

**For discussion on
10 May 2021**

**Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs
Progress Report on East Kowloon Cultural Centre**

Purpose

This paper updates Members on the latest progress of the development of the East Kowloon Cultural Centre (EKCC) under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), and sets out the way forward for the convergence of arts and technology at EKCC.

Background

2. The Government is committed to promoting the arts and culture in Hong Kong. In parallel with our active efforts to create an environment conducive to their diversified development and to develop and improve related infrastructure facilities, we devote resources to nurturing talent and encourage innovation to provide the public with quality cultural and arts activities.

3. The Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved the construction of EKCC at a project cost of \$4,175.7 million in July 2015. With a site area of 2.16 hectares, EKCC will comprise The Hall and The Theatre with seating capacity of 1 200 and 550 respectively, three studios for different arts forms with seating capacity ranging from 120 to 360, *etc.* Before funding approval was sought for the proposed construction, LCSD had drawn up the scope of works including the above performance facilities, ancillary facilities and provision of stage equipment¹ in light of the needs of the arts and cultural sector and the local community during the planning, design and consultation stages.

4. Located at the junction of Ngau Tau Kok Road and Kwun Tong Road,

¹ Stage equipment includes basic and general stage lighting, audio and visual equipment, stage machinery and stage rigging systems.

EKCC is connected seamlessly with the surrounding transportation nodes. There are two existing footbridges provided with lifts across Kwun Tong Road in the vicinity connecting to Mass Transit Railway (MTR) Kowloon Bay Station Exits A and B respectively. With the support of the Kwun Tong District Council, the Energizing Kowloon East Office invited the Highways Department to construct a footbridge across Kwun Tong Road connecting to MTR Kowloon Bay Station Exit B and the future EKCC in order to alleviate the congestion at the existing walkway system and enhance connectivity among the MTR Station, EKCC and nearby areas.

Latest Progress

5. Construction work of EKCC commenced in January 2016 and is expected to complete by the end of 2021. In the first half of 2022, LCSD will take over EKCC for equipment procurement, and conduct checks, tests and rectifications on various building services installations, stage facilities and systems. Soft opening of EKCC will be arranged in the first half of 2023 to test the operations of its various facilities and admission arrangements, whereas grand opening is scheduled for the second half of the year. With construction work progressing, we became aware that the development of arts technology (arts tech) could help artists broaden their horizons of creation and bring profound experience to the audience. To foster the development of arts tech, we decided to inject new elements into EKCC. With assistance from the Architectural Services Department, LCSD will procure state-of-the-art equipment and systems with the project funding, and bring in innovative technologies to facilitate a more diverse development of the arts and cultural sector. In this connection, EKCC will be positioned as an advanced culture and arts venue integrating arts and technology, and an incubator for arts practitioners and technology professionals to test and experiment creations by arts and technology.

Integration of the Arts and Technology

6. The Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address has pointed out that the integration of arts and innovation and technology (I&T) has become a new trend in arts development. The application of technology has extended the horizon of creativity in the arts and brought new opportunities for the arts and creative industries. In fact, the rapid development of state-of-the-art technology has brought forth a paradigm shift in culture and the arts, as evident in the use of innovative technology such as, among others, virtual/augmented/mixed/extended reality, 3D scanning and artificial intelligence by performance venues and artists around the world today. Technology inspires new visions for arts practitioners, while providing the audience with experiences as multi-sensory and interactive as never before.

7. With reference from the arts tech-focused development approach being taken by neighbouring areas, LCSD plans to adopt advanced innovative technology and set up EKCC as an incubator for the development of arts and technology, so as to identify new emerging trends in the arts, and seize the opportunities that come with I&T. As announced in The Chief Executive's Policy Address 2019, the Government will *“incorporate advanced innovative technology into EKCC, including all-round computerised stage facilities and execution system to provide artists, arts groups and art enterprises with more room for development, while nurturing audience and enhancing opportunities for arts inclusiveness, in order to further promote Hong Kong's status in the international arts arena.”* The Chief Executive's Policy Address 2020 further raised that *“we will develop the EKCC as an advanced arts and cultural hardware, providing the latest stage technology and equipment to support novel applications for stage productions and also explore the setting up of designated facilities as Testbed Studio equipped with Extended Reality technology and immersive audio visual systems to facilitate arts practitioners to work, explore and learn together.”*

8. To meet this trend, EKCC plans to join hands with artists, creative media schools and technology professionals in the promotion of arts tech. Facilities to be provided include 3D projection mapping equipment, surround sound system, all-round real-time stage tracking and execution system², and live streaming system. Our plan is to set up a testbed in a multi-purpose studio and designated as The Lab. With the provisioning of augmented/virtual/mixed/extended reality equipment which includes 270-degree LED screens, a 4K video filming system and an image processing system, The Lab will serve as an incubator for researching and developing arts tech, as well as for curating and creating new works. These state-of-the-art facilities will be made available to arts practitioners so that they can learn and apply arts tech to stage productions, treating the audience to a greater variety of productions and novel theatre experiences. As a ground-breaking type of culture with enormous potential, arts tech will open up unlimited possibilities and unprecedented opportunities for artists, the arts and cultural sector as well as the community. An amount of \$192 million is reserved and funded under the project for procuring the required advanced technology equipment. Please refer to **Annex 1** for The Lab at EKCC and **Annex 2** for overseas application of arts tech.

9. To showcase EKCC's positioning and to align with the development of arts tech, LCSD is positively organising a series of activities to build up a platform of communication and collaboration for the arts and cultural sector, technology industry, academic community, *etc.* Six sessions of EKCC x Arts Technology workshop were

² This positioning system enables real-time tracking of sounds and movements on stage for incorporation with and automation of stage facilities. Lighting, sound and visual effects will be synced to create an immersive and multi-sensory experience for the audience.

held from 11 to 12 March 2021 to brief participants on the preparation work and way forward of EKCC in the promotion of arts tech. A local innovative arts group shared its insight on integrating technology into arts creation and brought immersive experience to participants by jumping to virtual creation from the reality. These sharing sessions were well-received by over 400 arts practitioners, I&T talents and representatives from educational institutions. The vision of EKCC as well as its preparation work, and in particular the provision of a testbed studio (The Lab) for arts practitioners and technology professionals to experiment arts and technology creations, received strong support and recognition from the participants. Eight more sessions of EKCC x Arts Technology workshop will be held from 13 to 15 May 2021 to cater for the needs of the educational institutions and to further explore opportunities for collaboration. Young people aspiring for a career in arts tech will know better the prospect of the industry. LCSD has set up a temporary “Pre-testbed Studio” at the Rehearsal Room of Kwai Tsing Theatre to run from late April to May 2021. LCSD will host 73 guided visits to showcase to the arts, technology and education sectors the equipment and technology related to arts tech. To promote exploration of various possibilities in arts tech, visitors can personally experience the systems and equipment to be provided at The Lab. About 1 000 participants are expected.

Anticipated Benefits

10. We anticipate that The Lab of EKCC will bring the following benefits by collaborating with its partners from the sectors below -

- (a) Technology professionals: Daily operation and maintenance of The Lab will be undertaken by technology professionals who support artists/art groups to curate and apply arts tech in their art-making. This will not only offer chances for technology professionals to apply their expertise, but also create job opportunities;
- (b) Local artists: Artists/ art groups may create, experiment and rehearse their works with new facilities and technologies in The Lab before staging. Alternatively, they may showcase their newly created works in the form of art installation, exhibition, workshop, *etc*;
- (c) Creative media schools under local tertiary institutions: In order to allow local tertiary and postgraduate students to learn and master the novel arts tech for its application in art-making, LCSD plans to collaborate with creative media schools under local tertiary institutions to provide students with opportunities to collaborate and exchange with artists/arts groups and technology professionals, with a

view to getting more local young people to the arts industry. It is anticipated that productions staged at EKCC throughout the year will create more job opportunities in the arts and related technology sectors, and offer more chances for the young people to showcase their talents; and

- (d) Community: Kowloon East is a pilot area to explore the feasibility of developing a smart city in Hong Kong. A catalyst for the implementation of the Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong, EKCC will promote arts tech at the community level through diversified arts tech programmes and interactive education activities in a bid to foster interests in and understanding of the arts and technology in the community, particularly among young people. In tandem, novel and interactive theatre experience will help broaden the audience base for performing arts and promote cultural inclusiveness.

11. To conclude, EKCC will act as a facilitator to create a platform for networking among local artists and technology professionals through various channels, and attain greater cross-sector synergy for sustainable development by strengthening ties among the arts and cultural sector, academia and technology industry. By stepping up our efforts in nurturing promising artists, supporting creative projects and innovations and fostering the development of cultural and creative industries, we strive to bring Hong Kong into a smart era which embraces creativity and the arts, and further promote its status in the international arts arena.

Advice Sought

12. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

**Home Affairs Bureau
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
May 2021**

The Lab at the East Kowloon Cultural Centre (EKCC)



Our plan is to set up a testbed studio designated as The Lab at EKCC for the following purposes:

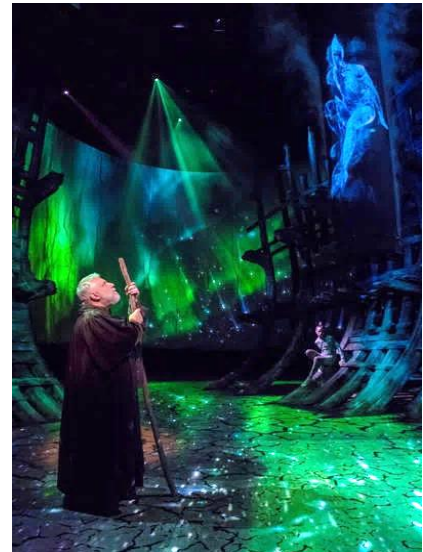
- To provide advance technology equipment;
- To serve as an incubator for arts tech; and
- To foster collaboration among artists, creative arts schools and technology professionals.



Overseas Application of Arts Tech

The Tempest by Royal Shakespeare Company, the United Kingdom (2016)

- Replacing some of the traditional scenery by 3D projection mapping
- Transforming actors' real-time movements into virtual animations



Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Canada (2017)

- Transforming real-time body motions of the conductor into dynamic images



Giudizio Universale -The Sistine Chapel Immersive Show, Italy (2018)

- Creating an immersive experience with state-of-the art sound system and 3D projection

