

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

Learning and Community Engagement Initiatives
of the West Kowloon Cultural District

PURPOSE

This paper updates Members on the learning and community engagement initiatives of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD).

BACKGROUND

2. Alongside the active promotion of venues and events, the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA) implemented a wide range of tailored learning and community engagement initiatives to keep the public abreast of the change and development in WKCD, and to enhance their knowledge and arouse their interest about arts and culture spanning across modern and contemporary visual culture, Chinese art and culture and its dialogue with western culture, and performing arts of wide-ranging genres and styles. These activities have been particularly important in engaging young people. This paper provides an update on WKCDA's ongoing work to offer learning and community engagement initiatives and programmes to the public, as well as on WKCDA's diverse effort in preparing for the opening of arts and cultural facilities in WKCD, including M+ and the Hong Kong Palace Museum.

M+

A Community of Learning

3. Learning is crucial for M+ with a vision to build a community of learning that nurtures empathy, respect, multiple perspectives and fosters creativity through visual culture. By offering an open and

welcoming platform with creative learning experiences, M+ is dedicated to creating an active learning culture that connects people, objects and spaces. Through the exchange of ideas and perspectives with reflective practices, it is hoped that visitors could develop a sense of belonging with the self and the outside world.

Learning Initiatives

4. To realise the vision and mission, M+ builds the bridge between the M+ Collections and different types of audience groups through the following major learning initiatives.

(A) Young People and Community Engagement

5. M+ hopes to inspire and support young people in the pursuit of creativity and nurture critical thinking in their self-discovery journey through visual culture. From 2015 to 2018, The *M+ Summer Camp* was held annually and has provided valuable outreach to around 400 secondary school students and 70 university student volunteers. From 2019 until now, M+ sought to maintain and extend the relationships it has developed with past participants by organising a series of *M+ Summer Camp Alumni Events*. To engage with potential young visitors before the opening, M+ partnered with the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups and M21 to launch an online conversation series around the issues facing young people today, which attracted more than 280 000 online views between September 2020 and June 2021.

6. Meanwhile, to ensure the future programmes of M+ are relevant to young people's life and needs, a volunteer team is engaged as our *Young Collective* to design, create and produce programmes with M+ Team and creatives for their peers. Upon opening of M+, there will be regular workshops and conversations on topics that concern youth development, and in relation to the M+ Collections. It gives young people opportunities to interact with creative practitioners from different backgrounds and expertise.

7. Apart from the direct engagement with young people, M+ reaches out to the local community through creative in-gallery and outreach activities. To offer visitors new ways to enjoy the gallery space, there will be programmes in connection with the M+ Collections such as performances, workshops and festivals that invite artists to deliver fun and welcoming experience inside the galleries. Besides, M+ is

working on a collaborative community project with an artist and partners from the social services sector, which would comprise artwork display at the Learning Hub of M+. A series of programmes including artist-led workshops, sharing by social services sector and community outreach events will be offered within and beyond the museum to encourage conversation and participation from a wider community.

(B) Family and Inclusive Engagement

8. As an inclusive museum, M+ welcomes visitors regardless of their backgrounds, age groups and abilities. To encourage parents and children to learn together, there will be regular family days during weekends comprising tours, workshops, screenings, performances and mobile creative stations with story-telling sessions and hands-on activities that provide fun and interactive experiences. One of the highlights would be the activities led by creatives with disabilities, it offers families as well as general visitors a chance to explore visual culture through the angles and lens of people with different abilities.

9. In the meantime, M+ also explores different accessible and innovative opportunities for visitors with specific needs to learn about visual culture. For instance, there will be tailor-made activities with accessible tools that assist participants to interact with the M+ Collections. Additionally, various types of online and audio resources including a pre-visit booklet that introduces basic information of the museum on accessibility will be provided to help visitors to prepare for their visits. In the long run, M+ hopes to build a community of learning in the museum and become a top destination for visitors from all walks of life.

(C) Academia (Schools, Teachers, Talks and Symposiums)

10. M+ aims to become the leading institution in promoting the learning skills of exploring visual culture for both teachers and students from kindergartens, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. In collaboration with local cultural practitioners, *M+ Rover* is a major outreach programme for students and the community. Since 2016, it has visited local schools and community spaces as a travelling creative studio and exhibition space. In this edition, we collaborate with a local artist, Wong Tin-yan, who designs the exhibition titled 'Yes but Why?' that emphasises questioning as an important learning tool to free us from habitual ways of thinking. *Rover TV* was launched in 2020 with more than 100 000 students tuning in to date. When

students returned to the classroom, the M+ Team and Wong Tin-yan took the programme onsite and has visited 17 schools and worked with around 1 800 students. The exhibition is open to the public from June 2021 at the Harbourside Deck in WKCD during weekends, attracting more than 2 500 people to visit.

11. To prepare for the opening of M+, a Teacher's Roundtable is formed to understand the expectations of schools towards M+'s programmes targeting students at all levels. All schools in Hong Kong will be invited to join orientation sessions to be arranged in late 2021 that give a general introduction to the museum and the upcoming activities. Upon the opening of M+, a series of regular thematic tours and workshops will be offered to students which provide ideas on how the M+ Collections relate to their time, place and daily life.

12. Other than local schools, M+ also aims at building a wider platform for knowledge exchange on visual culture specific to Hong Kong and Asia. To facilitate visitors to learn about the M+ Collections, there will be daily drop-in tours and pop-up chats delivered by a group of well-trained M+ Guide volunteers. A series of talks that invites artists, makers, curators, cultural practitioners from local and international will be offered to share their experience and insight on critical issues. M+ also seeks to establish partnerships with academic institutions through conducting research and offering short courses that explore topics on visual culture. Through diverse entry points, M+ hopes to arouse the curiosities of visitors to learn visual culture through numerous ways and perspectives.

(D) Interpretation and Digital Learning

13. To offer visitors with welcoming experience when they visit the museum, M+ strives to provide accessible, knowledgeable, and relevant information and content that is approachable to all. During visitors' in-gallery walking journey, several types of tools including audio guide, paper guide with activities, and visitor-friendly gallery text will be available to help them understand the highlight works and make connections to their life experiences. Some gallery spaces are designed to be learning-driven in particular for visitors to explore visual culture. For instance, the Cabinet is an open storage with a selection of over 200 works from the M+ Collections to provide an interactive environment for the visitors; there are also breakout learning spaces with drop-in activities in between galleries. Besides, there will be online learning resources and videos that allow visitors to find out

more about the M+ Collections, exhibitions and programmes content. With all these provisions, M+ aims to bridge the gap between visitors and museum content, building an open, easily accessible and sustainable platform for learning and knowledge exchange.

HONG KONG PALACE MUSEUM (HKPM)

14. A key aspect of HKPM's mission and vision is learning and public engagement. HKPM's learning and engagement programmes will serve as (a) educational resource for Chinese art, culture and history; (b) a platform for collaboration and community engagement; and (c) a catalyst for innovation and creativity for diverse audiences, both local and global. HKPM aspires to become an innovative leader in museum education to enrich and transform people's understanding of Chinese art and culture through fresh and accessible contents, creative programming, new technologies, and partnerships with local and global stakeholders. To achieve the above objectives, HKPM is focusing on the following three areas.

(A) The Learning Centre

15. The Learning Centre is located on the lower ground floor of HKPM. Measuring 1 600 square metres in size, the Centre is amongst the largest dedicated learning spaces in museums in Hong Kong. Inside the Centre is a 400-seat auditorium, an auditorium foyer, four spacious activity rooms, and a Resource Centre. A vibrant space for innovative learning and experimentation, the Centre is designed to meet visitors' personal and sociocultural needs. We plan to fill the Centre with wide-ranging educational activities, from film screenings to public lectures, exhibitions of students' works, art classes and workshops, digital artmaking stations, arts activities for community wellness, and short courses on arts and culture. Books and other learning materials will be available to the public in the Resource Centre.

(B) School Partnership

16. HKPM aims to foster long-term strategic partnerships with local school community to extend classroom learning through meaningful encounters with exhibitions and objects; offer students and teachers accessible and relevant learning resources on Chinese art

and culture; and provide training and professional development opportunities for teachers.

17. HKPM's current focus is on supporting students to explore the roles of art and culture in society, to find new ways of thinking about the past, and to unlock their creativity. Projects under planning include object-based learning initiatives, mobile conservation station and workshops, and internship programme as well as a digital learning portal for the school community.

(C) Community Engagement

18. With our community engagement effort informed by the values and ideas of diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion, HKPM plans to launch a flagship volunteer and docent programme to engage the community. HKPM aims to create a barrier-free environment for all visitors to enjoy museum trips through a host of inclusive services from access tours to programmes in diverse formats.

19. Firmly believing in the transformative power of the arts, we plan to invite members of our community to collaborate with local artists to create artworks or performances. We would also reach out to communities across all districts in Hong Kong through events, such as festivals, mini exhibitions and roadshows, to promote the understanding and appreciation of Chinese art and culture.

Pre-opening Audience Building Initiatives and Stakeholder Engagement Exercise

20. In preparation for the museum's opening in mid-2022, HKPM has been launching a series of pre-opening programmes to increase its visibility, build teams and audiences, and engage stakeholders. These programmes include the Palace Museum Culture Online Lecture Series, which features speakers from Palace Museums in Beijing, Hong Kong and Taipei, and HKPM's participation in large-scale cultural events, such as Hong Kong Book Fair 2021 and Fine Art Asia 2019, 2020, and 2021.

21. Between December 2020 and May 2021, HKPM organised or participated in 11 stakeholder engagement activities with about 1 000 participants from art, cultural and education sectors, including school principals and teaching staff from more than 320 primary and secondary schools, universities, tertiary institutions, special schools

and kindergartens. HKPM introduced to the participants the positioning of the museum, its exhibitions and learning programmes, operation and staffing, and obtained valuable feedback. Moreover, HKPM has attended meetings of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council and other advisory committees. HKPM also engaged the general public through an online public engagement event in May 2021 led by the HKPM's Board Chairman and Museum Director.

PERFORMING ARTS

22. There is a growing portfolio of performing arts venues in WKCD, including the Xiqu Centre, Freespace and the Art Park. The Lyric Theatre Complex, comprising a 1 450-seat lyric theatre, a 600-seat medium theatre and a 270-seat studio theatre, is under construction and scheduled for completion in 2024. WKCD's Performing Arts Division (PA Division), through its array of programmes and events, endeavours to cultivate arts audiences, promote lifelong arts learning and encourage wider and deeper engagement from diverse communities (i.e. age, social-demographic, levels of arts appreciation) throughout Hong Kong and beyond. They aim to achieve the objective of enhancing the appreciation of a diverse and pluralistic range of the arts, changing public perception towards performing arts from being inaccessible or elitist to a part of every-day life, and increasing the value of performing arts in the lives of the public.

Audience Cultivation

23. To build broader audiences, PA Division continues to curate and produce a diverse and pluralistic range of productions, new works, and learning programmes covering different art forms that target at different groups of the society. With a view to preserving the heritage and promoting development of xiqu, PA Division has been presenting the long-running programme of *Tea House Theatre Experience* at the Xiqu Centre to introduce Cantonese opera to new audiences, through its specially designed repertoires, showcasing a selection of narrated short excerpts in a range of vocal and music styles. Since 2019, a total of over 350 performances have been staged, attracting a total of over 29 000 audience. While the *Black Box Chinese Opera Festival* provides exciting, new perspectives on the history, evolution and potential future of Chinese opera, *Winter Holiday Comedy: The Emperor*, an original comic Cantonese opera, will entertain audiences, new and experienced, across the New Year 2022. Apart from Cantonese opera, PA Division also invites overseas and the Mainland xiqu troupes of

different xiqu genres such as Peking opera, Kunqu opera, Gaojia opera, Yue opera, Shanxi opera, etc. to stage in Hong Kong so as to cultivate a wider audience.

24. To explore new ways of artistic delivery to online/onsite audiences under the current pandemic restrictions and beyond, in 2020 Freespace commissioned three teams of young local artists to explore the future of contemporary theatre and performance through innovative new creations. These collaborations evolved into three new works under the Future of Performance series that will be presented to the public in 2021/22.

Learning

25. Early introduction to the arts is crucial for the holistic development of a young person. Programmes specially devised for the youth include West Kowloon Tea House Student Matinees, which allows students to learn about xiqu and Chinese culture in a fun and interactive way. Through narrated performances and facilitator-led discussions at the Tea House Theatre, as well as touring of the Xiqu Centre, arts learning is imparted outside the classroom. To support further teaching and learning activities in school, the programme also includes tailor-designed teacher training workshops and learning packs, introducing Cantonese opera and the programmes.

26. Freespace also offers interactive role-play workshops, such as Freespace Little Stage Managers (2019) and CrewKids (2021), which are specially designed to introduce children to the behind-the-scenes technical and production basics of the theatre.

27. To share experiences and ideas through the arts from the youth to the growing silver-haired population, the PA Division has launched the *Intergenerational Xiqu Journey* from May to June 2021. Seniors aged 60 or above and their younger generations were invited to participate in a series of Cantonese opera activities together. The activities included Xiqu Centre Guided Tour, Xiqu Movement Workshop and Tea House Theatre Performance. The programme gave participants a taste of this much-loved traditional Hong Kong art form, while at the same time encouraged the exchanges of memories and feelings about urban development and culture between the generations, to promote intergenerational communication.

28. Furthering the art of learning, talks, seminars, workshops and webinars, both online and in person, are regularly held on a wide variety of performing arts topics, including arts appreciation, arts and

cultural management and Chinese culture. Some of the free online talks and lectures during the COVID-19 induced venue closure included *How to adapt a theatre production for live-streaming: sharing by the team behind 'Waking Dreams in 1984'*, *Creating for the Virtual Stage*, *Building Virtual Bridges: How does new technology promote music collaboration across borders?* and *Xiqu Dialogues II: West Kowloon Cultural District's 'Xiqu Petit Theatre': The Why and What of Innovation and Experimentation*.

29. To activate the public space in the Xiqu Centre as well as to promote the art of Cantonese opera, regular exhibitions are presented at the Atrium of the Xiqu Centre, including the current exhibition celebrating the life and career of Kwan Tak-hing, one of Cantonese opera's most seminal figures.

30. To complement the learning of the heritage art form, *Xiqu Centre Guided Tours* was launched in January 2019. Conducted in Cantonese, English or Mandarin and supplemented with multimedia elements, the 60-minute tour helps visitors explore the Xiqu Centre facilities, learn about the architectural and design features, and discover fascinating facts about the culture and stories behind the art of xiqu. Weekly group tours are also offered for schools and registered charitable or non-profit organisations for free.

Community Engagement

31. Community engagement lies at the heart of WKCD. We believe that the arts play a positive role in transforming lives. To this end, PA Division provides an array of programmes and initiatives in each of the major performing arts forms (xiqu, theatre, dance, and music) to democratise arts to the general public of all walks of life, making it accessible financially and artistically.

32. *Freespace Jazz Fest*, WKCD's iconic annual programme of indoor and outdoor music and art events celebrating the innovation and diversity of one of the world's most popular forms of music, returns for the third year in October 2021. A large portion of the offerings at the Art Park and the Harbourfront Promenade are free of charge. Thousands find their way to the festival each year to revel in the warm ambience of music, arts and culinary pleasures.

33. Another free-for-all programme, the inaugural 'holiday-themed' *Summer Holiday: Hong Kong World Champs* took place from 10 to 11 July 2021 and will return next year. Families and visitors will get to enjoy free performances and workshops by Hong Kong's top

players in yoyo, kendama, rope skipping and more at Freespace and the Art Park.

34. Taking advantage of the Art Park of WKCD, a unique bike-friendly outdoor performing venue, a first-of-its-kind initiative in combining the democratisation of arts, upcycling of materials and nurturing young artists of Hong Kong is the ongoing '*Cycling Piano*' project. The Cycling Piano is a unique tricycle upcycled from a 1960s Hong Kong-made Morrison piano from Tsang Fook Piano Company. The pianist plus another busker and the cyclist will ride around the Waterfront Promenade and Great Lawn, entertaining and interacting with visitors, creating a very memorable artistic experience.

35. Regular free music performances in the Atrium of Xiqu Centre are presented by a diverse line-up of professional ensembles under *Music in the Atrium* during weekends.

ADVICE SOUGHT

36. Members are invited to note the learning and community engagement initiatives of WKCD.

West Kowloon Cultural District Authority
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