a sum of \$1 billion for building up M+'s initial collections upon its commissioning and an annual collection budget of \$20 million thereafter as well. In addition, museum's collection could be obtained from donation and subscription. M+ could cooperate with individual art galleries, collectors and artists to borrow collections for short-term exhibition use.
<p>(5) Collaboration between M+ and museums in the Mainland as well as those in the Asian region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WKCDA would establish links and network with museums in Asia and other parts of the world to explore future cooperation opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> M+ would work closely with museums as well as arts and cultural circles from different regions by organizing exhibitions, exchanges and seminars. These activities would not only provide a platform for the artists to showcase their works but also presented an opportunity for the citizens to appreciate the arts and cultures of other regions.

Issues/suggestions raised by LegCo Members	Administration's earlier response	Administration/ West Kowloon Cultural District Authority's response (as at 7 September 2009)
<p>(6) Arrangement for ownership of collection of M+</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ownership of M+'s collections, obtained through donation, acquisition or any other means, should rest with WKCDA. To ensure proper protection of the collections of M+, WKCDA might, when establishing M+ and its governing structure deal with the ownership of the collections of M+ through the making of by-laws which would be subject to LegCo's approval. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The upfront endowment given to the Authority included the provision for the initial collection and the annual collection budget thereafter for the M+. Since the construction of M+ and collection purchase were paid out of public money, it would be necessary that the Authority should handle the ownership matter with care so as to ensure proper use of public resources and protected public interest. The Authority would consider the findings of the consultancy study on the mode of governance of the museum and make reference to the practices of similar overseas museums in dealing with the ownership issue of M+'s collections.
<p>(7) Co-operation and integration between M+ and the existing museums under the management of LCSD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government would work closely with the WKCDA and establish links in various aspects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Museums managed by the LCSD would collaborate with M+ and explore different levels of collaboration.

Issues/suggestions raised by LegCo Members	Administration's earlier response	Administration/ West Kowloon Cultural District Authority's response (as at 7 September 2009)
<p>(8) Long-term plan for the development of curatorial professionals in parallel with the development of M+</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Administration undertook to advise members on the existing number of curatorial staff in Hong Kong, the manpower project, requirements and training plan for curators to complement the scale and themes of M+. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAB had started the preparation for the Manpower Mapping Study on the Arts and Cultural Sector. It planned to commission the manpower mapping study in the second half of 2009 for completion in 2010. The findings of the study would shed light on the needs of the arts and cultural sector for all sorts of talents. The Authority would also draw up appropriate plans for the manpower needs in different areas for the WKCD facilities to tie in with the manpower requirement when the construction of WKCD facilities were completed.
<p>(9) Public education on M+ and consultation with the museum community before proceeding to establish the management board of M+ and recruiting the M+ staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The WKCDA would engage the arts and cultural sector to gauge their views (in particular the concerned museum organisations) on the planning and development of the museum facilities in the WKCD to ensure that facilities and operation of the museum could meet their needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Authority conducted public education campaigns and consultation exercises at different stages of development in order to gauge the views of the public and stakeholders through different channels. This was to ensure that their needs were taken care of and considered at different stages of development and planning.

**General Road Map of the Planning and Development of M+
(as at 19 June 2009)**



Source: LC Paper No. CB(2)1869/08-09(01)

Profile of Dr Lars NITTVE, Executive Director, M+ of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority

- Dr Nittve was appointed Executive Director, M+ of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority ("WKCD") in June 2010 and he took up his post in January 2011. Dr Nittve has over 30 years of experience as a director, curator and educator of the arts. From 1978-1985 he lectured on art history at the University of Stockholm while concurrently writing as senior art critic for Stockholm's Svenska Dagbladet newspaper and as contributor to New York's Artforum magazine.
- Beginning in 1986 he embarked upon a career in museum curating and directing that saw him successfully hold posts at the Moderna Museet, the Rooseum in Malmo, Sweden, and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebaek, Denmark. In 1998 he was named the first Director of Tate Modern, which opened in May 2000 to great acclaim.
- From 2001-2010, while serving as Director of the Moderna Museet, Dr Nittve helped double the museum's attendance, triple its donor members, raise approximately US\$62 million in donations, and host a number of critically acclaimed exhibitions featuring artists such as Max Ernst and Andy Warhol. In 2003, Moderna Museet was named Museum of the Year by the Association of Swedish Museums. During his time there, Dr Nittve also developed a training programme with the goal of deepening appreciation and understanding of visual arts among teachers and promoting it as an educational tool in school activities.
- In 2009, Dr Nittve was awarded an honorary PhD at Umeå University in Sweden and he was named professor at the same university in 2010.

Source:

WKCD Website

(http://www.wkcd.hk/en/organisational_structure/profiles_of_senior_executives/index.html)

**Relevant papers on
Vision of M+ and its latest development**

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Subcommittee on West Kowloon Cultural District Development	---	Report of the Subcommittee on West Kowloon Cultural District Development on Phase III Study to the House Committee
Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project	13.1.2009 Item II	Agenda Minutes
	27.2.2009 Item II(a)	Agenda Minutes
	14.4.2009 Item II(b)	Agenda Minutes
	19.6.2009 Item II(c)	Agenda Minutes
	7.9.2009 Item II	Agenda Minutes
	16.4.2010 Item II(b)	Agenda Minutes
	29.3.2011 Item II	Agenda Minutes