

# 立法會 *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(1)560/16-17(04)

Ref : CB1/PS/2/16

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

**Meeting on 21 February 2017**

### **Updated background brief on the development of M+**

#### **Purpose**

This paper summarizes the major views and concerns of members of the Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project formed in the Fifth Legislative Council ("the former Joint Subcommittee") on issues relating to the development of M+.

#### **Background**

2. M+ is a new museum for visual culture in Hong Kong to be located at the western end of the West Kowloon Cultural District ("WKCD"). According to the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority ("WKCDA"), the mission of M+ is to focus on the 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 three main disciplines of visual art, design and architecture, and moving image. Following an international competition, the Swiss architectural firm Herzog & de Meuron, in joint venture with Hong Kong-based TFP Farrells and Ove Arup & Partners Hong Kong, was selected in June 2013 to design and administer the M+ building project. The main works started in the fourth quarter of 2015. It is planned that the M+ building and the Conservation and Storage Facility, which will provide approximately 60 000 square metres in gross floor area together, will be completed in the second half of 2018 for opening in 2019.

### Collection and acquisition

3. The Board of WKCDA established the Interim Acquisition Committee in June 2012 to build up the collection of M+. As advised by WKCDA in June 2016, there were already over 5 000 works and objects in the M+ Collection, of which over 1 300 works and objects were from Hong Kong, covering visual arts, design and architecture, and moving images. To establish art historical, cultural, and conceptual connections between Hong Kong and other Chinese works and international works, the collection also included important works from Asia and the rest of the world. A set of [acquisition policy](#) for M+ and the [complete list](#) of the M+ collection had been uploaded onto the WKCDA's website for public information.

### M+ governance structure

4. A subsidiary company wholly-owned by WKCDA, namely the M+ Museum Limited ("M+ Limited"), was incorporated on 14 April 2016. According to WKCDA, M+ Limited would enhance curatorial and museological independence while ensuring that proper responsibilities for the overall administration policies and accountability will remain under the auspices of WKCDA.

5. WKCDA advised the former Joint Subcommittee in June 2016 that an M+ Collections Trust would be set up shortly to hold the M+ Collection with a view to separating the legal and beneficial ownership of the Collection and protecting it from possible inappropriate deaccession in the future. A company limited by guarantee would be established to serve as the corporate trustee of the M+ Collections Trust. According to WKCDA, the trust arrangement would provide clarity over the institutional relationship, management responsibilities and accountability of WKCDA, M+ Limited, and the corporate trustee.

### **Members' views and concerns**

6. Issues relating to the development of M+ were discussed at a number of meetings of the former Joint Subcommittee between April 2013 and June 2016. The major views and concerns expressed by members of the former Joint Subcommittee ("members") are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

### Positioning of M+

7. Members were concerned about the positioning of M+, in particular whether it would place more emphasis on featuring local visual culture and history, and how M+ would rank among other major museums around the world. There was also a concern among members about the co-ordination between M+ and the public museums managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD"). Members urged WKCDA to strengthen communication with LCSD on each other's scope of collections to avoid duplication in acquiring artworks.

8. According to WKCDA, M+'s ambitions were to be the first museum of its kind in Asia and to rank among the top five museums for visual culture in the world. 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. 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.

9. The Administration advised that the collection policy of LCSD museums focused mainly on Hong Kong. Given the different positioning of LCSD museums and M+, the collections of LCSD museums and those of M+ should complement each other. LCSD and WKCDA would continue to strengthen communication on each other's scope of collections to avoid duplication in acquiring artworks, and would also explore the possibility of loaning appropriate exhibits to each other in order to make good use of the resources.

### Acquisition of artworks

10. Some members were concerned that the prices of the acquisitions of M+ would be used in the art market to influence the prices of artworks, in particular overseas artworks. They urged WKCDA to exercise caution in selecting and acquiring artworks. WKCDA explained that while purchase of artworks by M+ would likely raise the profile of the artists concerned and have an impact on the art market, the M+ team had sought to minimize such impact by, for instance, negotiating directly with artists (rather than through auction houses or art galleries) and being discreet in the acquisition process. Moreover, it had been an international practice for museums not to disclose the transaction prices of their acquisitions. Besides purchasing artworks, the M+ team had also been soliciting donations of works, which would make up an important part of the M+ Collection without affecting the art market.

11. In response to some members' concerns about the arrangement adopted by WKCDA in 2012 for accepting and acquiring Dr Uli Sigg's collections,<sup>1</sup> 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 had been approved by the Board of WKCDA.

#### Independence of curators and freedom of expression

12. Some members were concerned about how WKCDA 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 regarded as art.

13. WKCDA stressed that it fully appreciated that independence and freedom of expression were vital to the success of any cultural institution, and all acquisitions would be considered in accordance with the guidelines and procedures as laid down in the M+ acquisition policy. A number of seasoned curators who were highly respected in the international museum field had been recruited for the operation of M+, and they would not risk jeopardizing their professional standing by being subject to any types of censorship or regulation in their ways of work.

#### Recruitment and training of staff

14. 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+. WKCDA advised that while the Authority 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 locally. WKCDA believed that this would not only fill the gaps in the skills required for the success of M+, but also facilitate

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<sup>1</sup> 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 \$1.3billion, from Dr Sigg of Switzerland and in acquiring from Dr Sigg 47 pieces of artworks for a sum of \$177 million.

the transfer of knowledge to local talents and help build up local expertise. The M+ team had launched extensive internship programmes and a docent volunteer programme as part of its commitment to nurture local talents by offering them unique learning opportunities in renowned international art exhibitions and broadening their curatorial knowledge base.

#### Cost of the M+ building project

15. The former Joint Subcommittee was advised in July 2013 that the estimated construction cost of the M+ building project was \$5,413 million (in money-of-the-day prices). 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.

16. In July 2013, WKCDA advised that the Authority had already started negotiations with Herzog & de Meuron and TFP Farrells to further contain the cost to be incurred to a target budget of \$5 billion (in money-of-the-day prices) inclusive of consultancy fees. WKCDA assured members that it would attach importance to cost control and endeavour to ensure value for money in implementing the M+ project. In May 2016, WKCDA further advised that, following the approval of the application for minor relaxation of the development intensity of WKCD by the Town Planning Board, the Authority had adopted a cost-effective design for the M+ building by including one additional floor of retail/dining/entertainment facilities and two additional floors for other arts and cultural facilities.

#### Governance of M+

17. Some members were concerned whether the establishment of M+ Limited would undermine the transparency of the operation and finances of M+ and its accountability to the Legislative Council ("LegCo"). Some members queried, under the new governance structure, whether the Administration and the WKCDA Board would be able to retain effective monitoring and control over the operation of M+, particularly in respect of control over assets and finances.

18. WKCDA explained that it was necessary for M+ to establish its own board to enable curatorial and museological decisions to be taken independently by museum professionals and board members with the relevant experience and expertise. The new governance structure would help enhance public perception of the artistic freedom and curatorial independence of M+.

strengthen the capacity of M+ to raise funds and solicit donations in artworks, and put M+ on a similar basis with other major contemporary arts museums around the world. The Administration and WKCDA assured members that while matters concerning curatorship, programming, collection and acquisition would be under the purview of the Board of M+ Limited, WKCDA would retain the overall monitoring and control over the finances of M+ Limited. Funding allocation to M+ Limited would continue to be managed centrally by WKCDA, and the business and corporate plans of M+ Limited would be submitted to the Board of WKCDA for approval after endorsement by the Board of M+ Limited. The work of M+ Limited would be subject to the monitoring of LegCo to ensure public accountability.

#### Audience building and grooming of local talents

19. Members were concerned about how WKCDA 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. WKCDA advised that the M+ team had been building networks and partnerships with international museums with a view to bringing mega exhibitions to Hong Kong, which would attract both locals and tourists. In addition, the M+ team had rolled out an outreach programme in a bid to raise public awareness about M+ and promote audience building in the community and schools.

20. Some members enquired about M+'s plans for grooming local visual culture artists and bringing their works to the local and international communities. WKCDA advised that M+ would provide a platform and backing for talented Hong Kong artists to showcase their works. It would also bring artists from other parts of the world to Hong Kong to present their works to the local community, thus providing a platform for artistic inspiration and exchanges. Given the lead time to complete the M+ building, as an interim measure, the M+ Pavilion (located in the Art Park of WKCD and opened in July 2016), would be used to showcase smaller-scale exhibitions ahead of the opening of the M+ building in 2019.

#### **Latest development**

21. The Administration and WKCDA will brief the Joint Subcommittee on the latest development of M+ and museum matters at the meeting to be held on 21 February 2017.

**Relevant papers**

22. A list of the relevant papers on the LegCo website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 1  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
16 February 2017

## Appendix

### Relevant papers on development of M+

Committee	Date of meeting/issue	Paper
Former Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project	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> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	23.7.2014 (Item I)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>  The Administration's response to members' concerns raised at the meeting <a href="#">CB(2)316/14-15(01)</a>



<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting/issue</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Former Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project	24.11.2014 (Item II)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	12.1.2015 (Item III)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	19.5.2015 (Item II)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	30.5.2016 (Item II)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	21.6.2016 (Item II)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>