

**Response to Hon Christopher CHUNG's letter  
dated 25 February 2014**

As a museum focusing on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> visual culture, M+ aims to build a world-class collection encompassing the disciplines of visual art, design, architecture and moving image from Hong Kong, China, other regions of Asia and the rest of the world. Our response regarding the acquisition of “Kiyotomo Sushi Bar” is as follows –

**Relevance of the acquisition to M+ Collection**

The significance of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Japanese design is undisputed, both in the East Asia region and globally. As such, design from Japan will necessarily assume an important place in M+'s design collection. Shiro Kuramata (1934-1991) was regarded as the most influential and widely-known Japanese furniture and interior designer of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Out of more than one hundred architecture interiors designed by Shiro Kuramata, only three still exist today and the work in question is one of them. The acquisition of “Kiyotomo Sushi Bar” is an important milestone for M+ in collecting and studying Asian designs.

The acquisition includes both the street front façade of “Kiyotomo Sushi Bar” and the entire interior. The latter includes all furniture (12 chairs, ten barstools and three lacquered tables), all fixtures (e.g. “Ya Ya Ho” lights by the German designer Ingo Maurer), walls, floors, ceiling finishes and installations.

It has long been common among major museums of the world to collect interiors and large-scale architectural installations. This is because such works can more fully represent the ideas and vision of a designer or architect while providing the public the opportunity to experience these spaces in a museum setting. Major museums that have collected 20<sup>th</sup> century interiors and architectural installations include the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), Museum of Modern Art (New York), Victoria and Albert Museum (London) and Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago) etc.. We also believe that a museum should not steer away from acquiring the most important or major works of art on the basis of practical issues, such as storage or installation matters.

## **Course of event**

M+ team had the first initial discussion with the seller on 2 February 2013. M+ team then sent the Curator (Design and Architecture) to visit the “Kiyotomo Sushi Bar” in Japan on 4 March 2013. A further visit with the Museum Committee (MC) Chairman and the then-designate Chief Curator occurred on 17 July 2013 after an initial acquisition proposal of “Kiyotomo Sushi Bar” was put to the Interim Acquisition Committee (IAC).

At the IAC meeting held on 18 September 2013, the acquisition was recommended to be put to MC for approval. M+ team sought MC’s endorsement to acquire the proposed work on 26 November 2013 in accordance with the M+ Acquisition Policy. The West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA) Board was informed of the acquisition on 3 December 2013. The Board noted the significance and relevance of the proposed work to the M+ Collection and that the purchase had been done in strict accordance with the institutional mechanism under which it was within MC’s delegated authority to approve the purchase. M+ team then proceeded to finalise the transaction details with the seller. Although the WKCDA made the decision after going through all necessary steps prudently, announcement on the acquisition could not be made before the formal completion of the transaction.

## **Approval procedures**

Building a collection is a cumulative process. To seize acquisition opportunities as early as possible, the WKCDA Board established the IAC in June 2012, and formulated the M+ Acquisition Policy with advice from the Independent Commission Against Corruption, which sets out the reporting and approval procedures for acquisition by M+ team. In addition, all acquisitions approved by IAC and MC are reported to the Board on a regular basis. The M+ Acquisition Policy is available online at the official website of the WKCDA.

Both MC and IAC comprise members who are experienced in visual culture and equipped with professional knowledge. Each acquisition will be determined and approved strictly in accordance with the established criteria, procedures and mechanisms.

The WKCDA upholds the principle of prudent financial management, and attaches great importance to open and transparent policies and operations. M+ has commissioned a leading auction house for an independent appraisal of the work. The seller of the work also provided two appraisals by separate professionals to M+ for reference. That being said, it has been an international practice for museums not to disclose the transaction price of a particular acquisition. Otherwise, it would weaken a museum's bargaining power in future acquisitions and damage its relationship with artists and galleries/other sellers, and may undermine M+'s ability to ensure the effective use of public money in future acquisitions.

**West Kowloon Cultural District Authority**  
**March 2014**