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Jami Gong cheers the city up



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Editor's Note

Some people are born with greater art sense. They have good taste and extensity. But it does not mean they are the privileged to enjoy art.

Art is for every one. Art is the record of human being. Every individual has the right to admire the amenity of life. Unfortunately, normal education in Hong Kong does not nurture our next generation to embrace the world of art.

To be able to understand art, one should at least has some background knowledge on art history and style of different artists - these are seriously depreciated in schools.

Despite government's ignorance on art education, there are, still, quite a number of individuals who are keen on art. But again, our government does not treasure art talents at all. It is like having an art garden without watering, manuring and sowing. Soon when all the plants in the garden die, the soil will become barren.

The West Kowloon Cultural District is another piece of "political gravestone" of our government, which bears the name of our great leaders who erect a big white elephant as an achievement of their careers. From Tung's era to Tsang's era, it has undergone ten years of discussion - and still, the plot still left vacant.

Art is about the whole ambiance. People will not suddenly become cultivated with the establishment of art hub if the government still turns a blind eye to the root of problem. Education, as well as more down-to-earth support to the industry, is needed to create the whole ambience for the city. By then, people will concern more about art, our market-oriented media will then report more and thus a healthy cycle will be established.

Simpson Cheung Wai-ming
Chief Editor

Correction:

Vol 42, Issue 2, P.15 The caption writes "the Agency of Voluntary Service." It should be "the Agency for Volunteer Service". Same for the title of Ms Flora Chuung appears in the third paragraph. We apologise for making such mistakes.

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Four schools were invited to join a pilot project on Cantonese opera learning in 2008. The three-year programme now is an extension to the pilot project. (Courtesy: Dr Leung Bo-wah, HKIED)

EDUCATION

New music curriculum preserve opera legacy

BY MAGGIE TAM

More and more local students now have the chance to know more about Cantonese opera as it has become a compulsory part in the syllabus of music subject in the new academic structure for higher secondary education.

In a bid to nurture new talents in Hong Kong where local music teachers and students have only been trained in western music, Cantonese opera practitioners have been recruited to provide trainings in 60 primary and secondary schools from November 2009 under a \$2.6 million, three-year programme organised by the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED).

According to HKIED, ten Cantonese opera artists will be invited to schools to teach teachers and students history of the art, singing styles, hand gestures and body movements. There would be no standard curriculum for the subject.

The lessons at primary schools will focus more on singing and performing. Those at secondary schools will involve analysis of singing styles and appreciation techniques.

"The scheme will give greater diversity to lessons. No matter students like the art form or not, they can learn how to appreciate Cantonese opera," said Ho Tung Secondary School music teacher Ms Kam Yi-fong.

However, some teachers found the new syllabus demanding.

"We do not receive any education concerning Cantonese opera. It's something

related to culture itself and cannot be understood overnight. It's rather laborious for us to digest and teach [the subject]," said Ms Mak Suk-pui, a music teacher at Belilios Public School.

According to the *Curriculum and Assessment Guide (S4-6)* from the Education Bureau, students have to sing and listen to excerpts of Cantonese operatic songs, as well as describe and analyse the content and characteristics of the lyrics. They may also be required to compose a Cantonese operatic song of three to five minutes.

"We wouldn't impose thorough understanding of Cantonese opera on students. But even a village Japanese woman knows what Noh musical drama is and every Russian kid knows what ballet is. At least the younger generation in Hong Kong should know what Cantonese opera is about," said Mr Yuen Siu-fai, vice-president of Chinese Artists Association and advisor of the training programme.

Mr Yuen, who would also be one of the artists teaching the art form, said Cantonese opera was the most indigenous and traditional performing art in the city, but locals did not know how to treasure it. Instead of hoping the scheme can boost the number of Cantonese opera audience, he just wished it could continue the legacy left by ancestors.

"I'm happy to teach. Cantonese opera is a culture, not just a skill. We can directly show students our passion and the value of the culture, not just techniques," he said.

"It's rather fresh. I would like to gain some basic knowledge of our own traditional culture," said Ms Gigi Tang Shun-chi, a form

six student at Belilios Public School. "But I don't want examinations on the art form."

"It sounds boring. But if I have to learn it, I will try my best to understand what's going on," said Eric Tam Siu-yick, a form two student at Tang King Po School.

Recently, the traditional art form has been enlisted intangible cultural heritage by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

Chairwoman of Chinese Artists Association Ms Lisa Wang Ming-chun said while the industry was delighted with the recognition, efforts were needed to preserve it properly.

The association proposed a culture-oriented secondary school focusing on providing students with professional Cantonese opera training in their early teens in early October.

Dr Stephen Chow Chun-kay, chairman of the Cantonese Opera Advisory Committee, said it was up to the Education Bureau to decide if the proposal could be implemented, and whether such training could complement the existing curriculum and win recognition from schools and parents.

As for Phoebe Chan Hiu-lam, a young Cantonese opera learner at Marymount Secondary School, she is pleased with the new syllabus but she said that real Cantonese opera had much more to be learnt about.

"Although the syllabus is not in-depth, it is a way for students to approach the traditional art form. If they find it interesting, they will explore more. There's anyway a chance to preserve the legacy," she said.

EDITED BY EDITH TSANG



Accompanied with soft music, students reflected upon meaning of life in relation to given death scenarios.

EDUCATION

University students learn to face death in class

BY VERA CHEN

Mr Ng Yu-fung was remorseful when he received the news of his father's death around twenty years ago.

As a secondary school pupil at that time, he was not prepared to face the death of his family member. He chose to evade reality and ignored his dying father -- a wrong act he regretted.

"I dodged seeing my sick father. I was so afraid of encountering death at that time," he said.

Years after his father's death, he lamented he did not take Professor Wong Wai-ying's class which asked students to design coffins earlier in life and have a reflection on the meaning of life and death.

Dr Wong, an associate professor in Philosophy at Lingnan University, has been teaching his course "Life and Death" for the past seven years. In his class students are asked to design their coffins, write their wills and visit terminally ill people to touch on the issues of death.

"I learned how to face terminally ill patients in the course. Now I feel the urge to share this reflection with others," said Mr

Ng, who had recently attained a master's degree in Philosophy in life and death in Taiwan. He is drawing up a curriculum for teaching the subject in Hong Kong.

A recently published study into undergraduates' attitude towards death showed that university students suffered serious emotional problems when faced with death of their friends or families.

In light of the insufficient mention of the meaning of life and death in current education system, academics including Wong are asking for more emphases on death education, which Dr Wong said was different from giving counselling service to the bereaved because the subject touched on various academic aspects, including psychology, religious study and philosophy.

"Death is a part of life. No one can avoid it," Dr Wong said. "Asking students to design their own tombs can help them overcome their fear for death and break the taboo of talking about death." He said controversial topics as euthanasia and cloning technology were discussed in the lesson.

Another academic, Dr Ng Yau-nang, is offering a course "Ethics of Life and Death" at Hong Kong Baptist University.

Student Ms Tang Kwan-yee found the course useful. "I am more sensitive now when a friend mentions suicide -- It's a sign

that he needs somebody to talk to," she said.

Dr Wong and Dr Ng said there are insufficient resources in developing death education in universities. Dr Wong said the lack of resources limited the size of the class, meaning that many students interested in the course would not have the chance to take it.

Similar situation also took place at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University where only one course related to death education was offered respectively, sending students to compete with others for a place in the course.

In late September, the University of Hong Kong set up "Website ENABLE", the city's first interactive online platform for the community to write their life stories and state their preferred type of funeral. The website also provides counselling information and a guide to facing death of relatives or friends.

The university also has another course "Knowing the Unknown: An Introduction to Death, Dying and Bereavement". Students taking the course can take a closer look at death experience through sharing by forensic scientists and firemen.

EDITED BY JAYSON HUI

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

Testing industry calls for support in manpower



Technicians are testing samples in the laboratory of a testing and certifying company called SGS. (Courtesy: SGS)

BY BONNIE FUNG

Specialists of testing and certification firms in Hong Kong expressed their concern about the lack of professional manpower in the industry.

People may not know much about the industry before but it received more attention since the government put it in the spotlight.

"Our industry is not a very big one but we are supporting many other industries such as textile, toys or electronics," Ms Yonnie Yiu Yuen-kam, the General Manager of a testing and certification firm SGS, said. SGS has been in the business for 50 years.

Firms in the industry take the role of third-party testing and certifying. They receive samples from their clients and test the samples according to different standards of different countries. Then they produce reports on the safety and functional standard of those samples.

"Buyers from all over the world want to buy products or resources from Asia and they find us to test for them in order to protect their own rights," Ms Yiu said. "We represent buyers to make sure what they buy meet their import standard and quality

controlling standard. That is the value of our industry."

The Task Force on Economic Challenges chose the industry as one of the six economic areas in which Hong Kong has clear advantages. However, the industry has been developing since 1980s and providing services for factories in the Pearl River Delta.

According to the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, there are more than 300 firms employing more than 10,000 people in the industry now.

But executives expressed their concern about the lack of trained labour. "There is a need for a good system for training specialists. We have to depend on our in-house training now," Ms Yiu said.

"One main difficulty is to find specialists for our company," Mr Robert Cheung Hon-fai, business development director of the Hong Kong Standards and Testing Centre said. "At this moment there is no university providing courses about our industry."

The Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE) currently provides four specific courses about testing and certification. The institute is considering taking more students and running more related courses as to match the development of the industry.

Mr Andrew Chan Siu-ming, head of the

department of applied science in IVE in Shatin, said the employment rate of their graduates is close to one hundred per cent.

"Graduates may be employed as technicians in government departments and laboratory analysts in private accredited testing and certification laboratories; quality control or research and developmental technologists," he said.

Mr Chan said students have been taught about safety and laboratory skills at school. "Chemical technology and Applied Analytical Chemistry are two of the most popular courses. About three to four applicants compete for a place this year," he said.

He added that there were two new laboratories for students to practice analytical sample preparation work and instrumental chemical skills.

Ms Marenda Lo Mo-ching, senior information officer at the Innovation and Technology Commission said the council had had two meetings so far and would further discuss certain areas such as how to increase competitiveness of the industry and strengthen its manpower training.

"Manpower training is just one of those aspects the council will discuss," she said.

EDITED BY VENICE WONG



China bars dissidents from returning home



Ms Li Jianhong is showing a cardboard saying "I want to go home" in Chinese in front of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in HKSAR.

BY ALAN KWOK

The Chinese government has refused several dissidents' entry into their native country in recent months. In Hong Kong, dissidents also faced denials of entry and exit. A Shanghai-based writer, Ms Li Jianhong was barred from crossing the border in Lok Ma Chau in October.

With no explanation, Ms Li was blocked from entering China from Sweden one week before her passport was due to expire.

"I am a Chinese citizen holding a valid Chinese passport but I am denied the right to go home by my own country," she said.

According to Ms Li, the mainland police stationed at Lok Ma Chau searched her as well as her luggage and confiscated eight books. They refused her to cross the border and sent her back to Hong Kong after ten hours of negotiation.

"From beginning to end, they did not ask me a question or provide me any explanation," she said.

Ms Li guessed her ban was a result of signing *Charter 08*, a manifesto of scholars and journalists in China requesting for political changes and democracy, and articles she wrote this year to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Tiananmen Square Protests.

Since 2001, Ms Li has been using the pen name Xiao Qiao to publish articles on the Internet. In 2005, she joined the Independent Chinese PEN Center (ICPC) which aims to protect writers' freedom of speech and started to write articles criticising human rights and government policies in China.

"The Shanghai police ordered me to stop publishing articles as they treated them as a threat to social stability," she said.

Ms Li is a courageous writer, according to Mr Patrick Poon Kar-wai, vice president of ICPC. He said her articles are influential to Shanghai people and she is helpful to the prisoners of conscience in China.

"She is fearless to criticise the problems of the Chinese government," Mr Poon said.

Last year in April, Ms Li went to Sweden for a Writer-in-Residence Programme in Stockholm. The programme was held by the International Cities of Refuge Network, an association of cities around the world, dedicated to the value of freedom of expression and protection of writers who have consistently been targets of politically motivated threats and persecution.

As the programme finished and her passport was going to expire on October 24, Ms Li decided to return to Shanghai where she lives with her parents through Hong Kong.

She said her entry to China was rejected by mainland immigration authority in Lok Ma Chau on October 15 and again in Shenzhen on October 17.

"As my passport expires, I will lose my legal identity," she said.

The Immigration Department of the HK-SAR urged Ms Li to return to Sweden and booked air tickets for her as visitors are supposed to leave Hong Kong one week before their valid passport expires.

Mr Kwok Hiu-chung, senior education & project officer of Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor described this as inappropriate.

"Even if it is a repatriation, they should send her back to China which is her home country but not Sweden," Mr Kwok said.

Article 13.2 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* of the United Nations states that everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

"This violates basic human rights," Democratic Party Chairman Mr Albert Ho Chun-yan said. "It is impossible for any country to banish its citizens without lawful reasons."

In fact, earlier this year, Ms Li had applied for extension of her passport with the Chinese Embassy in Sweden but her application was rejected.

After two unsuccessful attempts to enter China in October, Ms Li sought help from the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government (LOCPG) in Hong Kong but they did not grant a meeting with her.

LOCPG spokesperson Ms Tang said they could not help as immigration is beyond their authority and responsibility.

"The LOCPG never help Chinese citizens. We expect nothing from them," Mr Albert Ho said. "It is merely an organisation of governance and is always unfriendly to citizens who come for help."

Mr Yi Danxuan, 41, a dissident who has been exiled to the US since 1992, is now living in Washington D.C. and he is the council member of the Independent Federation of Chinese Students and Scholars. The Federation comprises students and scholars from China who are residing in all parts of the US, seeking a peaceful, free, and democratic society and political system.

He is sympathetic to Ms Li's situation as it was what he had been experiencing for almost 20 years. As one of the student leaders in Guangzhou during the Tiananmen Incident in 1989, he was jailed for two years with an accusation of upsetting social order.

Mr Yi's first attempt to return to China was made in 2008 and that was successful with his identity as a US citizen. But he was refused to enter Shenzhen from Hong Kong in March this year.

"To expel its citizens, China is inhuman," he said. "To some old dissidents, they could never go home until they die."

Throughout these years, Mr Yi said his life in the US is full of contradiction.

"I live in a free society but I struggle," he said. "I can't forgo my sentiment towards China especially after the June 4. I want to do something for China."

League of Social Democrats legislator Mr "Long Hair" Leung Kwok-hung said the Chinese government was irresponsible to force its own citizens to be stateless and produce political refugees for other countries.

"It is ridiculous and shameful of the Chinese government to invalidate a citizen's nationality at will," he said.

Mr Laurence Coates, with the pen name Vincent Kolo, is a Sweden-based writer who fights for Chinese workers' rights and the author of *Tiananmen 1989 - Seven Weeks that Shook the World*. He was denied entry to China the day after Ms Li's first ban.

"The government of China seems to be very very afraid," Mr Coates said. "They want to control people's ideas. They want to stop people speaking out."

Democratic activists have been exiled for 20 years since the Tiananmen Incident, according to Rev. Chu Yiu Ming, who founded "Home Coming", a movement to help the exiled Chinese citizens to reclaim their right to return home through legal channels.

"The exiled democratic activists fight for their right to go home and reunite with their families is both reasonable and in accordance with the policy of the state. Beijing has no reason to refuse their entry," Rev. Chu said on "Home Coming" website.

During the Tiananmen Incident, Ms Li was a student of the East China Normal University in Shanghai. She joined protests in Shanghai to express support for student leaders in Tiananmen Square.

She thought citizens' continuous urge is necessary for democratic right in China and there is also pressure from globalisation and more influence from the western countries.

"Chinese citizens should not stop fighting for democracy. Otherwise, there won't be changes," she said. "The Communist Party will not grant us democracy all at once."

Ms Li flew back to Sweden on October 22, two days before her passport was due to expire. Mr Markus Friberg, press secretary of Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy of Ministry of Justice of Government Offices of Sweden, said asylum could only be applied in Sweden.

"The Swedish Government may according to the constitution not interfere individual cases," Mr Friberg said.

Ms Li has applied for asylum in Sweden but she still hopes to go back to Shanghai and reunite with her approaching-70 parents.

"I will never give up my Chinese nationality," she said. "Let me return home."

OTHER UNFREE DISSIDENTS



Mr Ran Yun-fei

Age: 44

Date of exit denial to Hong Kong:

October 3, 2009

Possible reasons:

Writer of critiques towards Central government, signee of Charter 08

Current Residential location: Sichuan



Ms Ai Xiao-ming, Professor of Chinese Department, Sun Yat-sen University

Age: 56

Date of exit denial to Hong Kong:

October 17, 2009

Possible reasons:

Documentary filmmaker revealing reality in China e.g. Sichuan earthquake, life of AIDS patients, etc.

Current Residential location: Guangzhou



Ms Lau Ka-yee

Age: 37

Date of entry denial to China and confiscation of home return permit:

October 26, 2009

Possible reasons:

Activist from the Tiananmen Mothers Campaign

Current Residential location: Hong Kong

EDITED BY ISA KWOK

BUSINESS

New ways to stay away from drink driving

BY ELEVEN LIU

The random breath checks conducted by the Police since February seemed to be hurting restaurants' and bars' business. But it might also create opportunities for those which had come up with new ways to help their customers to stay away from drink driving.

Hong Kong's first coin-operated alcohol test machine was introduced to a bar named "Test&Go" in May this year and an alcohol free beer was brought to the city from Japan in August.

A user needs to pay a ten-dollar coin, takes a deep breath and blows through a straw to get tested. Figures will then appear to indicate the alcohol level.

"There is a market for these machines. It caters for people's desire to drink and also protect them from over drinking," Mr Marco Ong, director of the bar, said.

According to Mr Ong, more than 200 coins are found in the machine in a week, meaning nearly 30 customers would test their alcohol levels everyday on average.

Mr Ong also said they were negotiating to place this kind of machine in the Tsim Sha Tsui shopping mall "Elements".

The working principle of this machine is similar to what the Police uses to test drivers on roads. And the alcohol level shown on the machine would be the same with that on the Police's one if a customer tests it 13-30 minutes after he drinks.

"Ten dollars can buy drivers a relief if the machine shows that they are not drinking too much. If they drink excessively, we will advise them to stay for a while and chat with them or offer them a cup of tea until their alcohol level goes down," he added.

"Generally speaking, people under 30 will test it for fun, but people aged 30 or more will do it because of safety," he said.

Customers in the bar are curious about the machine.

"I will test my alcohol level by the machine. I can't see it in other places. It is just for fun," Coco, a customer who declined to disclose her full name, said.

Another bar-goer Ah-Kit owns a car but he said he would go to bars by taxi instead of driving by himself.



(Above) The alcohol-free beer.

(Right) The coin-operated alcohol breath testing machine.

"The police are getting stricter in testing drivers these days. As I won't drive after I drink, the machine is of no use to me. I test myself just for fun," he said.

Implemented in February, the law that enabled the Police to test drivers' alcohol level randomly seemed to be working. According to the Police Department, the total case of drink driving from February to October has a 46.2 per cent decline year-on-year.

Mr Chin Chun-wing, the vice-chairman of Hong Kong Bar & Club Association, said the law had more effect on bars where customers were relatively richer and would drive to drink.

He said the machine would hardly boost a bar's business.

"The machine would remind customers that they shouldn't drink too much and this is not good for bars and clubs because selling drinks is their business. But if it is used to please customers as a game to see whose alcohol level would go higher if they drink the same amount of drink, it would be more functional," he said.

Those who want to drink but insist on safe driving can opt for alcohol-free beer.

A barbecue restaurant named "Chuan Shao" in Tsim Sha Tsui helps customers to avoid drink driving by introducing alcohol-free beer. Tasted like common beer, the beer is very popular in Japan, especially among drivers.

The restaurant is by far the only place selling alcohol-free beer in Hong Kong. Yet, Mr Lawrence Yu, director of the restaurant, said that the beer is not so popular yet.

"We will introduce the beer as a new drink to customers, but we only sell about



eight cans of beer per week on average... Most people prefer alcoholic drinks. We will promote the beer so that more people can notice it," Mr Yu said.

Mr Chin said the drink is difficult to survive in Hong Kong. "If the government forbids people from drinking alcohol, then this beer could be a replacement of alcohol. In that case, it would be very popular. But the real situation is that the government is now strongly promoting wine culture," he said.

The Police Department declines to comment on the effectiveness of the machine and alcohol-free drinks in curbing drink driving. They advise citizens not to drive after they drink.

EDITED BY JOJO CHOI

ENVIRONMENT

Our kitchen waste: feast of the earthworms

BY JESSICA ZHANG

Ms Jennifer Whitt has a save money box. But she puts kitchen waste instead of money into the box. And what she gets is fertiliser produced by earthworms. “The earthworms help me reduce my kitchen waste and provide fertiliser for my plants. It can save me some money,” Ms Whitt, an American who came to Hong Kong two years ago, said.

Ms Whitt’s family is one of the 50 pioneer households which joined a four-month “Waste to Food – Vermi-composting Community Pilot Programme” organised by Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden (KFBG) starting from October.

Each family was given a vermicomposting bin with 400 grams of earthworms called *Eisenia etida*. They have to be fed with about 400 grams of kitchen waste, which is equal to their body weight, every day or two. The earthworms eat the waste and their excretion becomes organic fertiliser, which can be used for potted plants.

According to the Environmental Protection Department, 3,310 tonnes of kitchen waste is produced everyday. It means that every Hongkonger produces half kilogram on average, which is the highest in Asia.

“The amount of kitchen waste produced by families is nearly 40 per cent of the total solid waste in Hong Kong. So households are our main target,” said Ms Idy Wong Lai-yin, head of sustainable living and agriculture department at KFBG.

Ms Wong said each household can reduce 40 kilograms of kitchen waste and produce four kilograms of fertiliser in three months. This programme can also help localise waste treatment, further reduce transport related fuel consumption and pollution. “I hope this program can encourage people to grow more plants at home and in the community, which can help make Hong Kong greener,” she added.

Ms Wong added that when they promoted the programme in some schools and families, the children were very happy because they seldom had the chance to get in touch with the living creature.

“The earthworms not only can help me reduce kitchen waste but also excite my son,” said Ms Whitt, referring to her seven-year-old son. “He treats the earthworms as



Kids are putting kitchen waste into a vermicomposting bin so that the excretion of the earthworms will become organic fertiliser. (Courtesy photo)

friends and takes care of them. He always helps me cut some kitchen waste into small pieces to feed them. And when he takes part in this progress of reducing waste, he knows more about how important it is to protect the environment,” she added.

Yet the programme also annoyed some people and made them feel uncomfortable.

Ms Carol Cheng’s husband signed up for the programme without her agreement. She said sometimes the earthworms couldn’t convert all of the waste in a short time. Under hot weather conditions, the waste would become rotten and might give off a bad smell. She worried this could breed some bacteria and is harmful to their health.

“I think putting a box of earthworms at home is very disgusting,” Ms Cheng said. “I really hope we can do something to help protect the environment, but I don’t think this is a good way.”

Mr Wong Kwok-shun also found he has a little problem with the programme. “I don’t have many plants at home,” he said. “So sometimes I don’t know how to deal with the fertiliser.”

What *Eisenia etida* likes to eat:

Vegetables, fruit peel (except citrus), tea leave/tea bag, ground coffee, egg shell, bread and rice, paper (e.g. finely shredded newspaper and tissue paper), small amounts of soy bean, leaves.

What *Eisenia etida* dislikes to eat:

Acidic food (e.g. citrus, vinegar), oily food (e.g. meats), salty food, seasoned food, food which is hard in texture, infected or diseased food.

Source: KFBG

EDITED BY SIMON YIU

Curator: a bridge between art & audience

BY MINI LI

Spending two years and a large sum of own savings to organise an art exhibition may suggest why there are not so many people willing to devote as an independent curator in Hong Kong. But for Ms Valeria Doran and several other local independent curators, the meaning behind outweighs the shortcomings.

"[Mr] Antonio Mak is almost a figure of legend...over the last 13 years, his work has virtually disappeared from the public arena in Hong Kong," said Ms Doran, an independent curator who organises *Looking for Antonio Mak* exhibition to unfold the artworks to the public again.

Ms Doran spent two years to gather local and overseas collections and commissioned eight artists to create installations about Mr Mak and his style of artworks. She found it meaningful and important although she often had to dig into her own pocket.

Ms Doran regarded the show as the most unforgettable curating experience she ever had.

"It is the range of response, the difficulties and challenges of putting the show together...every aspect of the process is incredible," she said.

Independent curator is an exhibition organiser who organises arts exhibitions without restriction by any organisations.

According to an article by a conceptual artist Ms Phoebe Man published in *Para/Site Visual Arts and Culture Magazine* in Spring 2006, curator is a mediator between artworks and audiences and should amplify the voice of artists.

There are 30 to 40 independent curators in Hong Kong. Unlike curators who are employed by museum, university galleries and commercial galleries, independent curators usually have unstable income and receive little support from organisations. Some independent curators even have no salary.

"It is really no such full-time independent curators as you can't make a living," Ms Doran, who is also an art critic, translator and visual arts lecturer, said. "I had to collect [Mr] Antonio Mak's works from all over the world that I had to pay for everything, the transportation, insurance...which were over budget and I supposed to give myself \$30,000 but actually mean nothing, \$30,000 for two years work."

In the past, a degree in arts or art history is essential for a curator but university majors no longer matter now. There are some

curators who hold degrees in humanities, history or sociology, according to Mr Oscar Ho, an experienced curator and founding member of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. Instead, knowledge of arts, organising, writing and budgeting skills are required.

Curating is vital to an exhibition. Ms Doran thought that the very first and most important thing was to have a concept of the exhibition. Then one had to choose artist's works, find connection between them and reflect the theme or trend you want to show.

"People averagely spend 17 seconds

have to find funding to cover the expenditure," Ms Doran said.

She pointed out that there was a fierce competition for independent curators to apply for the funding from the Hong Kong Art Development Council. Some 200 exhibition proposals are submitted each year but only four to five independent curators can receive funding. As the Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation no longer allows individuals to apply for their funding, the situation becomes worse.

Ms Doran said lack of critical platform hampered the advancement of exhibition.



Artist discussed his idea of the GREEN Kai Tak River exhibition with visitors. Curators are usually the unsung heroes behind. (Courtesy: Valeria Doran)

on an artwork because they think they get too much to look at [in an exhibition]," Ms Doran said. "Creating focus for audiences is important so they don't just walk through the exhibition."

Ms Doran also said curating an exhibition was not only about creating new experience to audience, but also creating alternative space for everyone to go into and be inspired by arts in their life.

Space is important to an exhibition but Hong Kong lacks venues for independent curators to hold exhibitions. Mr Doran said venues in Fotan Artist Village, Cattle Depot Artist Village in To Kwa Wan and Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre in Shek Kip Mei were too remote which affected the number of audiences and "range of response" of the exhibition.

"Most art institutions provide only venue and technical support, independent curators

Art critiques and reviews are not enough and Chinese newspapers are cutting pages that cover art events. These make it difficult to bring exhibitions to a deeper level.

"I don't think Hong Kong is a cultural desert, the young generation gets far more chances to approach art than those in the past," said Ms Choi Yan-chi, another curator. "Resources provided by the government is not bad but the public awareness of arts and culture is very weak, much weaker than that in Taiwan and China."

"The development of the West Kowloon Cultural District is a turning point. More jobs for curators are expected but we have not yet seen the chances come," said Mr Ho.

EDITED BY SIMPSON CHEUNG

Paid student officers make a difference

BY DAISY ZHONG in LEEDS

No university student gets paid working for student committees in Hong Kong. In Leeds, Britain, Ms Sophia James receives an annual salary of 16,000 pounds (HK\$192,000) working for the student union full-time as the Equality and Diversity Officer.

"We don't do it for the money...we do it because we can have a positive effect on people," she said.

Leeds University Union (LUU), which Ms James works for, got 2 million pounds (HK\$25 million) from the school last year to pay students like Ms James and for other operation expenses. Last year, Hong Kong Baptist University got \$600,000 from students. If student officers were to ask for pays like Ms James', it could barely pay three.

In 2009, LUU was named the number one students' union in Britain at the NUS Awards, which recognises outstanding achievement and demonstration of best practice in a higher education students' union. HKBU failed to run a student union this year

because there was not enough students willing to do it.

Ms Ko Ching-nuen, the former Vice President of Hong Kong Baptist University Student Union Council, said that the lack of involvement in union affairs was due to "students' indifference".

"People only care about what they can get from the student union, they are not interested to pursue changes, and contribute," she said.

Students working at LUU are newly graduates or students who have taken a year off half-way through their degrees.

"Since 1940s there has been such a pattern across UK. Students felt that they need full-time student representatives who listen to our members and represent their interests," said Mr Jak Codd, Communications and Internal Affairs Officer of the union.

Being the Equality and Diversity Officer of the union, Ms James deals with issues related to minority groups on the campus and helps them get involved with the union. She coordinates with LGBT groups to support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students.

"[The union] is very welcoming...and very diverse. There are so many different

clubs and societies for so many interests," said Ms Cheryl Chew Xueling, a third year student majoring in kinesiology in the University of Leeds. She just consulted the helper's desk for one of the volunteering trips.

LUU provides a free student advice centre that deals with any problem students come across in their academic and daily life.

"When you have a problem with the university you won't feel comfortable to go to it directly. We offer an impartial, independent student service," said Mr Codd.

"The university takes us seriously and really listens to our views," he said.

The union ran a campaign last year to lobby for Wednesday afternoon as non-teaching period for extra-curricular activities. The suggestion was accepted and implemented.

"We hold meetings with them (the school management), we write to them, we email them...we just don't give up and they get bored with us," said Mr Codd.

According to him, the key point of a successful bargaining is "knowing which battles is worth fighting" among things that needs to change.

EDITED BY ANDREA WONG



Organised by the LUU, Freshers' Fair attracted about 5,000 students this year to sign up for 280 clubs and societies.

COVER STORIES

Can HK become an art hub?

With the West Kowloon Cultural District project on the way and the cultural and creative industry becoming one of the six pillar industries, it appears that the government is determined to make Hong Kong an international art hub.

However, the government is cutting back millions of dollars of financial assistance to nine major art groups. At the same time, the perennial problems smaller art groups have been facing remain unsolved.

Will the art industry thrive or face demise in the future?

Minerva Cheng, Brian Law, Edward Ma and Yoyo Sun report.





Funding cut chokes local arts development

Nine local art groups are facing a gloomy outlook in the coming fiscal year with the funding cut by the government.

In the fiscal year 2008/09 and 2009/10, on top of the regular funding, the Home Affairs Bureau allocated nine major performing art groups an additional \$45 million but this extra subvention is expected to be cut in the coming fiscal year.

The nine major performing art groups are Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, Hong Kong Dance Company, Hong Kong Repertory Theatre, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Hong Kong Sinfonietta, Hong Kong Ballet, City Contemporary Dance Company, Chung Ying Theatre Company and Zuni Icosahedron.

Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, one of the major art groups benefited from the extra subvention, received \$48 million in 2007/08 from the government. The funding was increased to \$53 million in 2008/09 but it is expected to return to \$48 million next year.

Ms Celina Chin Man-wah, executive director of Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra (HKCO), said the number and scales of programmes have to be adjusted because of the funding cut.

She also said it was inevitable to lay off some administrative staff and even artists if they were not allocated adequate subsidies to operate the orchestra.

Ms Chin believed that the funding cut would seriously affect the morale of the whole industry and impose threats on local artists and arts groups.

"The arts sector is trying very hard for our art form but we cannot stay focused for our work because of this unstable factor [the funding cut]," she said.

Mr Raymond Wong Kwok-wai, project manager of City Contemporary Dance Company, echoed her view.

"I think the outlook of arts development in Hong Kong is gloomy as we [local artists] do not know whether the government would support us or not," he said.

"The planned programmes and performing venues would have to be changed

because of this factor [funding cut]," he added.

The Home Affairs Bureau explained an additional \$45 million a year for 2008/09 and 2009/10 was given to the nine government-subsidised art groups, which is one-off in nature, whether similar allocation is in store will be unknown until later in the year.

Besides the nine major art groups, smaller local art organisations also face similar problem.

An arts criticism magazine might close down early next year if it fails to secure a new funding from the government.

Launched in 2008, *C for Culture* was granted a two-year-basis subvention of \$45 million from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) for its operation from 2008 to 2010.

Ms Au Wai-lin, publisher of *C for Culture* said that the magazine had to cut writers' remuneration, hire interns and freelance writers instead of professional photographers and full-time writers to reduce the expenditure.

"Most of us who work for the arts and cultural sector are underpaid, are we really respected for what we have done?" Ms Au said.

Ms Maggie Lam Yuen-jing, corporate communications officer of HKADC, said they have initially approved a two-year funding to support *C for Culture* till February 2010. She added that HKADC could only be able to support grant applications on a selective basis and might not be able to award the full amount requested by applicants because of resource constraints.

Ms Au suggested the government have a long-term planning for community education on arts and culture to turn Hong Kong into a art hub.

"Performing arts should not be bound to the arts sector. It should involve the community, and we are trying to build a bottom-up way of arts through our magazine," she said.

COVER STORIES

Individual artists lack gov't support

Individuals practising arts in Hong Kong found it difficult to gain international recognition without government support.

Getting grants and funding from the government is not easy for local individual artists. Painting artist Ms Clementine Chan Yee-man is among one of them.

"The procedure of applying funding from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) is very complicated and I received no responses from the officials once submitted the application form," she said.

Lack of funding would affect artists' work and inflict negative effects on cultural exchange between local and overseas artists.

Ms Chan just turned down an invitation to hold individual exhibition in a gallery in Rome. It was simply because she could not afford the transportation and exhibition expenses. She could only participate in a group exhibition instead.

"I was quite disappointed and frustrated with this," said Ms Chan. "Exhibiting pieces overseas can really help artists gain recognitions in foreign countries."

Prizes and awards are also considered a kind of recognition for artists.

In Hong Kong, two arts awards are given out by government departments. They are the Hong Kong Arts Development Awards by HKADC and the Hong Kong Contemporary Art Biennial Awards (HKCAB) by Leisure and Cultural Services Department. However, their recognition seem questionable.

"I am excited about getting the HKCAB, it consolidated my confidence to start a career in art in the future," said Mr Calvin Chan Tsz-ho, a year-3 visual arts student from Hong Kong Baptist University.

His sculpture, *Root*, is among the 140 arts pieces shown in the HKCAB 2009 exhibition. "However, even not all of my classmates know about the award," he said.

"I see the awards from the government as nothing more than an enrichment of artists' CVs. They are not internationally recognized as well," said Ms Chan.

Ms Amy Cheung, winner of Hong Kong Arts Development Award in 2007, said awards were only a matter of fame.

"I had no feelings about getting the award, I registered to compete for the award at that time simply because my arts project needed money in urgent," she said.



There are only 13 performing venues under Leisure and Cultural Services Department, drama groups face fierce competition. (Courtesy: Trellis Theatre)

Small drama groups' survival remains gloomy

Small art groups slammed the government for giving too much favour to major groups while doing "nowhere close to enough" to aid their survivals.

The government has given \$263 million subsidy to facilitate the development of nine major art groups this year. Almost 90 per cent of Hong Kong Dance Company's total revenue -- a whopping \$31.42 million, is government funding.

Art groups that are smaller in scale criticised the government for making their survivals difficult.

An independent drama group Harmonic Theatre's director Ms Casper Wong said the government believed it had already poured a lot of resources to the small art groups, but support is nowhere close to enough.

Another small drama group ChaosIsM found survival difficult as well.

"The government doesn't care about the levels of artistry the groups have. It only cares about the scales of the groups when they apply for subsidy," chairman of ChaosIsM Ms Shoryu Leung Lai-kwok said.

Ms Leung added that smaller groups could hardly compete with the bigger groups to get government funding. But she said the government did privilege the small groups by offering discount in venue booking, like a 35 per cent off for the booking of Hong Kong Cultural Centre and Hong Kong Arts Centre.

Under the Leisure and Cultural Services

Department's Venue Partnership Scheme, art groups can get priority use of venue facilities and free workstations. But they have to meet a formidable requirement -- to put on at least three drama performances and seven workshops in a year.

Ms Wong said the requirements gave small groups a lot of pressure.

"There are only three of us running the group. We have to look for all the crew members, directors, script writers and actors for each performance every time," she said.

Apart from the lack of funding, Hong Kong Fringe Club's administrator Ms Catherine Lau said the small scope of audience Hong Kong has is another obstacle.

"Hong Kong is a small place. If a group puts on three shows in Central, then three in the New Territories, it has almost covered all the audiences," Ms Lau said.

She suggested small groups to expand their "playgrounds" by putting on performances in nearby regions such as the mainland and Singapore. It is something Hong Kong Fringe Club has been helping them to achieve.

She was disappointed that there were sports highlights in TV news every day, but never any highlights of arts programs.

"And why are programs recommending various art performances always shown at 8am on Sunday morning?" she said.

Art villages face obstacles in promoting art

There are three art villages in Hong Kong that provide reasonable rental and good facilities for artists, so that the artists can concentrate on their artistic creations. These villages all have the mission to help promote arts and culture in the community. But in reality, it is a difficult job.

Cattle Depot Artist Village

Visitors need to register at the main entrance and they are not allowed to take photos inside the Cattle Depot. The artists also need to follow a set of regulations, for example, they are prohibited from placing their works outside the studio.

Ms Kiki Ho, a gallery co-ordinator of la space in Cattle Depot, said most visitors and art groups found the regulations discouraging and annoying, and this kind of management system might affect the number of visitors and inhibit artistic atmosphere within the village.

Fotanian

The main obstacle for the Fotanians is the lack of money.

Ms Casper Chan, one of the organisers of the annual "Open Studio Programme" at Fotanian that has attracted over 10,000 citizens in January this year, said they had plans about an art intercultural exchange and an art research, but they did not have enough money.

She said they had little support from the government, but receiving subsidy from the government means they have to comply with certain regulations which may affect the open and free artistic atmosphere.

Jockey Club Creative Art Center

While Fotanian is successful in attracting people, JCCAC has been criticised for having few visitors since its opening in 2008. Mr Eddie Lui, the executive director of JCCAC, said using the visitor flow rate to judge whether an art centre runs successfully was unfair. He said each artist there had his own routine and his own way of doing art, and the artists were responsible for artistic creation, not attracting visitors.

Literary sector not on list for West Kowloon consultation

Local literary sector criticised the lack of official platforms to express views on the West Kowloon Cultural District project, as they are not included on the list for public consultation.

Neither literary groups nor individual writers are listed as stakeholder groups for the public engagement exercise of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, while entertainment company Venetian Macau and Lei Yue Mun Kai-fong Welfare Association are on the list.

In the recent public forum on November 8, member of Hong Kong Literary Museum Initiative Ms Tang Siu-wa, also the editor of literary magazine *Fleurs des Lettres*, said, "Literature has an important value to the local community, but literary writers, commentators, and representatives from the publishing sector do not have an official channel to discuss with the Authority."

At present, among the 50 scheduled focus group discussion meetings organised by the Authority to meet cultural sectors during the consultation period, no one is arranged to hear views from the local literary sector.

In response to Ms Tang, Professor Stephen Cheung Yan-leung, member of the consultation panel of the Authority, promised to invite the group to attend meetings but did not comment if a literary museum would be included.

Hong Kong Literary Museum Initiative, formed by a group of well-known local

writers including Mr Dung Kai-cheung, Mr Ma Ka-fai, and Ms Tang Siu-wa, has been pressing for a literature museum in the arts hub since August.

The group has gathered over 150 signatures from prominent literary figures in a petition campaign and attracted almost 5,000 users to join them on facebook.

Ms Tang said Hong Kong has once enjoyed a great advantage in developing literature between the 20s and 50s when many celebrated wordsmiths like Ms Chang Eileen, Mr Xu Dishan and Mr Dai Wangshu escaped to Hong Kong from the mainland under social unrest.

Ms Poon Sze-wan, a veteran cultural critic and reporter, said the museum could help cultivate a literature culture in town.

"Rational opinions in literacy critiques are compulsory for a society to progress. All these valuable records, historical relics can be collected and exhibited in the literature museum," she said.

The master layout plan of the 43-hectare cultural hub, of an area three times larger than Tsim Sha Tsui District, will be sent to Town Planning Board by 2012.

Mr Mathias Woo Yan-wai, director of local avant-garde art group Zuni Icosahedron, said, "Because of its large size and diversities, it's possible to include the widest spectrum of art forms – not just emphasising on performing arts, but also passive forms of arts like literature."



Protestors hold chanting banner during consultation meeting to air their views.
Photo: Natalie Wong

EDITED BY KELVIN CHAN, JOYCE KOON, PHILA SIU, DODO YIN

INTERVIEWS



Jami performs stand up comedy in his Take Out Comedy Club. (Courtesy: Kenneth Lim)

Stand-up comedian showcases the power of laughter

BY AKUA ACHAMPONG

“Come on you can do it, you can do it.” Jami ushers the old man in the front row. It was 1993 when Mr Jameson Gong was performing a stand up comedy routine in New York. After a confident four-year run of making people laugh under the hot lights, he freezes. On stage. In front of everyone. The hefty knock to his confidence that night took him six years to recover from.

Mr Gong, aka Jami, a stand up comedian, entrepreneur, humanitarian and owner of the Take Out Comedy Club in Soho, was born and raised in Chinatown in New York City.

He made the transition into comedy back in 1989 at university when a friend dared him to enter a comedy competition.

“I made an ass of myself but the next day people came up to me on campus and were like, ‘man, you were funny!’ Jami recalls. “When strangers come up to you and say that you were funny, it’s priceless”.

Jami got the idea for the Take Out Comedy Club, on a flight to visit his sick grandma in 2002. She had inspired him to re-enter the world of comedy after he quitted back in 1993.

“I wrote the blue-print [for Take Out

Comedy Club] on a sick bag on the flight, by the time I’d arrived my mother told me that my Grandma has passed away, I took it as a sign, that she had given me the idea, I still have the sick bag hanging on the wall”.

Mr Gong says Hong Kong comedy is the last thing that springs to people’s mind

“I have the best job in the world. Sometimes you have to fail in order to succeed but 99.9 per cent of world couldn’t do what we do.”

and he has taken it upon himself to “educate Hong Kong in comedy”, to revive the Asian comedy scene.

He runs classes nurturing new talents and assisting people with their comedic skills about areas like public speaking, confidence and charm.

“There must be people in Hong Kong if given the opportunity, encouragement and nurturing, who want to try stand up comedy.” Jami says.

Jami is trying to change people’s perceptions of Asian comedy and to inject some humour back in to Hong Kong, going to an *Asian Kings of Comedy Tour America* in

2005 and developing the idea for Take Out Comedy in Hong Kong.

In times of economic uncertainty, people are in need of some comic relief. He says, “My numbers are up because the economy is down.”

Jami is definitely benefitting from the failing economy, when he brings in bigger names such as Paul Ogata, he can expect his intimate venue to be crammed from wall to wall with people.

“People here in Hong Kong work, work, and work. I’m trying to introduce the power of laughter,” the comedian says. Talking at a million miles a minute, Jami stops himself and says, “Am I talking too fast?”, just before he is speeding off again.

His enthusiasm and determination to succeed is tangible; it’s not hard to see why he is doing well. The Take Out Comedy Club hosted its 3rd annual Hong Kong International Comedy Festival, involving 30 comedians from 16 countries, what he refers it as “the Olympics of comedy”.

“I have the best job in the world. Sometimes you have to fail in order to succeed but 99.9% of world couldn’t do what we do,” says Jami.

EDITED BY SYBIL KOT

INTERVIEWS

Bradley: A true animal-loving vet

BY CARRIE CHENG

Holding a bone structure model in one hand and a tooth stick in the other, veterinarian Dr Tiger explains the condition of the patient's broken jaw attentively, "How could she do that?... It's not serious like the whole part here broken," she says. So the rabbit didn't need to receive any surgery.

Ms Katriona Bradley, a 43-year-old veterinary surgeon, is known most to her patients and colleagues as Dr Tiger because she was born with stripes and a nurse in hospital named her "Tiger".

Graduated from Glasgow University with a Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery Degree in 1988, Dr Tiger moved to Hong Kong from Scotland two years later and opened Tai Wai Small Animal and Exotic Clinic in 1997.

Having been a veterinary surgeon in Hong Kong for 18 years, she often attracts plenty of clients from the community. Her schedule is often so full that people have to make an appointment a month before medical consultation. Sometimes she performs six to seven surgeries in a morning.

People come to veterinarians for all sorts of illnesses of their pets. Dr Tiger recalls that one of her patients spent \$13,000 on a spay surgery for a turtle which can be bought with \$10 in Mongkok Gold Fish Market.

"For some people, they are lonely - no boyfriends, no children, not many friends. And that their pets mean a lot to them," she says.

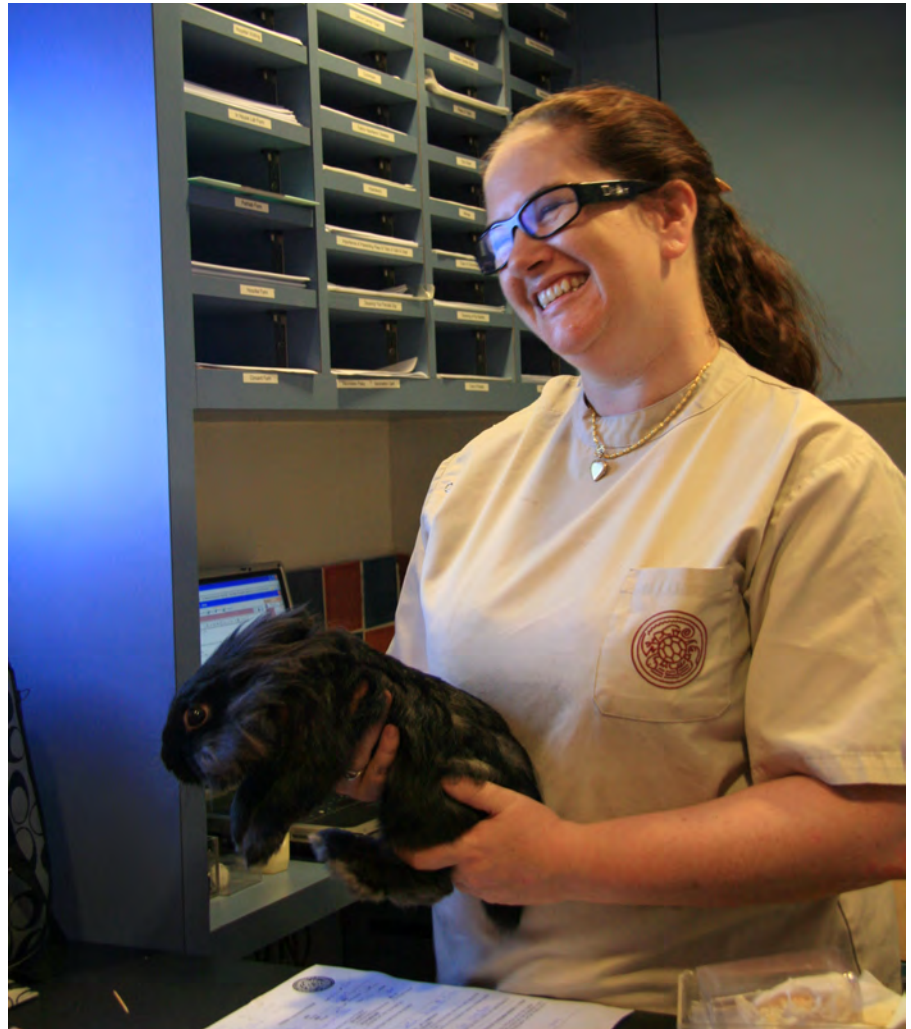
Sometimes, her professional skills and veterinarian experience do not exempt her

"I can remember a lovely cat that I tried to remove some intestine from because it was diseased and the surgery failed and he died of infection."

from making wrong decisions during surgery though the pet owners are usually understandable.

"I can remember a lovely cat that I tried to remove some intestine from because it was diseased and the surgery failed and he died of infection," she says.

At the age of four, she asked her mother,



Dr Tiger has been a veterinary surgeon in Hong Kong for 18 years.

"Mummy, what happens when a dog gets sick? Do we take it to the doctor?" It was her first time ever thought of being a veterinarian.

Now, being a mother of two, Dr Tiger is also keeping five dogs, ten turtles, one snake, and one hamster at home.

She says boldly that same as having a child, buying an animal is a lifetime responsibility.

"If you have a baby, you have a contract. If you buy an animal, you have a contract too," she explains.

While some medical practitioners encourage pregnant women to abandon their pets because pet parasites may cause diseases, Dr Tiger stands on her own principles - keeping hands clean and paying attention to personal hygiene are sufficient enough to get rid of those diseases. No need to abandon pets.

Dr Tiger is the person who always keeps with the principles of veterinary medical

ethics in mind. She stresses that getting paid by keeping dying animals alive is like earning "dirty money".

While some pet owners want to extend the life of their heavily ill pets just because they do not want their pets to leave them, she tells them to go to another clinic if they insist.

"They love their animal too much and they don't want to hurt themselves. So the animal, suffering a lot," she says.

Dr Tiger is not only a vet in the clinic; she is also a volunteer for Animals Asia, a Hong Kong-based animal welfare charity of which one of the missions is to rescue bears confining in cages for their bile extract in the mainland.

Seeing the bears walking out of the cage after the surgery and walking on the grass is one of the most exciting experiences of Dr. Tiger. "I think he's never seen grass before."

EDITED BY GRACE LI

REVIEWS

A time capsule unwrapped: 1940s HK by German photographer Hedda Morrison

BY VIVIAN CHUI

Visiting a black-and-white historical photo exhibition may not sound like the most exciting thing to do. However, *Time Travel to 1940s Hong Kong*, a heritage photo exhibition in Stanley, makes a good exception. With its use of audio-visual aids, the project denotes a touch of local creativity.

Eighty antique photos by Ms Hedda Morrison, a German photographer, reconstruct Hong Kong in the 1940s. Among them, 60 pieces are displayed by local designer Mr Douglas Yeung Chi-chiu, who made a unique presentation of the photos by coupling them with real objects. At the same time, artist Mr Jim Chim Sui-man brings the still images to life with recorded narrations.

Ms Morrison's photos are appealing, especially with her choice of subjects. Instead of portraying Hong Kong by just photographing the colonial architecture and harbour front, she captured the everyday life of Hong Kong people.

The rich and the poor, the young and the old, the streets and fishing boats - her camera lingered on various subjects and locations, giving a comprehensive picture of the old Hong Kong.

When you explore different dimensions of the city like commerce and transportation, you feel a subtle connection to that particular period of time.

For instance, the portrayal of Hong Kong's fishing industry is impressive as she not only took the photos of the fishermen working on the boat, but also provided close-ups of "ham yu lan" (literally 'the dried and salted fish shops'). The multiple perspectives give visitors an insight of our territory in the post-war era.

As a resident having lived here for long, you may think that you are familiar with the city, but Ms Morrison's photos serve as a reminder of the huge transformations Hong Kong has gone through.

One typical example would be the Des Voeux Road. Filling the street were not business people in suits, but sweating rickshaw pullers. Life was much harder at that time as you can tell from their appearance, especially the patched clothes and the bare feet. All these little details enriched the photos.

Besides the photography, extra credits should be given to the decoration by Mr Douglas Yeung. The installation of real ob-



Ms Hedda Morrison spent six months in Hong Kong in the late 40s.

jects helps create an interactive ambience.

For example, an age-old film camera and luggage were put under the part "the photographer", visualising the period when Ms Morrison stayed here for six months from September 1946 to March 1947.

To initiate a "sound and vision" project, the Link also invited artist Mr Jim Chim Sui-man for vocal collaboration. Mr Chim tells the stories of the old Hong Kong through Ms Morrison's lens. Standing in front of each section, you can hear Mr Chim speaking in the background, telling you tidbits of the city like the origin of the name "Hong Kong" and the change of Stone Slab Street.

The stories themselves are great enough,

for they are both interesting and informative. However, sometimes visitors have to lean over to the speaker to listen to the stories more clearly when there are too many viewers.

Notably, it is definitely a clever choice for the photo exhibition to be held in the Murray House. The nostalgic Hong Kong theme blends in perfectly with the Victorian-era style building.

Going to an interactive exhibition like this is much more attractive than flipping through a history textbook to learn about the past of the place we grow up in.

EDITED BY ECHO CHEN

Movies

Julie and Julia ★★★★★



(Courtesy: Sony Pictures USA)

Julie and Julia is delightful to watch with Academy award-winning actress Meryl Streep. She portrays a real-life cookbook writer and television personality Julia Child who was very popular in America.

Apart from physical imitation of the cookbook writer's voice and even her laugh, Streep colours the character by delivering a lovely performance: clement and peaceful with a warm heart. Therefore, even though Julia Child has passed away already, Streep wonderfully makes the character vivid again on the screen.

As bright as Streep is another main character Julie Powell who is played by Amy Adams. In the movie, Powell, a typical woman with no big challenges except the three simple daily meals, regards Julia Child as her role model as a popular TV chef in comparison.

The movie is released in Hong Kong on November 26.

Law Abiding Citizen ★★



(Courtesy: Warf Movies)

Watching *Law Abiding Citizen* is like watching the wicked version of *Catch me if you can*, the postmodern edition of *Death Wish* and unbelievably, the abridged part of *Saw* altogether in the 100-minute time.

Jamie Foxx is starring as Nick Rice, an assistant district attorney, and Gerard Butler plays Clyde Shelton who was once a loving dad and now is a vengeful citizen. Nick's filthy deal with a murderer caused Clyde's vengeance against him. So Clyde started his "Saw way" of killings.

Director Gary Gray succeeded in portraying the thrilling atmosphere and took audiences' breath away through its shocking, violent scenes. Yet it could not bring a second of thoughts on justice or the legal system except the thrills, the killings and the tension.

Law Abiding Citizen is definitely an appealing title. However what's inside might not be supportive enough.

Restaurants

Islam Food (Kowloon City branch)

33-35 Tak Ku Ling Road, Kowloon City



Surprised to a menu with pork-only dishes? Islam Food Restaurant (Kowloon City), founded in 1950, offers an impressive selection of hot and spicy Muslim dishes.

The restaurant's Beef Patty, Hot and Sour Soup and Curry Beef Brisket are

by far the most popular dishes. Shark fin has recently become one of the dishes in the new menu, which was not provided by Islam Food in the past. But to make food more diverse, it seems that every regional restaurant needs a localisation to adapt to local tastes.

Spare some space for desserts. The restaurant introduces Northwestern-Chinese desserts such as shallot pancake, sesame cake and dumplings. The shallot pancake is not very sweet, but tastes refreshing. The idea of integrating the Muslim dishes and Chinese food makes this Islamic restaurant stand out among other restaurants in Kowloon City.

The average price for each person is around \$50.

Food: ★★★★★ Price: ★★★★★

Environment: ★★★ Service: ★★

Popcorn Monster

Shop 3, 41-43 Dundas Street, Mong Kok



Watermelons, oranges, lemons, green apples, blueberries and grapes - you can now taste all flavours of them in a bucket of popcorn.

Popcorn Monster is a newly-arrived snack shop in Mongkok. There are 26 flavours containing a wide

spectrum from sweet flavours like toffee, vanilla to salty savours of Pizza and Bacon & Cheese. The best-seller "Rainbow" offers the taste of several fruits in a mouthful of crispy popcorn.

The friendly staff of Popcorn Monster is so welcoming that they offer a free tasting of some flavours upon request, except the salty flavours that have to be made on-site.

A medium portion costs \$22. Despite the strong flavors and nice packaging of the popcorn, the price is a complete rip-off. I am skeptical about the sustainability of this colourful popcorn wave.

Food: ★★★★★ Price: ★

Environment: ★★ Service: ★★★★★

Stirring Souls in Fo Tan Studios

One of founders Lam Tung-pang explains the eight-years' development of open art studios in Fo Tan.

BY LAM TUNG-PANG

While the Fotanian community created a refreshing art scene in Hong Kong, people can barely know that it has started because a fire took away one of the five studios in the Department of Art of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) in 2001.

As a studio space is essential for us to keep working after graduation, I, together with seven other students, decided to look for a studio in the old industrial area.

Since Fo Tan is close to the library of CUHK, which holds a wide collection of art books, we established the 318 studio in Wah Luen Industrial Centre with a cheap monthly rent of HK\$3,800 for 100m². The high ceiling and a spacious elevator of our studio enable us to exhibit and transfer large pieces of artworks.

In the same year, we hosted the first open local studio entitled *318 Studio Opening Show*. Most visitors were our friends and classmates. Several famous local artists, including Mr Gaylord Chan and Mr Mok Yat-sun, came over but there was no media coverage throughout the Show.

Yet, we strove to promote the studio among our schoolmates. Lots of graduating students began to set up studios there.

The 2003 open studio, Fotan Gathering (literally means 'old fire' and 'new charcoal'), aimed at displaying artworks of both established and young artists to the general public. This exhibition aroused much attention of the media and the public. Hong Kong Museum of Art invited our studios to be a Fringe Activities in the Hong Kong Art Biennial.

"Fotianians" refers to artists who work in studios in Fo Tan old industrial buildings.

The number of them increased from 18 in 2002 to 30 after two years. The concept of "Fotianians" became popular among artists. The development of Fo Tan studios marks an essential chapter in the history of local contemporary art.

Since then, and there has been more media coverage about the studio, for example, a story in *Sing Pao Daily News* headlined "Factories Turned Artists' Village?" on December 5, 2003.

Next year, when outsiders were invited to collaborate and organise the 2004 open studios in Fo Tan, it triggered much controversies among the "Fotianians".

But as we really needed administrative and diplomatic professionals to publicize the organized public events, local artist Ms Leung Po-shan joined and took charge of the publication entitled *Fotanian2004—Open Studio*. With her effort, the open studio attracted local newspapers, broadcasting media, international art magazines such as *Art Review* in London and *Asia Art News* to cover this project.

Still, we see obstacles hindering local artists to develop their full potential. The annual studio event, to some extent, is a huge gathering of artists, but only a few are willing to work part-time or full-time for administrative tasks.

As most do not have a common strategy to solicit sponsorship, artists have to worry about the increasing rents when the studio expands in the future.

The governments in some countries support studios by reserving certain areas for artists' studios by issuing a guarantee on long-term fixed rent. Also many private organizations and cultural funds sponsor the operation of studios.

In my point of view, art has never been a popular topic in Hong Kong. There is a barrier separating the community and art. To remove this barrier, it is important for the government not only to designate a building restricted for studio-use only, but also to enhance the interaction between artists and the community.

Arts should connect to the lives of the people.

The writer is an artist based in both Hong Kong and Beijing. He won the *Hunting Art Prizes Young Artist of the Year* award in the UK. His work is exhibited in private and public collections in the UK, USA and the Hong Kong Museum of Art.

Letters to the Editor

Is e-book the future trend?

With the compelling benefits of electronic school textbooks, class can be more interesting, cost on textbook can be cut, information can keep pace with the ever-changing world.

However there are still worries about the e-books, parents worry the e-book may be harmful to their children's eye-sight, fear that the learning effectiveness may be lowered with those 'interesting' software and games, as well as robbery problem with the expensive notebook.

To me the advantages from electronic learning outweigh the disadvantages. Communication can be more than before. Attractive photos and songs can increase students learning intensive, thus effective of learning can raise.

Moreover, notebook may not be the main teaching apparatus, instead the electronic white board is. It is similar to black board but it has touch screen, like a computer screen. Students do not need to put their heads into the notebooks but concentrate the attention on board.

JENNY LEUNG
T.W.G.Hs Lui Yun Choy
Memorial College

Thank you for your letter, Jenny. I also agree that e-book will be the future trend of education. It can solve the problem of revising textbooks every several years, and thus reducing parents' financial burden.

But I also think that e-books may only interest and be suitable for primary and junior secondary students. When students get promoted to higher forms, they really need to read academic articles to gain more in-depth knowledge. This is surely the case in the university.

If students get used to learning by e-books and do not bring up the habit of reading printed materials, they will need to pay extra effort in the future.

SIMPSON CHEUNG
Chief Editor

Send your letter with your full name, address and phone number to tyrej@hkbu.edu.hk

EDITORIAL

A milestone for democracy that we shall not miss

BY KELVIN CHAN

A secondary school student asked Chief Executive Mr Donald Tsang Yum-kuen whether he was able to vote for chief executive three years later when he was 18-year-old. Mr Donald Tsang did not answer him directly but insisted that 2017 is the year Hongkonger can vote for our leader.

The consultation paper on proposals for the electoral methods in 2012 is going to be unveiled in this month. The key controversy that we are concerned about most this time, is not about the method itself but about whether the constitutional reform can move forward or not.

What we definitely do not want to see is that twelve years after handover, the reform is standing still.

Similar consultation paper had been disclosed in 2005 but failed to muster the necessary two-third majority in Legislative Council. Two years later, in 2007, the National People's Congress Standing Committee

pledged that Hongkonger could elect our leader by universal suffrage in 2017 and all the legislators in 2020.

We understand that the reason behind the veto in 2005 was that no clear outlook of the constitutional reform could be seen. But chance comes again when we have to decide the electoral arrangements in 2012.

The government is expected to enlarge the Election Committee that is going to elect the next chief executive in 2012 and add ten extra seats in the Legislative Council, five of them are directly elected and five voted on by district councillors except those who are nominated.

Pan-democratic camp still cannot support this arrangement and fight for universal suffrage in 2012. Ms Cyd Ho Sau-lan even said in the *South China Morning Post* that they would demand direct talks with the Beijing government if Mr Donald Tsang could not do anything to meet their requirements.

Wake up pan-democrats! The fact is that it is no use fighting for universal suffrage in between now and 2017 as no matter what you do, the Beijing government will not make concession again. Why don't we grasp

this chance to prepare what we struggle for many years in 2017?

One of the principles for progress to democracy stated in the *Basic Law* is "gradual and orderly". The 2012 proposals is an intermediate station to the final destination and this is a great opportunity for us to fulfill the principles of "gradual and orderly" and this is the time we can make the constitutional reform one step further.

We agree with what Mr Donald Tsang described the constitutional reform, which is not a "zero-sum game". The road to democracy is full of confrontations but success relies on suitable concessions and consensus.

Even though Mr Donald Tsang pledged that no matter how the results of the 2012 proposals are, it could not affect the universal suffrage in 2017, we think we can hardly afford to miss this chance to make a progress in the constitutional reform and we do hope that supports from the majority in the Legislative Council can be seen.

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GALLERY

Behind the curtains of Cantonese Opera

Let's enter the world of Cantonese Opera, a colorful and sophisticated art form originated from Guangdong near the end of Song Dynasty.

While the onstage performance shows perfect synchronisation between the actors, the band and the stage management crew, the great sense of autonomy shown in the backstage can be surprising.

Actors doing make-up and practicing lines on their own; staff tidying up the costumes and checking on the setting busily. But soon, you will realise it is exactly a scene that the term - unspoken consensus - is used to describe.

In September, UNESCO listed Cantonese Opera as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This reassures the value of this age-old art form.

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY THOMAS YAU
EDITED BY VANESSA YUNG



