

For discussion on
19 May 2015

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

Update on the development of M+

PURPOSE

This paper serves to update Members on the progress of the M+ project.

BACKGROUND

2. M+ is a new museum for visual culture in Hong Kong within the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD). Its mission is to focus on the 20th and 21st century visual culture, broadly defined, from a Hong Kong perspective, the perspective of now, and with a global vision. In order to realise its vision and mission, M+ needs to develop on four fronts: to build a team; to build a collection; to build a museum building and to raise awareness through inventive pre-opening programmes.

3. Since the last update to this Joint Subcommittee in July 2014, the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA) has made significant progress on the M+ project on different fronts. This paper sets out the progress of M+ development in terms of construction of the museum building, collection and acquisition, as well as governance structure. Updates on WKCDA's work on capacity building, audience building and stakeholder engagement, including that of M+'s, will be provided in the next Joint Subcommittee meeting in June 2015.

CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS OF THE MUSEUM BUILDING

4. Following an international design competition, the Swiss architectural firm of Herzog & de Meuron, in joint venture with Hong

Kong-based TFP Farrells and Ove Arup & Partners Hong Kong, was selected to design and administer the M+ building project. The design consultancy service commenced in September 2013.

5. Detailed design of M+ has been completed as scheduled and the foundation works commenced in August 2014. The tender for the main works contract for M+ was issued in March 2015. Subject to the outcome of this tender exercise, the M+ construction works will commence in late 2015 for completion in 2018. However, the works programme is subject to the Finance Committee's funding approval for the related public infrastructure works in the integrated basement since construction of the M+ superstructure cannot proceed without the basement. The relevant funding application will also be submitted to the Joint Subcommittee for consideration at the coming meeting on 19 May 2015.

COLLECTION AND ACQUISITION

6. M+ is in the progress of building a world-class collection representative of the 20th and 21st century visual culture in the disciplinary areas of visual art, design and architecture, and moving image, from a Hong Kong perspective with global look. With its ambition to become a truly global museum, M+ aims to build a world-class collection of Hong Kong, Chinese, Asian and international visual culture.

7. As of 14 April 2015, M+ has acquired through purchase and donation 4 057 pieces of works, of which Hong Kong works accounted for around 32%. Total number of works acquired by M+ after the M+ Sigg transaction in 2012 are 2 547, of which over 50% are produced by Hong Kong artists and designers. From 1 April 2014 to 14 April 2015, acquisitions by purchase totalling 392 works were approved.

8. Major artists and collectors have also made various important donations to M+, for example, the generous donation of a large-scale installation "Matrix" by the globally recognised artist, Antony Gormley, and the donation of three important groups of works by a leading Hong Kong ink painter, Wilson Shieh. As of 14 April 2015, M+ has received 2 316 artwork items from 56 donors as well as two cash donations. The total value of donations of all forms is

about HKD 1.35 billion. M+ will continue its efforts to secure more donations in the years to come.

9. The roadmaps for the Ink Art, Design, and Greater Asia collection were presented to the Interim Acquisition Committee in 2012-13, and the strategy for the Moving Image Collection was presented to the Interim Acquisition Committee in 2014. M+ is currently conducting in-depth research and developing the strategy on Hong Kong Visual Culture and Popular Culture.

10. To underline its commitment to transparency, WKCDA has, since 2012, published the M+ Acquisition Policy, which was developed based on the policies of major museums in the United States of America, Canada as well as Australia, and in consultation with the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The approving procedures and limits as laid down in the policy are comparable to those of many major international museums. The policy is reviewed from time to time and the first review was completed in March 2015. The up-to-date M+ Acquisition Policy as well as the complete list of the M+ Collection has been uploaded to the WKCDA official website for public information.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Background

11. As reported to this Joint Subcommittee in July 2014, WKCDA decided that the governance of M+ would be implemented through the establishment of a subsidiary company wholly-owned by WKCDA as a separate legal entity. The recommendation to establish a separate governance structure for M+ was first proposed by the Museum Advisory Group (MAG) in its Report to the Consultative Committee on the Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of the WKCD (CC)¹ in November 2006. In paragraph 2.38 of its report, the MAG recommended that:

“2.38 ... the governance structure of M+ must guarantee the principles of curatorial independence,

¹ The MAG report was examined and considered by CC and based on these recommendations, CC in 2007 submitted its Recommendation Report to the Subcommittee on West Kowloon Cultural District Development of the Legislative Council (LegCo) which had thoroughly discussed and received the recommendations made by CC.

professional excellence, collaboration and accountability to the public...”

12. The Recommendation Report of CC also includes the same recommendation as reflected in paragraph 4.10 of its Executive Summary which states that:

“4.10 The governance structure of the M+ should have appropriate safeguards to ensure curatorial independence and management autonomy.”

13. Since then, WKCDA has engaged in detailed internal discussions, with advice from an external consultant, with a view to determining the most appropriate governance model for M+, i.e. one that can support decisions related to the museological content of the museum whilst ensuring proper responsibilities continue to lie with WKCDA.

Rationale for a new governance structure

14. For M+, the importance of putting in place a separate governance structure is as follows:

- a) **To create a clearer identity for M+ as an institution.** Currently M+ sits as a functional department within WKCDA rather than a museum organisation. This creates legal ambiguity in the eyes of M+ stakeholders and major partners, including exhibition artists, potential donors and other museums with which international collaborations will be explored. It is crucial for those in the art sector to be clear that they are working directly with M+ as an institution.
- b) **To ensure the M+ governance structure has the right expertise while supporting curatorial independence and artistic freedom.** Decision makers involved in museum-related content (such as collection, exhibitions, museum facilities) must have sufficient professional expertise in museum and visual culture matters. The aim is for M+ to establish its own board so that curatorial and museological decisions can be taken independently by board members with museum experience and

professional expertise, thereby enhancing the confidence of the public, donors and artists, etc. in M+'s programming and artistic decisions and ensuring the artistic freedom and curatorial independence of M+. M+ will be the only visual arts venue in WKCD that fully programmes and produces its content through extensive exhibitions, a learning centre, a moving image centre and a research centre. An organisation of the size of M+ requires dedicated governance with a Board and Committees who are equipped with the right skills and experience.

Checks and controls for the proposed M+ Limited

15. To realise the above rationale, it is proposed that the M+ Limited will be set up as a **company limited by guarantee**. Following the incorporation of the proposed M+ Limited and for the foreseeable future, WKCDA will continue to provide full administrative and manpower support to M+ Limited as it does currently, including but not limited to legal, procurement, human resources, administration, finance, information communications technology, communications and marketing, office accommodation, secretarial support, etc. Funding allocation to M+ Limited will continue to be managed centrally by WKCDA; and the business and corporate plans of M+ Limited will be submitted to the WKCDA Board for approval after being endorsed by the Board of the M+ Limited (M+ Board). All major financial decisions outside of approved plans would require approval by the WKCDA Board. While WKCDA will retain the overall monitoring and control over the finances of M+ Limited, matters concerning curatorship, programming, collection and acquisition will be under the purview of the M+ Board. As with WKCDA, the work of the M+ Limited will be subject to monitoring by the Joint Subcommittee to ensure public accountability.

16. The proposed M+ Limited will follow the delegation of decision making authority endorsed by the WKCDA Board in accordance with the established policies and guidelines. The WKCDA Board will be the body setting overall policies for the governance of WKCDA, including M+, and the overall strategic direction for the WKCD, while the M+ Board and its management team shall make decisions with regard to museological and curatorial policies and museum content-related matters within the defined levels set by the WKCDA Board.

17. When M+ Limited is established under the Companies Ordinance (Cap. 622), the existing Museum Committee under the Board of WKCDA will be dissolved and its functions will then be taken up by the M+ Board. To support the different areas of the museum, the intended composition of the M+ Board should bring together diverse expertise and experience, covering the following fields: business management, finance, visual culture industry, museum expertise, legal, entrepreneurs, investments, marketing, fundraising, human resources, government relations, donors/collectors, members/volunteers programmes, education and new media. To further strengthen and balance the Board composition, future members who are not directly from the industry should have a strong interest in museums and/or collecting. Appointments to the M+ Board would be made by the WKCDA Board.

18. The proposed governance structure for M+ has been thoroughly considered by the relevant committees of WKCDA and the WKCDA Board in the past year, during which the institutional relationship, management responsibilities and accountability of WKCDA and M+ Limited have been clearly defined and delineated. The WKCDA Board has endorsed the proposed implementation plan for setting up the M+ Limited and, subject to further consideration, plans to proceed with the incorporation of the subsidiary company in the coming year.

ADVICE SOUGHT

19. Members are invited to note the progress of M+ development.

**West Kowloon Cultural District Authority
May 2015**