

# 立法會 *Legislative Council*

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

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat  
for the meeting on 23 July 2014**

### **Planning and development of M+**

#### **Purpose**

This paper provides background information on the planning and development of M+ in the West Kowloon Cultural District ("WKCD"), and summarizes the major views and concerns on the subject expressed by members of the Joint Subcommittees formed under the Panel on Home Affairs and the Panel on Development in the Fourth and Fifth Legislative Council ("LegCo") to monitor the implementation of the WKCD project.

#### **Background**

2. M+ is a new museum for visual culture in Hong Kong to be located at the western end of WKCD. According to the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority ("WKCDA"), the mission of M+ is to focus on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century visual culture, broadly defined, from a Hong Kong perspective, the perspective of now, and with a global vision, with its collections encompassing the disciplines of visual art, design, architecture and moving image.

3. In June 2009, WKCDA advised the former Joint Subcommittee of the Fourth LegCo of its establishment of a Museum Policy and Management Services Department under the Chief Executive Officer of WKCDA to undertake the M+ project. In June 2010, WKCDA appointed Dr Lars Nittve as the Executive Director of M+, and he took up his post in January 2011.

4. Following an international competition, the Swiss architect firm of Herzog & de Meuron, in joint venture with Hong Kong-based TFP Farrells and Ove Arup & Partners Hong Kong ("HdM"), was selected in June 2013 to design and administer the M+ project. The M+ design consultancy services commenced in September 2013. The Joint Subcommittee was briefed on the schematic design of M+ at its meeting on 29 November 2013. Members noted that with approximately 60 000 square metres in gross floor area ("GFA"), M+ would house a diversity of gallery spaces, education facilities and museum offices. At ground and lower levels, access will be provided to the Park and other WKCD facilities, alongside a public resource centre, theatres, retail and dining facilities, and back-of-house functions including conservation and storage facilities. According to information provided by the Administration in November 2013, the M+ project, as part of the batch 1 facilities to be delivered in WKCD, is targeted for completion by end 2017.

## **Members' concerns**

### M+ collections and acquisitions

#### *Positioning of M+ collections*

5. Enquiries were raised by members about the scope and strategy for the collections of M+, in particular whether it would focus on the artworks of Hong Kong visual culture, and how the vantage point of M+ was different from the leading museums in the West. As explained by WKCDA, the mission of M+ would focus on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century visual culture from a Hong Kong perspective and with a global vision. In terms of geographical priorities, Hong Kong Art would always be the core of the collections of M+ and would be well represented in the collections. Since the Interim Acquisition Committee ("IAC") was established in June 2012, M+ had been actively looking for quality Hong Kong art and around 70% of the approved acquisitions (excluding the Uli Sigg Collection) was Hong Kong Art as at October 2013. WKCDA further advised that M+ would be a museum for Hong Kong people and would create a friendly and open environment for the public, rather than standing aloof and inaccessible. It would be a hub for visual culture in WKCD, providing spaces for exchanges, not only within different fields of visual culture but also between performing arts and visual arts. In addition, there were a number of local artists who had started to gain international recognition and M+ would be a place to display their modern and contemporary artworks.

6. Members were also concerned how M+ would co-operate with existing public museums managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD"). Hon MA Fung-kwok expressed concern that the Administration's

recent proposal of providing \$50 million to LCSD for acquiring and commissioning artworks by local artists might give rise to competition between LCSD museums and M+ in the acquisition of local artists' artworks.

7. The Administration advised that while the collection policy of LCSD museums focused mainly on Hong Kong, M+ aimed to build a world-class collection representative of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century visual culture from Hong Kong and China, and expanding to other regions of Asia and the rest of the world. Given the different positioning of LCSD museums and M+, the collections of LCSD museums and M+ should complement with each other. The Administration further advised that LCSD and WKCDA would strengthen communication on each other's scope of collections to avoid duplication in acquiring artworks. LCSD and WKCDA would also explore the possibility of loaning appropriate exhibits to each other in order to make good use of the resources.

*Selection and approval procedures for acquisition of artworks by M+*

8. When the Joint Subcommittee was briefed on the progress in the planning and development of M+ at its meeting on 23 April 2013, members noted that in June 2012, WKCDA decided to adopt the "part gift/part purchase" model in accepting a donation of 1 463 Chinese contemporary artworks, valued at around \$1.3 billion, from Dr Uli Sigg of Switzerland and in acquiring from Dr Sigg 47 pieces of artworks for a sum of \$177 million. Concern was raised about the arrangement adopted by WKCDA for accepting and acquiring Dr Sigg's collections and whether WKCDA had put in place an acquisition policy. Some members also considered that WKCDA should not have rushed into acquiring artworks while M+ had yet to build up a full curatorial team and the design of the M+ building had yet to be finalized.

9. WKCDA advised that as recommended by the Museum Advisory Group in its report to the Consultative Committee on the Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of WKCD in 2006, M+ would be built from inside out, meaning that its physical design would be shaped around its visions, ideas and contents that were being formulated over the coming years. As it took time to build up the collection of M+ and in order to seize acquisition opportunities as early as possible, the Board of WKCDA established IAC in June 2012 and had also formulated an acquisition policy for M+, setting out the reporting and approval procedures for acquisitions by the M+ team. All proposed acquisitions (both purchases and donations) would be carefully reviewed in accordance with the strategy and acquisition criteria as set forth in the M+ Acquisition Policy which was available on WKCDA's website for public inspection. Proposed acquisitions were to be approved by different tiers of authority according to the value of the work and the approving authority could set conditions including price ceilings

for negotiation purpose. Acquisitions exceeding a certain amount had to be submitted to the Board of WKCDA for approval. Procedures on avoidance of conflict of interest of staff/members of the authorities who were involved in advising on/approving acquisitions were set out in the Acquisition Policy. The M+ management was also required to report to the Museum Committee and the Board of WKCDA on acquisitions made on a regular basis.

10. As regards the acquisition of Dr Uli Sigg's collection, WKCDA advised that the "part gift/part purchase" arrangement, which was intended as a sign of commitment to the donor, was not an uncommon model in the international arena for museums to obtain collections. Given the scale, completeness and importance of Dr Sigg's collection, WKCDA considered it justifiable to accept the collection by way of such an arrangement, which was approved by the Board of WKCDA.

11. Hon Christopher CHUNG expressed concern about the acquisition of the "Kiyotomo Sushi Bar" made by M+ in November 2013 and considered it necessary for WKCDA to enhance the transparency of the artwork acquisition arrangements of M+. WKCDA explained that the "Kiyotomo Sushi Bar" was one of the only three still existing architecture interiors designed by Shiro Kuramata, who was regarded as the most influential and widely-known Japanese furniture and interior designer of the late 20th century, and was an important milestone for M+ in collecting and studying Asian designs. It had long been common among major museums of the world to collect interiors and large-scale architectural installations. The acquisition was endorsed by IAC, approved by the Museum Committee and reported to the Board of WKCDA in accordance with the M+ Acquisition Policy. WKCDA stressed that it upheld the principle of prudent financial management and attached great importance to open and transparent policies and operations. M+ had commissioned a leading auction house for an independent appraisal of the work.

#### *Independence of curators and freedom of expression*

12. Some members were concerned about how M+ would safeguard the independence and freedom of its curators in deciding on the artworks that they would acquire and display, and whether an artistic accountability system would be implemented in M+ under which curators would be accountable for their decisions on acquisitions and the arrangement of exhibitions. Some other members, however, were of the view that while respecting the freedom of expression, artworks which were indecent/obscene or contained political/insulting messages should not be considered as art. These members called on WKCDA to make careful judgment in selecting artworks to be acquired and displayed.

13. WKCDA stressed that M+ fully appreciated that independence and freedom of expression were vital to the success of any cultural institution. M+ had recruited a number of seasoned curators who were highly respected in the international museum field, and they would not risk jeopardizing their professional standing by being subject to any types of censorship or regulation in their ways of working. WKCDA assured members that it would implement a management mechanism under which the curators could perform their work most effectively. The curators had different specialties and were responsible for acquisition of collections and solicitation of donations in their particular art disciplines. As at April 2013, M+ had already recruited 11 curators for different visual art areas and acquisitions of artworks had mainly been made in those areas.

14. In response to Hon Alan LEONG's enquiry, WKCDA advised members at the meeting of the Joint Subcommittee on 23 April 2013 that it was in the process of establishing a trust for the collections of M+. The relevant legal work was expected to be completed in the coming months and the trustees would be appointed in due course. Pending the establishment of the collections trust, the artworks acquired were being held in secured facilities in Hong Kong and Switzerland under WKCDA's management.

#### *Collection costs of M+*

15. Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan suggested that WKCDA should step up efforts to solicit more donations of works to M+ such that savings achieved in collection purchase could be spent in other areas of work of the WKCD project. WKCDA advised members that it would proactively explore different ways to support the project through, among others, seeking sponsorships as well as donations of collections. According to information provided by WKCDA for the meeting of the Joint Subcommittee on 28 May 2014, of the \$1.7 billion (in 2008 Net Present Value) portion of funds allocated for the collection and related costs of M+, \$271 million had been spent as at end 2013-2014 as M+ started to make acquisitions in 2012-2013. Members were also advised that around \$150-200 million was budgeted per year for the next three years on collection acquisitions.

#### Recruitment and training of staff of M+ team

16. Concern was raised about the training and recruitment of curators and museum professionals for M+ and the nature of work undertaken by local and non-local staff. Some members considered that WKCDA should rely less on foreign experts and strive to recruit local art experts and museum professionals who were familiar with local arts and culture to support the development of M+.

These members were concerned how M+, with only a small number of curators from Hong Kong in its curatorial team, could achieve its mission to develop content from a Hong Kong perspective and promote Hong Kong visual culture.

17. WDCKA explained that while it was always trying to recruit locally, there was a need to bring in expertise from overseas countries especially in the early stages of the development of M+ and for certain positions for which there was no formal training. This would not only fill the gaps in the skills required for the success of M+, but also facilitate the transfer of knowledge to local talents and help build up local expertise. Besides, M+ had launched extensive internship programmes and a docent volunteer programme as part of its commitment to nurture local talent by offering them unique learning opportunities in renowned international art exhibitions and broadening their curatorial knowledge base. Some interns were hired by M+ after the internship programme on a project basis and one of them was employed as Assistant Curator. As at November 2013, about half of the M+ curatorial team was from Hong Kong. This number corresponded with the recruitment plan of M+ which aimed to recruit at least 50% of the curatorial staff from Hong Kong, and 25% from other parts of Asia and the world respectively. M+ currently had both local and non-local staff in curatorial, education and registrar positions.

#### Audience building and programme development

18. Members sought information on how M+ could encourage audience participation and raise public awareness of M+. They called on WKCDA to organize activities to introduce the concept and vision of M+ to the public. According to WKCDA, its main strategy for building audience was to organize pre-opening exhibition programmes on the WKCD site and in different parts of Hong Kong. With a budget of about \$15 million per annum being set aside for the organization of pre-opening programmes and public projects of M+, M+ would organize on average two pre-opening exhibition programmes annually and a number of talks, symposiums and public forums to enhance the public's understanding of the concept and vision of M+. The first public project was the M+ Bamboo Theatre Exhibition and Bamboo Cinema held during the Chinese New Year in 2012, which had attracted 4 000 visitors in one day. The Mobile M+: Yau Ma Tei, presenting exhibitions at six different sites in Yau Ma Tei during the period from 14 May to 10 June 2012, was another initiative to bring arts closer to the public and to bring life to the WKCD project. WKCDA further advised members that before the scheduled completion of the museum building in 2017, the Arts Pavilion in the Park, upon its commissioning in 2015, would be the base for M+.

### Cost of the M+ building project

19. In view of the significant escalation in the cost of the WKCD project, members generally considered that WKCDA should make its best endeavour to contain the construction costs of individual facilities of WKCD without compromising the overall quality and functions of the facilities. At the meeting of the Joint Subcommittee on 3 July 2013, members noted that HdM had been selected as the winning design team, the conceptual design of which came with the lowest estimated construction cost at \$5,413 million (Money-of-the-day ("MOD") prices). Members were also advised that WKCDA had already started rigorous negotiations with HdM to further contain the cost to be incurred to within a target budget of \$5 billion (MOD prices) inclusive of fees. WKCDA assured members that it would attach importance to cost control and endeavour to ensure value for money in implementing the M+ project.

### Design of M+

20. In response to Hon Gary FAN's view that the winning design of M+ was too simple and lacked character, WKCDA pointed out that HdM was a partnership of two leading architectural practices in the world and in Hong Kong. The winning design was selected unanimously by the Jury Panel of the M+ Design Competition as the best design reflecting the core values of M+. The Jury Panel considered that it had the merits of a memorable design that drew its raw power from simplicity and clarity of its "parti", and was the most cost effective amongst all the submitted designs for the competition. WKCDA was requested to provide for members' reference more information on details of the architectural design of M+, including the material(s) and colour(s) to be used for the external walls of the museum building, which featured a semi-transparent appearance.

21. Members also sought information on whether WKCDA had any plans to make use of the external walls of M+ as a display screen for promotion or other purposes. WKCDA advised that given that M+ was a museum of visual culture, consideration would be given during the design process to whether and how the museum building itself could be used as a screen for display of images of artistic works or dissemination of other information as appropriate, having regard to the fundamental purpose of the building as a museum, practice of other buildings in the vicinity and other relevant factors.

22. In response to members' enquiry on the amount of exhibition space in M+, WKCDA advised members that the area designated for display galleries was between one-fourth to one-third of the total GFA of M+, which would be

roughly 15 000 square metres. Apart from display galleries, artworks and design and architecture installations would also be displayed in the general public spaces of M+.

### **Latest development**

23. The Administration and WKCDA will brief the Joint Subcommittee on the latest progress of the development of M+ at its meeting on 23 July 2014.

### **Relevant papers**

24. A list of the relevant papers with their hyperlinks available on the LegCo Website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
18 July 2014



**Relevant papers on  
Planning and development of M+**

Committee	Date of meeting/issue	Paper
Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project formed by the Fourth Legislative Council	13.1.2009 Item II	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	27.2.2009 Item II(a)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	14.4.2009 Item II(b)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	19.6.2009 Item II(c)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	7.9.2009 Item II	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	16.4.2010 Item II(b)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	11.7.2011 Item I	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	26.8.2011 Item I	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	23.4.2012 Item II	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	27.6.2012 Item II	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Council meeting	6.2.2013	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings</a> <a href="#">Pages 6475 – 6485</a> <a href="#">(Oral question on "Acquisition of artworks by the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority")</a>

Committee	Date of meeting/issue	Paper
Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project formed by the Fifth Legislative Council	23.4.2013 (Item II)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	10.6.2013 (Item III)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	3.7.2013 (Item II)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	29.11.2013 (Item III)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	26.2.2014	<a href="#">Letter dated 25.2.2014 from Hon Christopher CHUNG to the Secretary for Home Affairs regarding the acquisition of "Kiyotomo Sushi Bar" (Chinese version only)</a>
	19.3.2014	<a href="#">West Kowloon Cultural District Authority's response to the issues raised in the letter dated 25.2.2014 from Hon Christopher CHUNG</a>
	28.5.2014 (Item I)	<a href="#">Agenda</a>

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