

The Rise and Fall of Traditional  
Craftsmanship

Time is slipping away, but some local crafts  
are here to stay

P. 8

Collect the Past, Inspire the Future

Every object from the past tells a story

P. 20

Sea of Canvasses

One of the last remaining traditional  
businesses in Hong Kong

P. 26

# THE YOUNG REP•RTER magazine

APRIL 2017

## Nurturing New Talent in Cantonese Opera



# *In This Issue*

## **4 Nurturing New Talent in Chinese Opera**

*Though the government has increased support to the opera's development, Hong Kong still lacks places for performers to shine*

## **8 The Rise and Fall of Traditional Craftmanship**

*Time is slipping away, but some local crafts are here to stay*

## **12 Is Cantopop Dying?**

*Diversifying the local music industry may be the way to revive Cantopop*

## **15 Collect the Past, Inspire the Future**

*Every object from the past tells a story*

## **18 Walking Tours: A New Trend in Tourism**

*The rise of a more personalised way of exploring the city*

## **20 Toys for Adults**

*In this society that still sees sex as a taboo, sex toys industry is growing on the brink*

## **22 Do Phone Transmitters Cause Cancer?**

*Although a direct link between cell phone transmitters and cancer is not proven, experts warn of potential health hazards*

## **24 Sea of canvasses**

*One of the last standing traditional businesses in Hong Kong*

## Letter from the Editor

The Hong Kong government has slapped a \$640 million bill on taxpayers to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the city's return to Chinese sovereignty. Yet many people in Hong Kong are worried about our fading cultural characteristics and economic competitiveness.

This month, TYR looks at our local culture, industry and history.

Both traditional Cantonese opera and Cantonese pop have difficulties attracting new blood. Despite government support, the artists feel that public interest is limited. Our reporters talk to insiders of both industries to find out why music produced in Hong Kong is no longer thriving like it used to.

Not only is the entertainment field losing vibrancy, but so is local craftsmanship.

Crafts that have been passed on from generation to generation are struggling to maintain their relevance in present day Hong Kong. Our reporter takes you through the history of the local canvas

industry, once a staple of the local manufacturing scene.

A tailor tells the story of the dying art of producing Chinese wedding gowns. He tells our reporter how the government's conservation approach has failed to preserve the city's intangible cultural heritage.

While some traditions fade, new trends pop up. We look at how a writer of minibus signs turns his calligraphy into an art form and a thriving business.

Others meanwhile preserve Hong Kong's collective memory. We look at a self-styled history library that archives the story of Hong Kong through a collection of toys, among other dated objects.

And then there are the play things of the adult kind. One of our reports reveals that sex toys not only help those with physical dysfunctions, but address the deep psychological needs of a modern city.

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Printer  
*Department of Journalism*  
*School of Communication*  
*Hong Kong Baptist*  
*University*



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**the\_young\_reporter**

EMAIL  
tyrmagazine@gmail.com  
WEBSITE  
tyr.hk





COVER STORY

# Nurturing New Talent in Cantonese Opera

*Though the government has increased support to the opera's development,  
Hong Kong still lacks places for performers to shine*

*Reported by Wing Li  
Edited by Richelia Yeung*



In 2005, the government set up the Cantonese Opera Development Fund(CODF) to promote the development of Cantonese opera in Hong Kong and to nurture new talent.

In 2010, a year after the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization added Cantonese opera to the list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the government injected \$69 million to the CODF for opera-related programmes.

From 2015 to 2016, the CODF allocated about \$4.49 million to the training of budding artists.

“The funding of the CODF has given opportunities for new talents to gain practical experience through performances,” said Dr Boaz Chow, a lecturer at the School of Chinese Opera at the Hong Kong Academy for

Performing Arts(HKAPA).

Chow said the CODF offers great help to local opera organizations, for example, the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong and the Young Academy Cantonese Opera Troupe, which recruited many young talents.

In particular, the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong organized 100 performances for young talents during the year.

Wong Shew-ping, a Cantonese opera artist for 37 years, said that the increasing resources that the government has put in Cantonese opera can give more opportunities for teenagers and children to get in touch with the traditional culture.

The Hong Kong Schools of Music and Speech Association has listed Cantonese operatic songs as a regular

competition item in the Schools Music Festival since 2008.

Cantonese opera has also been included in the core and elective modules of the music curriculum since 2009 under the New Senior Secondary School Curriculum.

Wong added that measures that the government has taken can nurture interest in some youngsters.

Chow said apart from financial assistance, he hopes that more venues for performance can be provided so that young talents can get more chances to gain experience.

“The supply of venues for performance still cannot meet the demand of the industry,” said Chow.

Janet Wong Kit-fong, a 33-year-old Cantonese Opera artist, said that sometimes it is difficult to find a suitable venue to schedule a



Janet Wong Kit-fong rehearses with her team for the upcoming performance.

performance, especially for small-scaled organisations.

Wong, who graduated from HKAPA in 2005, said that the competition is still not very intense in the industry.

She hopes that more young people can join the industry so that the prospect of Cantonese opera can flourish.

However, Tany Kong, a year-3 student majoring in Cantonese opera in the HKAPA, thinks otherwise.

Kong, who has learnt Cantonese opera since she was seven years old, said that there are more young people who are willing to join the industry now because the government is putting in more resources.

"I think the competition among new artists will be intense in the future," said Kong.

But Kong added that since she cannot make much money from Cantonese opera, she may not become a full-time artist in the future.

"Fledgling opera artists need opportunities or a stroke of luck to be able to become leading performers," Kong explained.

Chow, who has 14 -years of experience in Cantonese opera, said that many Cantonese opera artists are freelance performers who do performances and teach Cantonese opera at the same time.

"There is a lack of government-funded Cantonese opera team which can ensure regular performances, so many artists now choose to develop in different areas within the industry," said Chow.

As a teacher of Cantonese Opera for 17 years, Wong said that newcomers may not be able to master fundamental techniques in areas such as singing, acrobatics and kung fu as good as the experienced performers.

Wong said some people may not like the slow pace of Cantonese opera.

"The new blood in the industry

can try to hasten the speed of the performance in order to attract new audience," Wong said.

Chow added that discovering new script and building a strong foundation in martial arts and acrobatic techniques are vital for young professionals to build a loyal audience gradually.

Both Chow and Wong said they appreciated the effort made by the government in assisting the Cantonese opera community. They are positive of future development.

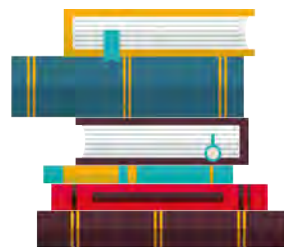
Apart from government promotion of Cantonese opera, they suggested that industry insiders should be more creative in terms of performances and stage effects.

"They should not just rely on the government. Those in the industry also need to make an effort so that Cantonese opera can continue to develop," said Wong.

# CODF

Cantonese Opera  
Development Fund

## 2005



## 2009

Intangible Cultural  
Heritage of Humanity



Students at HKAPA put on a Cantonese opera performance on the school's open day

Gov injected HK\$69m to

**CODF**  
2010



**2015-2016**

CODF allocated HK\$4.49m  
to training





## BUSINESS

# The Rise and Fall of Traditional Craftsmanship

*Time is slipping away, but some local crafts are here to stay*

*Reported by Holly Chik Edited by Jasmin Goken*

Tucked away in Shau Kei Wan, an old fishing village on the Northeastern shore of Hong Kong Island, a small shop is all that's left of a Chinese tradition in Hong Kong.

Lai Hing Kee Embroidery has been selling handcrafted quilts and Chinese wedding gowns for over half a decade.

In recent years, Lai Sum, 49, who is the third owner of the 53-year-old shop, has stopped selling and renting out what he calls "obsolete" items, such as wedding dresses and towel quilts, some of which are on the First Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory of Hong Kong.

"Our business has not been doing well. To be honest, if this shop is not owned by my family, it would have been closed down long ago," said Lai, whose grandfather bought the shop in its early years.

It started off as a traditional wedding supplies store, selling bedclothes and wedding gowns.

"Many fishermen in Shau Kei Wan took traditional Chinese wedding customs, such as wearing a highly embroidered red silk dress with a pair of dragon and phoenix, very seriously back then," said Lai.

A few years ago, the government Intangible Cultural Heritage Office visited their shop for a week and recorded the quilt making procedures, which ended up in the First Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory of Hong Kong, said Lai.

The office was set up in 2004 according to the Convention for

the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

According to the convention, the aim is to safeguard heritage through

identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, as well as revitalization.

Yet all Lai received was a certificate from the office, which he considers



Lai Sum's grandfather sells wedding gowns which had been made over 20 years ago.





Though the wedding gowns are well kept inside these metal boxes, many customers gave up renting in disgust once they saw the old-fashioned and decrepit dresses, said Lai Sum.

of no help to his business and the promotion of the heritage.

“Making a book, capturing a photo or displaying our quilt making equipment in the museum can hardly help preserve traditional industries,” said Lai. He said the rebuilding Lee Tung Street in Wan Chai was a “mistake.”

Lee Tung Street used to be known as Wedding Card Street. It was famous for small businesses which manufactured wedding cards. But in 2007, the street was redeveloped into a modern pedestrian walkway lined with chain stores.

Lai said clearing out and demolishing areas like Lee Tung Street destroys with traditional businesses.

Development programmes that promote or encourage collaboration

between craftsmen and modern artists might help, said Lam Weng Cheong, Assistant Professor of Department of Anthropology at The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Lam is not surprised that some of the traditional businesses are not doing well because few young people want to take up these traditions as their careers.

Lai admitted that traditional trades, like any other retail industry, would

fade away when there is no longer the demand.

After taking over his grandfather’s business in his 30s, Lai has been trying to change they way the family business is run to catch up with the changing business environment.

“Our silk floss quilts cost thousands of dollars, but they last at least 10 years. But nowadays, people prefer cheaper and more convenient alternatives, such as nylon quilts, even though they are not as durable,” Lai added.

***“Our silk floss quilts cost thousands of dollars, but they last at least 10 years. But nowadays, people prefer cheaper and more convenient alternatives, such as nylon quilts, even though they are not as durable”***





Mak Kam-sang teaches Chinese calligraphy by looking at the history and changes of minibus signs



“Most of the factories also stopped producing towel quilts 10 years ago. They were widely used in hospitals and ambulances because of their durability,” Lai said.

Five years ago, they also stopped renting out traditional Chinese wedding gowns.

“The customers weren’t interested when they found out the gowns were made at least 20 years ago. They thought they were old fashioned,” said Lai. He thought people no longer appreciate traditional craftsmanship.

“We must accept the fact that time has changed,” said Lai.

But Mak Kam Sang, who writes signs for minibuses, tells a different story. He scribbles and writes with a Chinese writing brush the destinations in Chinese calligraphy on pieces of perspex.

“Making minibus sign making is

more than dealing with plastic sheets. It is about mastering Chinese calligraphy,” said Mak, a lover of this ancient form of art.

It started in 1978, when the government first granted licenses to air-conditioned minibuses. Many of the drivers went to Mak to order the signs. He only intended to run a sign making company in the beginning, but he eventually specialised in minibus signs

Four years ago, the Sing Tao Weekly interviewed Mak.

“Some teenagers then came to me and proposed the idea of turning the minibus signs into key chains,” said Mak.

He works with a marketing and distribution firm which has over 50 dealers in Hong Kong, so he can focus on product design.

The 60-year-old has since been

expanding his business, targeting not only minibus drivers, but also teenagers who buy his signs as key chains, gifts or decorations.

Nowadays, nearly 80% of his customers are teenagers.

In March, he opened a studio where he teaches teenagers Chinese calligraphy, its use in sign writing and the history of minibuses.

Mak has been organising guided tours and workshops for teens who are interested in the handwritten signs.

“I hope to continue promoting the culture of minibuses and calligraphy”, said Mak. He hopes to continue his business as long as he is physically able to do so. Eventually, Mak hopes to run an online shop so that this tradition and business can be kept alive.



In Mak Kam Sang’s studio, which opened in early March, he teaches teenagers Chinese calligraphy, and the history and evolution of minibuses.

## CULTURE

# Is Cantopop Dying?

*Diversifying the local music industry may be the way to revive Cantopop*

Reported by Yoyo Chow and Candice Wong Edited by Susan Gao and Isabella Lo



K-pop is trendy around Southeast Asia because of the popularity of Korean television drama

“Cantopop is dying,” said lyricist James Wong Jim in 2003. “The funeral bell of the Cantopop has rung,” said singer Jan Lamb Hoi-fung in January this year. Fourteen years apart, in the eyes of some music talents, Hong Kong’s pop music scene is either stagnant or deteriorating.

James Wong was not only among the most influential voices in Cantopop, he was also one of its harsh critics. He bemoaned the lack of creativity. Other singer-songwriters as well as the audience share his views.

In recent years, Hong Kong has seen an increasingly vibrant indie music scene. There is also “MK Pop”, songs belted out by buskers on the streets of Mong Kok. Yet CD sales record, according to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (Hong Kong Group), has hit rock bottom.

But Conrad Wong Pak-lok, bass guitarist of local band Dizzy Cream, points out that musicians are reaching out to their audience directly online, through platforms

such as YouTube and Facebook. “A young audience prefers to listen online,” said Conrad, “it’s a more effective way to connect with young people.”

“The number of YouTube views and the sale of concert tickets,” he said, “are more accurate ways of gauging the music industry, rather than CD sales”.

But he believes that the lack of diversity is the main problem of the local music industry.

Conrad suggested that producers should avoid producing music with similar melodies and arrangements, and only compose with techniques they excel in.

“Most Hong Kong audience criticise music with double standards,” Conrad said. “They assume that foreign pop songs are more diversified than Cantopop.”

He thinks that is because the Hong Kong audience is not open-minded enough to accept new or non-mainstream music, unlike in Taiwan, where people support diversified



## *“The music industry is like a dying plant that we have stopped watering”*

underground music.

“The music industry is like a plant . It will die if we stop irrigating it,” said Edward Chan Ho-yin, a record producer and the prize winner of the Ultimate Song Chart Awards 2016.

Chan suggested music should not be viewed as an industry. “Producers,” he said, “ should make music which reflects people’s views , our pop culture and trends. “

He said that many producers and artists have tried to change the traditional style of Cantopop. In his collaboration with Juno Mak Jun-lung, a local singer, they tried to add new elements to the mainstream melody to make it unique, such as only including background music in half of the song.

“The music market needs a mixture of something new and something old. No music could be described as outdated,” said Chan.

“Awareness of local culture is not enough and most businessmen would only like to invest in a successful



Edward Chan Ho-yin was the prize winner of the Ultimate Song Chart Awards 2016



Edward Chan’s trophies from the Ultimate Song Chart Awards 2016.

music company,” said Chan.

“The music industry faces high rent for their studios. Many revitalised industrial buildings that were transformed to live house were closed down by the government because of legal restrictions. Even busking is considered as obstruction of public places,” said Chan.

“If our society is not engaging in culture, even music elites will not shine,” said Chan.

“When everyone is worried about Cantopop, do you ever wonder whether Chinese opera is dead or not?” said lyrics analyst, Jass Leung Wai-sze. “The answer is obviously no because there are still people working in the field of opera, so as Cantopop. Something unpopular doesn’t make it dead.”

Leung suggested the current Cantopop scene cannot be compared with that during the golden era of the 70s and 80s, since the production of music has evolved. For example, the inspirations for music has changed and the concepts have become more sophisticated. In 1981, Sam Hui Kwun-kit’s “Student Song” was merely encouraging pupils to focus on their studies. In 2014, Kay Tse On-kei’s “Egg and Lam” was advocating Hongkongers to fight for democracy in an adverse environment.

She said that the shift in consumption patterns, from purchasing CDs to subscribing to music apps, has changed the development of Cantopop. Most artists earn their livings from online platforms, small-scale performances and collaborations with sponsors.

“Death means there is no more energy and creativity,” said Leung, “you can see artists are trying to live on the fringes of the industry. How can I agree that Cantopop is dying when there are still people in the industry working so hard for it?”

“The industry is definitely dying, but it doesn’t mean that Cantopop is not living,” said Anthony Fung Ying-him, Director of School of Journalism and Communication at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and an expert in Hong Kong popular culture.

He pointed out that there are different genres of Cantopop, though it is not pigeon holed into love songs, folk songs, hip hop and indie.

“In every healthy market, such as Japan, Korea or the West, there is a balance between mainstream music and alternatives,” said Fung, “but that never happened in Hong Kong, not even during the golden era.”

Besides reconstructing business models, Fung believed

the government should be held responsible for not encouraging the growth of a public culture to support local music.

“The government responds to the industry’s request in a ‘governmental way’, which is holding Cantopop exhibitions only to promote our international image, but not for the survival of the Hong Kong music industry,” said Fung.

“They should first legalise more music activities, such as street music and industrial music, instead of targeting them as evils.”

“Cantopop can move on to the next stage as long as it finds a business model to sustain the industry and the music,” said Fung.



Conrad Wong Pak-lok says renting a 160 sq. feet band room in Kwun Tong District costed them \$3000 per month.



## PEOPLE

# Collect the Past, Inspire the Future

## Every object from the past tells a story

Reported by Elisa Luk & Sharon Pun Edited by Winnie Ngai

Joel Chung believes that there's a story behind every item of old object. He collects and shares these stories.

He started collecting stuff about 32 years ago when he was studying design at college. He would hunt for treasure on Ap Liu Street and Lascar Row.

He called himself a “librarian of history”, managing the archives of Hong Kong history.

“I wouldn’t call myself a collector because I don’t think I own these objects. These things have lived longer than me and I cannot take them with me when I die, so I am just taking care of them,” said Chung.

He collects old objects as a form of heritage. He believes antiques can inspire creativity.

Chung is particularly interested in collecting things related to childhood, that includes stationery, toys, books etc. It is because childhood is what everybody owns and

what best triggers memories. Over the past eight years, he has made collections based on certain themes, such as the Kowloon Emperor, poverty, air pollution and the toy industry.

He set up the Silver Stationery, as a shop in San Po Kong, to exhibit part of his collections. There is also the Stationery Bank where friends donate stationeries to let Chung pass them to the people in need. He believes such re-allocation of materials helps to reduce waste.

Both Silver Stationery and Stationery Bank are about the stories of education. The former is a display of childhood objects to show how they were used in daily lives. The public can sign up for paid tours to listen to stories behind these collections. The latter is a redistribution service where visitors can take home certain items for free. On top of that, Chung also promotes the childhood culture by posting photos of his exhibits to his Facebook page.

“There are over 10,000 items and each one can tell a



Chung Yin Chai Joel, the owner of Silver Stationery and the Stationery Bank.



story,” he said.

His exhibits are not permanent like those in museums. He changes them often to suit his visitors.

Chung also shares stationery with people in Mainland China and overseas, but his priority is to help locals.

“We try our best to deal with the excess resources, to help as many as we can,” he said.

At first, Chung had to communicate with donors and organise to transport his collections. After setting up Stationery Bank, Chung said that visitors would take as well donate things. He believes this is a great education opportunity.

“People started to realise the concept of sharing. But through watching hunt and then distribute these stationeries, they want to help and that led to an improvement in human nature. That’s a bonus,” Chung said.

He also thinks that re-allocating



Chung has collected a classic machine for local drinks, Vitasoy milk.

resources through the bank is a way to save the Earth. Most of the stationery is made of plastic. Reusing them cuts the amount of waste sent to the landfills.

Chung described Silver Stationery as a chemical lab and every item is a chemical element. They wait to react

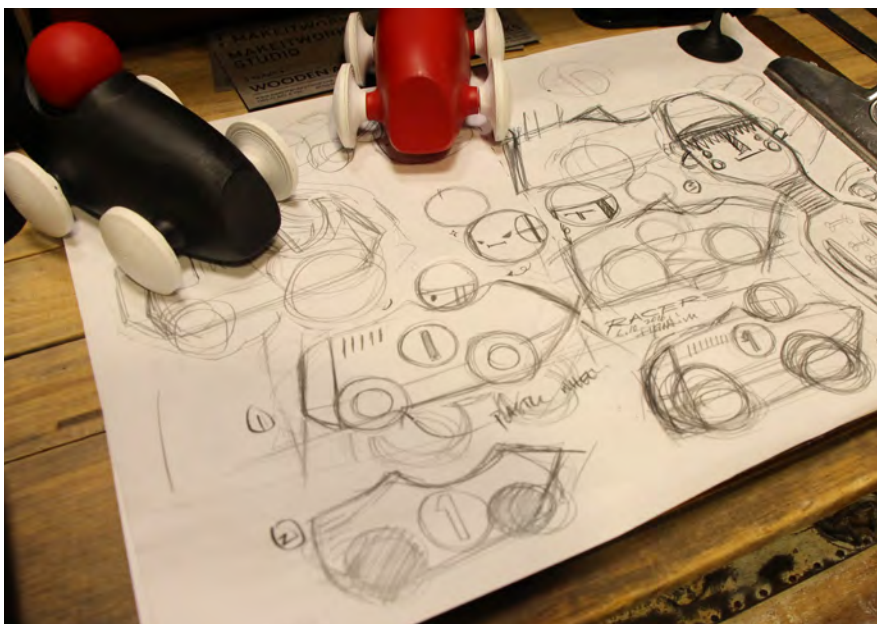
with visitors who have different interests and it leads to infinite possibilities.

“Every item here is important because the most precious part of this place is the convention, just like history need loads of antiques to illustrate its full picture. They can’t



Silver Stationery, the exhibition place for Chung’s collection.





Chung also collects childhood literature and illustration.

replace each other,” he said.

Visitor Yeung Pui-yan appreciates Chung’s effort.

“We need this kind of persistence to keep our collective memory,” said Yeung.

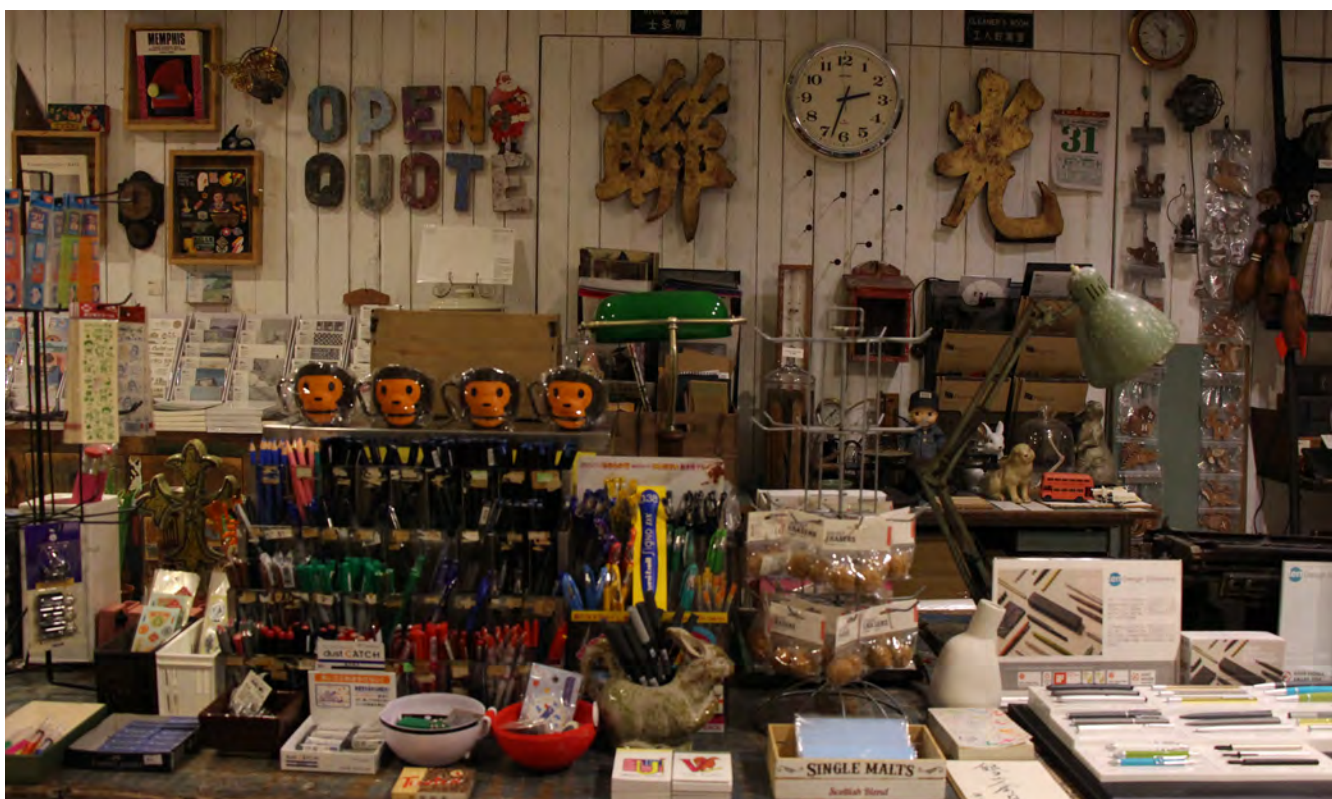
Chung’s friend, Siu Shiu-kei, who has his own brand of wooden toys said they got to know each other because they are both obsessed with childhood products and share their ideas.

“We like to collect things about our daily lives. They are not pricey and

sometimes there are flaws on them. Those things are beautiful” said Siu.

He is currently cooperating with Chung to prepare an exhibition.

Chung wants to establish a museum of childhood in ten years’ time. The goal is to archive ’ collections from different generations and display them to international visitors. He hopes to inspire people to create their own history by collecting every piece of memories.



All displayed items here are important for Chung to tell stories and history.

## SOCIETY

# Walking Tours: A New Trend in Tourism

## *The rise of a more personalised way of exploring the city*

Reported by Dorothy Ma and Yolanda Gao Edited by Sing Lee and Ellen He



For tourists, Hong Kong's may have been renowned for luxury shopping malls and theme parks. But the city is taking on a new approach to lure visitors.

"We started our tour with a bowl of wonton noodle soup then progressed on through roasted meats, dim sum and more delights," Gary Halbert from Vancouver, said after he enjoyed his first tour in Hong Kong.

The private, small scaled tour undertaken on foot, named walking tour, is rising in Europe, according to the Guardian. Now Hong Kong operators are planting their local flavor into it.

Instead of the touristy destination, they bring visitors to local communities of Tai Po, Sham Shui Po and Kowloon City. It is all about unique cultural, historical and culinary exploration.

Five years ago, Leung started run their walking tour focus on foodies as the first food tour in Hong Kong, said Silvana Leung, Director of Operations at Hong Kong Foodie.

The family-owned Cantonese restaurants hidden in the old neighborhood often do not have waiters speaking fluent English and the English menu, she said.

Local walking tour organization take this defect as its opportunity, attempting to give an original image of Hong Kong to the non-Chinese speakers.

According to the travel website TripAdvisor, Walking tour is the fourth popular things to do in Hong Kong now, having an even higher rank than Disneyland and Lantau Island.

Leung's tour sets six stops of dishes

along the four-hour tour, including noodle soups, Pineapple buns, roast geese. It tries to give a whole Hong Kong food scene to people who are not familiar with Asian food.

"Pineapple bread does not contain pineapple but why does it have such a name? Why are Hong Kong people so obsessed with it? The point is that we introduce our own culture through food. It is not just about eating," she explained.

Seeing an increasing number of overseas tourists, some operators even offer tours exclusively for German and Russian.

According to the Hong Kong Tourism Board, in 2016, the number of mainland visitors and the total numbers of visitors fell by 6.7% and 4.5% respectively. But there was a 3.1% increase in the number of overseas tourist since 2015.



PM was raised in Germany, speaks Cantonese in her family, and came back to Hong Kong about twenty years ago working as a tour guide. She turned to the walking tour industry five years ago.

PM said her customers are seldom affected by the political situation of Hong Kong. Besides, Leung said the number of German tourists has been going up almost every year.

“Hong Kong is an international city and quite a lot conferences are held here. This month (March, 2017) is ‘arts month’, so art lovers from all over the world are flooding into the city, not only mainlanders,” Leung said.

Information age also help boost the development of walking tour. Tourist, especially the millennials, prefer searching travel advises on the Internet, and most of walking tours organization are based on Internet.

They attract customers and showcase their credibility by the plenty comments left on the Internet platform, said PM.

Despite its potential, walking tours have their limitations.

Walking tour’s key concept is a close relationship between the guides and their customers. Thus most of the operations only have a small scale of business.

“Mass tours are not our goal. A walking tour is a very intimate experience. It’s very difficult to have even 12 people on a tour,” said Leung.

Licensing is another issue.

By law, all travel agents are required to have a government issued license.

“Some of the walking tour operators are not licensed,” said Mandy Cheung, Director of the Hong Kong Getaway Private Tours.

She pointed out that getting a license may cost over half a million Hong Kong dollars, which small businesses cannot afford.

A license regulation is necessary for the industry, said legislator Yiu Si-wing from the tourism functional constituency. He advised individual tour guides to work together with licensed companies, to guarantee the service quality.

Yiu also warned that the unlicensed private tour business may breed the illegal conducts like prostitution.

Hong Kong has been trying to transform the tourism industry. In the 2017-2018 government budget, \$240 million was allocated to support local light shows, mega events and promote diverse tourism products.

Some operators are calling for more resources for walking tours. “Most of the walking tour operators are small-scale businesses with no support from the government”, said Cheung.

“The market for walking tours is not extensive at present. But with the demand from tourists and the increasing variety of tourism apps, this trend is expected to be more and more apparent in three years,” the legislator said.

The Hong Kong Foodie Taste tour though is supported by the government’s New Tour Product Development Scheme, a fund that helps travel agents to come up with creative tour products.

Leung said the fund helps a lot while what government could do is more than that. Small business lack the connection with other agencies, hotel, airlines thus they need a lot help in promotion.

In terms of the outlook of its tourism, Hong Kong still has a long way to go in developing its indigenous resource. At least the policy-making process needs to be improved, said the lawmaker.

Yiu believed the government should have a specific department to consider policies on alternative tours, regional investment and conservation of attractions.

“What Hong Kong tourism needs most is a comprehensive plan, plus short-term, mid-term and long-term measure. For instance, improve facilities such as Wi-Fi coverage in the short term and develop greenfield sites sightseeing on Lantau Island in the long term,” he concluded.



Oversea visitors, especially those who have been to Hong Kong before, are the target customers of private tours and walking tours, said by tour guide Mandy Cheung.

## BUSINESS

# Toys for Adults

*In this society that still sees sex as a taboo, sex toys industry is growing on the brink*

*Reported by Erica Chin and Kobie Li Edited by Celia Lai*

About 47% of women in Hong Kong are dissatisfied with their sex life, according to a survey conducted in 2015 by sex toy store, Smile Maker.

Cynthia Ho, a sex therapist and relationship counselor, has dealt with 280 cases of people seeking professional sex therapies over the past seven years and the number is on the rise. She has come across people who have sex problems such as addiction and or others who do not understand the appropriate ways to have sex. "Sometimes, sex toys are prescribed," she said.

In 2010, there were around 30 physical sex toys shop in Hong Kong but now but now there are over 50 shops and numerous online shops selling sex toys, Vera Lui, the owner sex toy shop, witnessed the increasing popularity of sex toy in Hong Kong.

Since 2015, Watson's started selling sex toys at 237 outlets, sex toys can be more commonly found in Hong Kong.

"The business is lucrative, interesting, at the same time, getting hotter and hotter," said Martina Ngai, an intimate stylist working in Lui's sex toy store. Her job is to offer personal advice and find sex toys that suit their individual needs. "Both demand and supply for sex toys in Hong Kong is on the up," Ngai said.

Many sex toy stores in Hong Kong has both brick-and-mortar stores and online shops for customers to choose from. Services even include delivery-to-door services or pick-up options at lockers, post offices and convenient



Intimate stylist Martina Ngai says tourists from Southeast Asia and Australia think Hong Kong's sex toy shop have a more comprehensive collection of different sex toys, such as vibrators (top) and strings (bottom).

stores for the convenience and privacy of customers.

"Even though customers can shop online, half of them prefer to visit the physical shop so they can feel the toys, as well as to seek personal advice from the staff," Ngai said.

Since Lui appeared in a television talk show last year in which she spoke frankly about sex, the shop has seen an increase in the number local customers. They also have customers from Southeast Asia and Australia. "Some of them are under 18 years old," said the intimate stylist.

"I see sex toys as something that bring sparkles to a relationship," said Ho. "If people want to reignite the chemical and keep that sparkles running, in that case, sex toys do help a lot," she added.

Ho warns though that sex toys are sometimes, abused. Some patients want to avoid seeking help and overuse their sex toys. In a long run, they may find the most excited felling using sex toy, eventually it is even harder to have satisfied sex life as they cannot control their partner like sex toys. They overlooked the fact that their poor sex life may be linked to psychological or emotional problems.

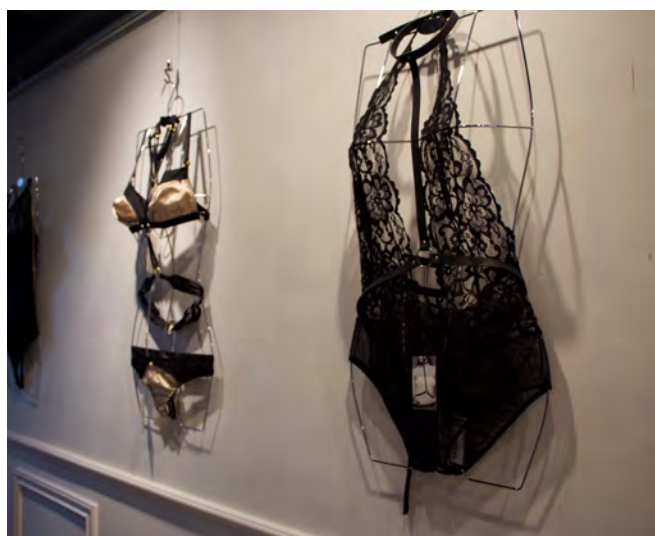
She also said men are more likely to face physical sex problems like erectile dysfunction, premature and inhibited ejaculation caused by smoking, alcohol, drug abuse or unstable emotions such as stress and depression.

One customer, Tina Chan said she





Sex toys stores in Hong Kong are more commonly found upstairs in central areas.



Martina also sells intimate products like lingerie and underwear.

preferred to buy her sex toys in person because she was afraid she would end up with counterfeits. “It is a matter of personal needs,” she said.

“Sex toys stores in Australia are bigger and more elegant. They have more variety, bullet sized vibrators to lingeries and cosplay outfits,” she said.

She also found it hard to bring up any topics about sex in Hong Kong. “Even though they (my friends) are actually using sex toys, they just refuse to talk about them. It is a totally different

social norm,” she added.

“Asian women are conservative or very protective of their bodies,” Ngai said. She believes the essence of the business is to let women know more about their bodies and their sexual needs through selling intimate products.

“They can discuss sex-related topics, such as the anatomy of the vagina,” she said. She believes an open minded attitude toward sex in Taiwan has made sex toys more acceptable there. Ho believes Hongkongers nowadays, especially youngsters, are less

conservative than their parents. She sees a positive direction that sex toys industry has market in Hong Kong.

“The sex toys industry in Hong Kong is definitely improving,” Ho said, “but still because of how Hong Kong people perceive sex and sex toys, I think Hong Kong still has a long way to go.”



Cynthia Ho, a sex therapist who had handled over 280 cases, said Hongkongers nowadays are more willing to seek professional



Martina wishes to make customers coming to sex toys stores feeling as normal as hanging around in Apple store.

# Do Phone Transmitters Cause Cancer?

*Although a direct link between cell phone transmitters and cancer is not proven, experts warn of potential health hazards*

*Reported by Ada Lyu Edited by Emily Xu and Isabella Lo*



Mobile phones have become an important part of life. Many people have their phones close by even when they sleep.

In February 2017, a news report on how three members of a family who live on the top floor of Tai Ping Estate in Sheung Shui were diagnosed cancer sparked public concern. Two of them died within five years. Mr Liao, the son of the family, suspected it had something to do with the mobile phone transmitters on the top of the building.

Liao found that there were 12 mobile phone transmitters on top of the building. A former classmate of his who lived in the same building, died of brain cancer three years ago.

According to Hong Kong Economic Times, there are more than 47,000 mobile phone transmitters around the territory. From Hong Kong Economic Times' report, the Office of Communication Authority said that over the past three years, they received about 300 complaints

concerning safety problems linked to radiation from mobile phone transmitters. But tests conducted by Communication Authority showed that the radiation levels did not exceed safety standards, even at the building where Mr Liao lived.

The radiation standard used in Hong Kong complies with those of the International Commission for Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). This is also widely used in the U.S., Canada, Australia and some densely populated countries such as Singapore, Japan and South Korea, according to the Office of Communication Authority.

Chan Sai-kit, a member of the Democratic Party and a registered social worker, said that within the bounds of Hong Kong's law, the highest electromagnetism intensity is 9 million  $\mu\text{W}/\text{M}^2$ , which applies to

all areas in the territory. It is 90 times that of the Mainland and 8,900 times that of Germany.

"It's hard to say for sure, but documents we collected did show the possibility that mobile phone transmitters may harm people's health," Chan said. He also provided a document showing 31 requests for help that the Democratic Party received in March 2017, nine of which were from people with cancer. "We will assist these people in radiation tests and connect with experts to provide them with suggestions in healthcare," Chan added.

(photo of the document)

Chan said that the incorporated owners of Tai Ping Estate decided to end the contract with four telecommunication companies and some of the transmitters will be



removed in two months.

However, he still hopes that the government can review the radiation standard and regulate the number of transmitters. He also suggested that phone transmitters should be at least ten metres above the roof of any building in order to reduce possible harm brought by radiation.

Dr Leung Kwong-chuen, a clinical oncologist at Hong Kong Baptist Hospital explained that usually, only ionizing radiation can contribute to cancer. The wavelength of radiation from cell phone transmitters is non-ionizing. “More information is needed to prove the association between cancer and mobile phone transmitters. But people may have headaches or other discomfort from the transmitters,” Dr Leung said.

Lai Xiao-yang, a professor from the Electronic Information and Electronic Engineering Department at Jiao Tong University in Shanghai said that the influence of electromagnetic radiation on human health not only depend on intensity but also by the exposure time and frequency. “Theoretically people shouldn’t be exposed to electromagnetic radiation higher than 10 million  $\mu W/M^2$  for a long



“Mobile phone radiation is non-ionizing and doesn’t cause cancer, according to traditional opinion,” Dr Leung Kwong-chuen says.

time,” he said.

Lai explained that high frequency radiation is more likely to penetrate the human body, even though the higher the frequency, the lower the depth of penetration. The main effect is a rise in temperature in the tissues exposed to radiation.

While we can regulate our body temperature, extended, frequent exposure to radiation can have serious health effects, such as heat stroke and tissue burn.

Lai added that if a phone transmitter is at least ten meters away, the intensity of the radiation would usually decrease to less than 1.5million  $\mu W/M^2$ .

The deaths at Tai Ping Estate was not the first time questions were raised on the possible health hazards from mobile phone radiation. In February 2009, French telecom company Bouygues Telecom was asked to take down a mobile phone mast because of its uncertain effects on human health.

In October 2012, the Supreme Court of Cassation of Italy recognized the possible effects in human health from mobile phone radiation. An Italian businessman, Innocente Marcoloni was given compensation after he developed a tumor on the left side of his head after using his mobile phone for five to six hours a day for 12 years.

Although the link between mobile phone radiation and health is still uncertain, Lai and Leung have come up with their set of advice for people living near transmitters. They believe sticking tinfoil on the windows can reduce radiation into the room. Eating more radiation resistant food, such as tomatoes, sesame and kelp also help. Regular exercise can be a preventative measure as well.



A compliant’s neighbor was showing the atherom on his arm to the media (Credit: Chan Sai-kit, Democratic member)



PHOTO ESSAY

## *Sea of canvasses*

*One of the last standing traditional businesses in Hong Kong*

*Reported by Caroline Kwok  
Edited by Nicole Kwok*

From sails, tents and marquees to fashion items such as shoes and backpacks, there is a material that blocks the harsh sun, stands against the strong wind and rough rain, carries the heaviest items and accompanies you along the rugged journey.

Canvas is an extremely durable, light and affordable fabric with a history that can be traced back to around 3,000 B.C. when people in China use hemp, a fiber-yielding plant, to make cloth.

Canvas has changed its forms with time and technology to meet people's various needs and functions. Originally woven from cotton or flax, canvasses are now made from many different materials as well, such





Chan Quan lays out a piece a canvas for his customer to see the texture of it and decide the size that he wants.

as PVC and nylon. Canvasses can also be engineered to be fully water-proof and fire-resistant or even radiation-resistant.

In Hong Kong, canvas was used to prevent rooftop leakage for poorly constructed squatter homes in the 1950s. The iconic “red-white-blue” canvas bag is also one of the must-have items for every household in the 70s as Hong Kong people carry clothes, groceries, electronics and any other daily necessities across the borders to help their poor relatives in the less developed mainland China.

Canvas bag is a token of supportive spirit; its versatility symbolizes the adaptive and resourceful Hong Kong folks, and its sturdiness represents the industrious and resilient Hong Kong people.

These canvas bags normally found on the streets for less than \$50 even ventured into luxury couture. The “Braided Leather Street” bag in the Louis Vuitton 2007 Spring Summer collection was almost a “replica” of this tri-colour concept. Yet, its estimated retail price was more than \$13,000.



A roll of medium canvas weighs about 120 pounds, almost as heavy as Chan.



The top of a flat ring will be placed on one side of the canvas and it will be hammered to the bottom of the ring on the other side.



Canvas are sewn with a normal nylon thread and a thick intertwined nylon thread for better durability of the final product.



Flat rings are needed to prevent holes on the canvas from fraying.

However, as Hong Kong has become a more affluent city now, canvas is less of a domestic item and more often used as waterproof rooftop covers for streetside shops, construction sites, and soft toppers for trucks.

Chan Chuen, 78, has been in the canvas industry for more than 50 years. He had his own ups and downs in the industry but witnessed how canvass continues to roll as a pragmatic and down-to-earth material.

Chan is the owner of a one-man canvas store in Sham Shui Po after he closed down his two other shops as the market size is small and Chan could no longer afford to hire his two assistants.

Chan's store will probably go out of business as Chan ages because none of his sons want to take up his mantle.

"Of course, these are hard works" Chan said.

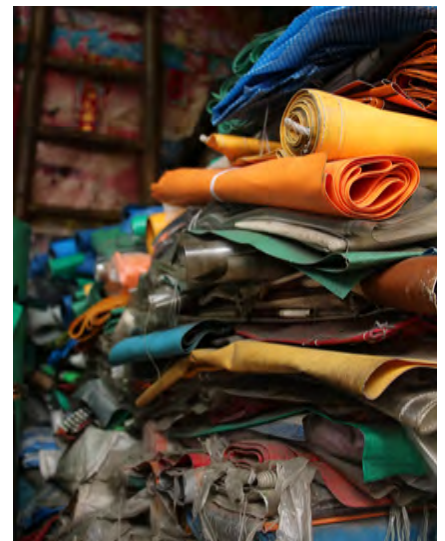
However, canvass will not become a sunset industry as another canvas store newly opened just two stores away from Chan's.



Chan getting a quote of a canvas by measuring the size of it. He says a regular size canvas cover costs around \$1,000, but the most expensive canvas he has ever made costs over \$10,000 due to its special size and irregular shape.



Chan also sells handmade "red-white-blue" canvas bags in his store.



Customers will bring their damaged canvas to Chan for a quick repair.





Chan Quan founded Chuen Kee Canvas about 50 years ago.



Chan (left) started his canvas shop in his 20s, about the same time his wife (right) married him.

E M A I L  
*tyrmagazine@gmail.com*

F A C E B O O K  
*The Young Reporter*

W E B S I T E  
*tyr.hk*