

**Legislative Council**  
**Panel on Home Affairs and Panel on Development**  
**Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation**  
**of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project**

**Follow-up to meeting on 23 July 2014**

**1. Update on the development of M+**

**The Administration/the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (“WKCD”) were requested to –**

- (a) explain the concept and characteristics of, as well as meaning to be conveyed by, the current architectural design of M+ as the winning design of the M+ Design Competition;**

Following an international competition, the renowned Swiss architecture firm, Herzog & de Meuron, working with Hong Kong-based TFP Farrells and Ove Arup & Partners HK, were selected to design the M+ Building. The winning design of M+ is the most cost-effective among the shortlisted submissions owing to its simple and regular building form and structure. It comprises four main parts: (i) the Found Space which embraces the constraint of the Airport Express tunnels that run beneath the West Kowloon Cultural District (“WKCD”) site and provides a new space for large-scale installations; (ii) the platform above the Found Space which is like a central public plaza having multiple entrances on multiple levels providing direct access to the entire exhibition area, to the park and other WKCD facilities; (iii) the horizontal slab above the central plaza which offers a diversity of exhibition rooms and galleries; and (iv) the vertical building which houses different facilities including education facilities, curatorial centre, research centre as well as retail, dining and entertainment facilities. In addition, there will be an underground link between the M+ Building and the conservation and storage facilities. Unlike most other conventional museums where the conservation and storage facilities are hidden from the public, M+ will be a museum where visitors could see part of the conservation process through the facilities.

Due to the simplicity and transparency of the design, the M+ Building will be a building that on the one hand could take its location and work well with the backdrop of the International Commerce Centre Complex, and on the other hand comprises a

strikingly slim, semi-transparent vertical plane rising atop an impressive horizontal slab which fused into the shape of an upside down T to create an iconic presence for M+, and Hong Kong, on the museum's site overlooking Victoria Harbour. The simple design and generous access of the building also conveys the message that M+ is a place where the public could interact with the art, design and other aspects of visual culture in a friendly and welcoming ambience.

**(b) outline the positioning of M+ in the context of Hong Kong, Asia and beyond which should guide the collection strategy and acquisition policy of M+;**

The Museums Advisory Group, in its report to the Consultative Committee on the Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of the West Kowloon Cultural District (“Consultative Committee”) in 2006, proposed that the M+ Collection may focus on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century visual culture, beginning with visual art, design and architecture, moving image and popular culture from Hong Kong, expanding to other regions of China, Asia and the rest of the world. Popular culture was later considered as a natural element of the three other areas, which now constitute the main disciplines of the M+ collection and programming. Therefore, the ambition of M+ does not merely lie in building a collection that reflects a certain environment at a particular time in Hong Kong, but rather to build a collection that looks at the world from a Hong Kong perspective, in which global developments in visual culture will be filtered through the lens of what is relevant to Hong Kong's current place in the world. To help achieve this goal, M+ developed the M+ Acquisition Policy in mid-2012 which laid down its broad strategy and procedures for building up the M+ Collection.

The M+ Collection could be thought of as a number of concentric circles and the Hong Kong visual culture would always be at the centre of and the point of departure for the collection. The next two tiers of the M+ Collection in terms of geographical priorities are Pearl River Delta and the rest of China, and thus the collection covering these two regions should be rich and comprehensive whereas other parts of Asia, as the fourth tier, should also be well represented. At the outer circle, there is the visual culture from beyond Asia/other parts of the world and the collection in this area would be much more precise and relating to the core of the M+ Collection. In essence, M+ would acquire works from regions further away from Hong Kong more selectively and strategically

whereas the acquisition strategy would be more inclusive for regions closer to Hong Kong.

The development of the M+ Collection kick-started with the acquisition in June 2012 of approximately 1 500 works of Chinese contemporary art from Dr Uli Sigg, the majority (no. 1 463) of which were donated by him. The M+ Sigg Collection within the M+ Collection is recognised as the largest, most comprehensive and important collection in the world of Chinese contemporary art. Subsequently, M+'s curatorial team has acquired several hundred works (especially in visual art and architecture) from Hong Kong to create and bolster the centre and the second tier of the collection. The M+ Collection is thus already well positioned to develop multiple narratives of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century visual culture in the region. Since 2013, M+ has made further major progress in building up its collection through purchases as well as donations in other disciplines – Design and Architecture, Ink Art, Moving Image and so forth, while filling in the gaps in the M+ Sigg Collection. The M+ Collection has been growing in many areas, including not only Hong Kong art, but also art from other parts of Asia (especially East Asia, encompassing Taiwan region, Japan, and South Korea), as well as those by Chinese and Asian artists working abroad and artists relevant to the core of the M+ story from other parts of the world. All these developments follow the strategy as laid down in the M+ Acquisition Policy, which has been uploaded to WKCDA's website for public information.

- (c) explain the need for and the rationale behind the current proposal for implementing the governance of M+, and not the other arts and cultural venues in WKCD, through the establishment of a wholly owned subsidiary company under WKCDA; and respond to members' concerns about whether the Administration /WKCDA Board would be able to retain effective monitoring and control over the operation of M+, as well as whether the funding allocation and expenditure of M+ would be subject to monitoring by the Legislative Council ("LegCo") under the proposed governance structure; and**

The decision to implement a new governance structure for M+ by establishing a subsidiary company wholly-owned by WKCDA has been in discussion and development for many years. The idea was first put forward by the Museums Advisory Group in its report to the Consultative Committee in 2006, the Executive Summary of which stated that "the governance structure of the M+ should have appropriate safeguards to ensure curatorial independence and

management autonomy.” This report was presented to the then-LegCo Subcommittee on WKCD Development in October 2007. Following this report, WKCDA engaged a consultant to conduct a governance study, which recommended a subsidiary governance structure for M+, outlining its necessity to achieve and secure curatorial independence, while providing clear accountability to the public – all in line with international best practices.

Given the overarching responsibilities of the WKCDA Board and complexity of the WKCD project, the WKCDA Board and its committees, by nature, need to comprise a wide range of expertise to oversee the development of the entire project (e.g. members with accounting, business development, information technology, etc background have to be appointed). To avoid possible ambiguity as to the authority that makes decisions on non-museological policies (the WKCDA Board) and museological matters (M+), it is necessary for M+ to establish its own board to enable curatorial and museological decisions are taken independently by museum professionals and board members with the relevant experience and expertise, thereby enhancing the confidence of the public, donors and artists, etc. in M+’s programming and artistic decisions.

M+’s mode of governance is expected to be completely different from the performing arts venues to be built in the WKCD, the governance structure of which will be formulated in view of the unique characteristics of the major art form to be staged in each venue. In the present thinking, M+ will be the only venue to be operated by a subsidiary wholly owned by WKCDA.

That said, the overall monitoring and control over M+ will remain with WKCDA. For example, funding allocation to the future M+ subsidiary and its proposed expenditure will be subject to the same level of scrutiny and monitoring by the WKCDA Board. The M+ subsidiary, similar to WKCDA, will continue to be accountable to LegCo. The Director of the M+ subsidiary will attend LegCo meetings as necessary in the same way the Executive Director, M+ of WKCDA does at present.

The management and governance of the M+ subsidiary will have to comply with the prevailing policies of WKCDA on matters such as accounting, finance, human resources, legal, administrative management, etc. Besides, the annual business plans and three-year corporate plans of the subsidiary will have to be approved by WKCDA, and the annual accounts of the M+

subsidiary will be consolidated with those of WKCDA in accordance with Section 28(4) of the WKCDA Ordinance (Cap. 601). As such, the M+ subsidiary, while maintaining independence on curatorial and collection management matters, will still be accountable to WKCDA in other aspects. WKCDA will update the LegCo Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project (“Joint Subcommittee”) with more details on the proposed M+ subsidiary when ready.

- (d) provide estimation on the increase in the construction cost of M+ for every month that consideration by the Finance Committee of the funding application for the advance public infrastructure works in the M+ portion of the integrated basement was deferred.**

Construction cost is intrinsically linked to a range of variables such as construction sequence and development programme, and is also dependent on external economic factors. As the timely completion of the advance public infrastructure works in the M+ portion is part and parcel of the M+ development, any delay in funding approval by the Finance Committee will have significant cost and time implications to the development of M+ as well as other venues in WKCD. Assuming a rate of construction cost escalation of 6% per annum, the construction cost of M+ could increase by over \$20 million per month of delay. In line with WKCDA’s commitment to exercise financial prudence, the project team will continue to closely monitor the construction cost and progress of the funding application to be submitted in the 2014-15 legislative session.

## **2. Update on the Park development – design, use and management**

**WKCDA was requested to provide a physical model of the Park in WKCD to facilitate the Joint Subcommittee’s understanding of the Park design and configuration.**

A physical model of the Park will be prepared by the consultant team as part of the schematic design deliverables. Detailed arrangements would be made in due course to facilitate Joint Subcommittee members’ viewing of the physical model.