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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 25 February 2013**

**Xiqu Centre Design Competition**

**Purpose**

This paper provides background information on the design competition for the Xiqu Centre of the West Kowloon Cultural District ("WKCD") and highlights the relevant views of members of the Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project formed in the Fourth Legislative Council ("the former Joint Subcommittee").

**Background**

2. Following its submission of a Development Plan ("DP") for WKCD to the Town Planning Board ("TPB") for consideration in December 2011, the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority ("WKCDA") embarked on the preparation of design competitions for the landmark facilities in WKCD, with a view to commencing the construction works as soon as possible upon the completion of the statutory planning process. On 9 March 2012, WKCDA announced the launching of WKCD's first design competition for the Xiqu Centre, which was scheduled for completion around the end of 2015.

3. The Xiqu Centre, located at the eastern edge of WKCD on the corner of Canton Road and Austin Road West, would be the first of the 17 core arts and cultural facilities ("CACF") to be opened in WKCD and one of the 15 proposed performing arts venues. The design competition covered the design of a 1 100-seat main theatre, a 400-seat small theatre, a Tea House for performances for audiences up to 200 and ancillary training and education facilities. WKCDA had set up a Steering Committee comprising representatives of

professional institutes and arts and cultural disciplines to oversee the competition. The selection process of the design/design consultant for the Xiqu Centre as announced by WKCD is in **Appendix I**.

4. At its meeting on 27 June 2012, the former Joint Subcommittee was briefed by the Administration and WKCD on the progress of the design competitions for the implementation of the WKCD project. Members were advised that in respect of the Xiqu Centre design competition, WKCD had adopted the "One-stage Open Project Competition" mode as recommended by its Procurement Strategy Consultant ("the Consultant"). Members also noted that WKCD issued a Request for Expression of Interest for pre-qualification for the Xiqu Centre design competition in March 2012 and a total of 54 submissions were received by the deadline of 10 April 2012.

5. On 17 July 2012, WKCD announced that five design teams<sup>1</sup> had been shortlisted for submission of proposals for the design of the Xiqu Centre. According to WKCD, the design teams were shortlisted through a selection exercise conducted by the WKCD management with the assistance of an Independent Professional Advisor and the participation of a Jury Panel. The outcome was supported by the Steering Committee and approved by the Development Committee and the Board of WKCD. The shortlisted design teams were invited to submit schematic designs of their concepts and their entries would be assessed by the Jury Panel in accordance with four broad categories of assessment guidelines, namely architectural design aspects, technical design aspects, sustainable design aspects and ability to work together with the client team/consultants/stakeholders.

6. On 10 December 2012, WKCD announced the appointment of Bing Thom Architects and Ronald Lu & Partners Company Limited ("BTA & RLP") as the design consultant for the Xiqu Centre. According to WKCD, BTA & RLP was unanimously recommended by the Jury Panel as the winning design team. The press release issued by WKCD containing information on the winning design and BTA & RLP is in **Appendix II**.

## **Members' views**

7. The design competition for the Xiqu Centre had not been specifically discussed by the former Joint Subcommittee. Nevertheless, members of the former Joint Subcommittee had expressed views on the subject of design

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<sup>1</sup> The five shortlisted design teams are Bing Thom Architects and Ronald Lu & Partners Company Limited, Foster + Partners with O Studio Architects, Mecanoo architecten/Leigh & Orange, Safdie Architects LLC and Wong & Ouyang (HK) Ltd (in collaboration with Diamond and Schmitt).

competitions for CACF of WKCD at various meetings in the context of discussing the proposed DP and the progress of the design competitions for the implementation of the WKCD project. Members' views are highlighted in the ensuing paragraphs.

8. Members called on WKCDA to fulfill its undertaking to hold architectural design competitions for individual landmark facilities in WKCD and provide sufficient time for local and overseas designers to prepare their submissions for the design competitions. They also impressed on WKCDA the need to conduct the design competitions in a fair and open manner and avoid conflict of interest. WKCDA assured members that the design competitions for facilities in WKCD would be held in tandem with the statutory planning process relating to TPB's consideration of DP. WKCDA would ensure the conduct of the competitions in an open and fair manner and in accordance with international practice, and would maintain high standards and requirements regarding declaration of interest. WKCDA envisaged that first-rate submissions would be received from local and international designers.

9. In response to members' enquiries about the delivery of facilities in WKCD, WKCDA advised that the winning designs of the design competitions would be adopted for implementation. WKCDA had engaged the Consultant to analyze, select and recommend a procurement strategy for delivery of CACF, other arts and cultural facilities and retail, dining and entertainment facilities to be provided in WKCD. Upon the recommendations made by the Consultant, WKCDA had selected the Xiqu Centre as the first CACF for design competition and the competition would serve as a useful reference for subsequent competitions. WKCDA was still considering alternative funding sources for the development of three venues with commercial contents (namely, the Mega Performance Venue, Exhibition Centre and Musical Theatre). Subject to alternative funding options, WKCDA had yet to decide whether design competitions would be conducted for these CACF.

10. Concern was raised about the consistency of the winning designs of the design competitions with the City Park conceptual plan ("CP") designed by Foster+Partners ("F+P"). WKCDA assured members that all the facilities in WKCD would be built within the context of WKCD DP and the urban design guidelines under the F+P scheme. The main purpose of DP was to lay out WKCD area and set apart the land for various arts and cultural facilities; for other land uses such as commercial, hotel, retail and public open spaces; and for internal infrastructural projects. DP, which was formulated on the basis of F+P's CP, took into account the development parameters that had been set out in the relevant draft Outline Zoning Plan. While each individual facility could preserve its distinctiveness, consistency of all facilities in WKCD could be maintained.

### **Latest development**

11. The Administration will brief the Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project on the process and result of the design competition for the Xiqu Centre at the meeting on 25 February 2013.

### **Relevant papers**

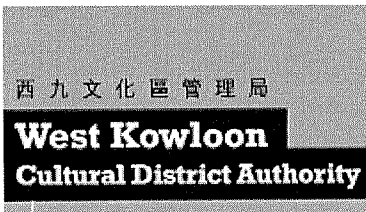
12. A list of the relevant papers with their hyperlinks at the Legislative Council's website is in **Appendix III**.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
21 February 2013

### **Selection Process of the design/design consultant for the Xiqu Centre of the West Kowloon Cultural District**

1. Interested parties submit Expression of Interest ("EOI") to the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority ("WKCDA") to pre-qualify for the Xiqu Centre design competition by 10 April 2012.
2. The EOI submissions will be assessed against a set of criteria which measure their professional and financial capability, resources, past experience and track record, as well as quality assurance.
3. The WKCDA Management, led by the Steering Committee and assisted by an Independent Professional Advisor, will shortlist four to six design teams for consideration and endorsement by the Development Committee and the Board of WKCDA. Names of the shortlisted design teams will be posted on WKCDA's website.
4. The shortlisted design teams will be invited to produce and submit schematic designs, models, etc., of their concepts; they will be compensated with a fee of HK\$1,000,000 for preparation and upon satisfactory completion of the submission.
5. The design entries from the shortlisted design teams will be assessed by a Jury Panel of prominent leaders in the relevant professional and arts and culture fields. The Panel will examine the schematic designs, together with assessment through interviews, workshops, etc., to ascertain the individual team's ability. The selected team will be recommended to the Development Committee and the Board of WKCDA for appointment.
6. Shortlisted design teams will be provided with lists of nominated Theatre Planning Sub-consultants and Acoustic Sub-consultants for selection to collaborate in the competition stage.

*Source: Press release entitled "West Kowloon Cultural District Authority Announces Design Competition for its First Arts Venue" issued by WKCDA on 9 March 2012*



## Press Releases

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10 December 2012

### **Leading Hong Kong Architects Chosen To Design Xiqu Centre The First Arts Venue In The West Kowloon Cultural District** Exceptional Shortlist Of Design Teams Announced For M+

The West Kowloon Cultural District Authority ("WKCDA") announced today the appointment of two Hong Kong born architects to collaborate on the architectural design of the Xiqu (Chinese opera) Centre, one of the landmark cultural venues for the West Kowloon Cultural District, scheduled for commissioning in 2016.

The two lead architects, Bing Thom in Vancouver and Ronald Lu of Hong Kong, have formed a joint venture partnership Bing Thom Architects and Ronald Lu & Partners Company Ltd and will work with the Authority over the next 4 years to design and deliver a world-class facility for the preservation, development and promotion of this important art form of Chinese cultural heritage in Hong Kong.

The Xiqu Centre will be the first of 17 core arts and cultural venues to be opened within the District. The venue will provide a platform for the Xiqu communities to interact, develop, produce the finest examples of Cantonese and other Chinese opera performances, attract new audiences, educate and collaborate with and host international cultural programmes.

Occupying a prime site of 13,800 square metres at the eastern edge of the District on the corner of Canton Road and Austin Road West, the centre will provide a gateway of access to the Cultural District. Early concept designs illustrate that the building will provide a striking entrance, a lantern for the District, employing the Moongate traditional Chinese motif and a dynamic treatment of the facade. Its flow or "qi" is expressed with curvilinear paths and forms. The architecture incorporates a generous amount of public leisure space, in addition to 2,000 square metres of training and education facilities, two superbly designed auditoria for 1,100 and 400 seats (the latter to be developed in phase 2) respectively and a traditional Tea House for performances for audiences up to 280.

Bing Thom and Ronald Lu have a wealth of relevant experience in the design of performing arts and Chinese opera venues including: Ronald Lu & Partners' design for the first purpose-designed Chinese opera facilities in Hong Kong, the Ko Shan Theatre Annex, Hong Kong; Bing Thom Architects' ongoing project of Shijiazhuang Grand Theatre; The Chan Centre for the Performing Arts at UBC, Vancouver, (completed in 1997) and; The Arena Stage Expansion in Washington DC (completed in 2010).

Mrs Carrie Lam, Chairman of the WKCDA Board said the Government is firmly committed to providing world-class arts and cultural facilities in the West Kowloon Cultural District, "The West Kowloon Cultural District is one of the world's largest arts and cultural projects which will raise awareness of the rich performing arts scene in Hong Kong both locally and internationally. The positioning of the Xiqu Centre within the district will enable multi-disciplinary dialogue and interaction between Xiqu and other performing arts. By building this cultural hub, we are investing both in our future and our heritage, to celebrate Hong Kong's unique cultural identity."

Mr Bing Thom said on behalf of Bing Thom Architects and Ronald Lu & Partners, "The commission for Hong Kong holds a special place in my heart, a true homecoming for me - my first building in my birthplace. It is an honour to return to design a home for this most authentic Chinese performing art,

the first building for the West Kowloon Cultural District. The world is fast becoming a blend of Eastern and Western cultures and Hong Kong captures this magic by nurturing and celebrating Xiqu tradition. The Xiqu Centre design is a contemporary expression of a traditional Chinese opera building to show our wonderful art form to the world. The West Kowloon Cultural District gives Hong Kong talent its world stage!"

The design team was picked unanimously by a Jury Panel made up of prominent leaders in the relevant professional and cultural sectors in Hong Kong, China and internationally: Mr. Cui Kai, Architect, China; Prof. Odile Decq, Architect/ Urbanist, France; Mr. Jordi Farrando, Architect, Spain; Mr. Lee Shing See, WKCDA Development Committee member and Chairman of the Steering Committee and Engineer, Hong Kong, China; Mr. Mao Chun Fai, Fredric, Theatre Director, Hong Kong, China; Mr. Pau Shiu Hung, Architect, Hong Kong, China and; Mr. Yuen Siu Fai, Vice Chairman of the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong.

Also announced today was the shortlist of six design teams that have been invited to submit proposals for the architectural design of M+, Hong Kong's future museum for 20th and 21st century visual culture within the District, scheduled for completion in 2017. M+ is an ambitious project, the scale of the museum building alone, at around 62,000 square metres, will be on par with the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Situated on the waterfront of the Victoria Harbour at the edge of a 14-hectare park, the architecture brief will be shaped around the museum's core values. It will provide vital space for artists to meet, exhibit and experiment and will house a world-class permanent collection of Hong Kong, Chinese, and Asian visual culture: art, design, architecture and the moving image.

The six shortlisted teams are:

Herzog & de Meuron + TFP Farrells  
Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue Nishizawa/SANAA  
Renzo Piano Building Workshop  
Shigeru Ban Architects + Thomas Chow Architects  
SNOHETTA  
Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects + Benoy Limited

#### (Profile of Shortlisted Design Teams)

Mrs Lam said, "The shortlist of design teams is phenomenal by any international standards. M+ will be a museum for the Hong Kong people, firmly rooted in the location and its unique culture, providing a Hong Kong perspective with a global vision."

Between now and the opening of these first buildings, WKCDA is committed to providing a platform for arts communities to interact, engage, learn and develop and will stage an exciting programme of events in the new year, heralded by an outdoor concert and street performances festival *Freespace Fest* this weekend.

The District's first cultural event was the *West Kowloon Bamboo Theatre* which was staged at the future site of the Xiqu Centre near Canton Road during the Chinese New Year in 2012 and will be repeated on a larger scale in 2013 due to overwhelming demand. Mobile M+, a series of pop-up "nomadic" exhibitions curated by M+ scheduled to occur leading up to the opening of the M+ museum in 2017 was launched in May with *Mobile M+: Yau Ma Tei*, an exhibition of interventions by Hong Kong artists within the museum's future neighbourhood. The next exhibition, *Inflation!* will open in March and run through to May to coincide with the first edition of Art Basel in Hong Kong while in January M+ will collaborate with the Asia Art Archive to present new work by Song Dong for an exhibition at Artistree.

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

#### **The West Kowloon Cultural District**

The West Kowloon Cultural District in Hong Kong is one of the largest arts and cultural projects in the world. Its vision is to provide a vibrant cultural quarter for the city; a vital platform for the local arts scene to interact, develop and collaborate; and major facilities to host and produce world-class exhibitions, performances and arts and cultural events. The District will include 17 core arts and cultural venues and over 30,000 square metres of space for arts education. It will be a low-density development, providing ample open green space and embracing two kilometres of a vibrant harbour-front promenade, 23 hectares of open space and a green avenue, closely connected with its neighbourhood.

The project will be developed in phases with construction scheduled to commence in 2013. The venues to be commissioned include the Xiqu Centre, M+ (20th and 21st century visual culture museum), a 14-hectare park incorporating Freespace with an outdoor stage, a Lyric Theatre, a Centre for Contemporary Performance, Medium Theatre I, a Music Centre with a Concert and Recital Hall, a Musical Theatre, a Mega Performance Venue and an Exhibition Centre. A host of ancillary facilities including a Resident Company Centre, other creative learning facilities and a number of Arts Pavilions for visual arts exhibitions will also be constructed.

### **Xiqu (Chinese opera)**

Xiqu, also called Chinese opera, is a form of performing arts which integrates singing, acting, speech, martial arts, gongs and drums, strings, costume and body movement. Xiqu performers make use of symbolic gestures and facial expression to portray the characters and communicate with the audience.

According to statistics in 1950s, there were originally 360 forms of Xiqu in China. Today, more than 200 genres are still performed on stage. The best known genres including Kunqu, Cantonese opera and Beijing opera, were added to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2001, 2009 and 2010 respectively.

Cantonese opera is the first world intangible cultural heritage in Hong Kong. In recent years, the number of Cantonese opera performances and operatic song concerts has increased to over one thousand per year, with attendance figures for Chinese opera performances ranked highest among the four major types of performing arts (theatre, music, dance and Xiqu).

### **The Xiqu Centre**

The Xiqu Centre will symbolise the importance of Xiqu and its rich heritage for our city. It is conceived to support and promote Xiqu as a contemporary art form making it accessible to new audiences, and keeping this remarkable piece of our heritage alive for future generations. A cultural sanctuary, blending theatre, art and public space, the centre will be a place for contemplation and celebration. Like the soft glow of a lantern behind a bead curtain, the Xiqu Centre will light up the Eastern entrance of the West Kowloon Cultural District and act as a lantern for Hong Kong.

In the search for the essence of Xiqu, the winning design is centred around four core design principles: a gateway and a performance pavilion; the courtyard; nature and the urban landscape; and a journey of transition and flow.

The concept of gateway and pavilion is embodied in the siting of the building. All four corners of the site are open to welcome visitors to the centre.

The concept of courtyard is embodied in the unique building massing. Below the 1,100 seat Main Theatre is a generous weather protected public space for the citizens of Hong Kong, an urban stage for informal events and celebrations.

The concepts of nature and urban landscape are expressed in a three dimensional landscape treatment found throughout all levels of the complex.

The concept of "flow" or "qi" is expressed with curvilinear planes and form. The exterior façade is curved with arched openings. Multi-level circulation paths capture the pedestrian flow from adjoining sites and the neighbourhoods



The Xiqu Centre design has been conceived with sustainability in mind from start to finish. The design team has carried out initial energy test models on the design and are confident that the required sustainability targets can be met. The structural design allows the building to be constructed from the top and bottom at the same time. This innovative and efficient construction approach will ensure the building will be completed at pace, enabling the centre to open as soon as possible, as the first building on the West Kowloon Cultural District site.

### **Bing Thom Architects and Ronald Lu & Partners**

Bing Thom Architects ("BTA") is an internationally recognised Canadian architecture and urban planning firm with a 30-year history in large scale performing arts, cultural and public institutional projects. With major works in Canada, the US, and China, BTA is known for design excellence and project leadership. Winner of the Royal Architecture Institute of Canada 2011 Gold Medal and 2010 Firm Award, BTA inspires diverse teams of professionals to produce exceptional work.

Ronald Lu & Partners ("RLP") is an award winning architecture firm founded in 1976 by Ronald Lu, with major works in Hong Kong and Mainland China. A leader in sustainable design, RLP is also recognised for design excellence in Community and Cultural projects, including the first purpose designed Chinese opera facilities in Hong Kong, the Ko Shan Theatre Annex. Since 2004, RLP has won over 50 local and international design awards. RLP believes architecture is an act of change that aims to inspire humanity and create a better environment for future generations.

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**Relevant papers on  
Xiqu Centre Design Competition**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Former Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project	29.3.2011 (Item II)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Former Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project	29.11.2011 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Former Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project	13.2.2012 (Item II)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Former Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project	27.6.2012 (Item II)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">CB(2)2369/11-12(03)</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>