

#21 /2017 06



Louis Yu Kwok-Lit: Producing High Quality Plays to Entice Audiences to the Theatre

Editor:
C² Magazine Editorial Board

Email:
c2magazine.macao@gmail.com

Produced by:
100 Plus Cultural Creative
Development Limited

Published by:
Cultural Affairs Bureau of
the Macao S.A.R. Government

Editor's Letter

Successful cultural events can give impetus to the development of creative arts. How much effort has to be given into the planning of such events? In the Feature, we invite representatives from music, fashion and drama sectors to share their experience in brand building and programme planning.

Louis Yu Kwok-Lit, Executive Director, Performing Arts of West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, has his opinion on managing and operating cultural venues. In Opinion, he discusses the relationship between the theatre, the venue and the audience. Macao Fashion Gallery is now showcasing works by six local designers. Their brand stories and their attitude towards life are also told via their designs. JADE. L's Jade Leong and MACON's Jane Chan share their ideas of design in Brand Stories. In Budding Talents, young sci-fi writer Kaik talks about the multimedia adaptations of her novels.

Seven bloggers from Macao and overseas continue to share what's new and their insight in Blogs.

C² Magazine Editorial Board

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and the interviewees, which do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao S.A.R. Government.



002.....	Feature Behind-the-Scene in Creative Arts
010.....	Brand Story Macao Style Brand Story – Macao Original Fashion Exhibition
012.....	Budding Talents Kaik's Writing Career: From Creative Writing to Multimedia Adaptations
014.....	Opinion Louis Yu Kwok-Lit: Producing High Quality Plays to Entice Audiences to the Theatre
016.....	Event Calender
018.....	Blogs Joe Tang – Forward-looking Cinema Ho Ka Cheng – New Milestone of Development of Local Film Culture Yi-Hsin Lin – A Collaboration Between Shekou in Shenzhen and the V&A Museum Yap Seow Choong – Stylish Stores in Shanghai Ron Lam – Revolution of Sento Lam Sio Man – Giving Artists Their Studio Time Cheong Sio Pang – Out of Norms in Contemporary Art

Behind-the-Scene in Creative Arts

By Lai Chou In
Photo courtesy of Calvin sin Production and interviewees

In Macao, there is plenty of arts and cultural activities to choose from, be they programmes organised by the government, or community-led events that encourage creative arts in Macao. However, have you ever realised the thoughts behind the collaterals and texts, or the efforts that go into the careful planning of events? As the saying goes, "Preparation ensures success, while lack of planning is doomed to fail". In this issue we have invited some representatives from music, fashion and drama sectors to share their experience in branding and programme planning. Whether it is an award presentation event attended by a few thousand, or a market bazaar targeting a hundred people, thorough event planning is always essential.



Jones Chong Cho Lam

Affirming Talent Through Award Events

At the beginning of each year, various music award events of different scales are held in Hong Kong, showcasing the talents of numerous Chinese-speaking pop stars. While those who watch these award events in the comfort of their own homes in Macao may not remember the awards won by these Hong Kong pop stars, the touching scenes and the singers' thank you speech tend to leave a strong impression on the TV audience.

On the other hand, speaking of Macao's local music award events, the only event of some significance is the TDM Music Awards. To address the lack of similar events, the Macao Artistes Association organised the inaugural SIM Music Awards in February this year, hoping to offer more opportunities to recognise the work of local artists.

Compared to TDM Music Awards, SIM Music Awards focused solely on giving recognition to the performance of individual artists. "Within the entertainment circle, we have a consensus that, when the time is ripe, we would want a singer-oriented award event like the one in Hong Kong," said Jones Chong Cho Lam, Chairman of Macau Artistes Association.

A year and a half ago, the Association initiated timely discussions with Teledifusão de Macau (TDM), the organiser of TDM Music Awards, to plan for a new entertainment awards event in Macao. Since TDM Music Awards is usually held in the summer, they have decided to stage the SIM Music Awards at the beginning of the year.

Jones Chong Cho Lam pointed out that, the most challenging aspect of the planning process is to reach a consensus among owners of entertainment companies and the individual artists in the entertainment industry, as well as to decide on the number of prizes and the evaluation mechanism. In the end, the inaugural SIM music awards presented only a total of 17 awards to the artists, including the Most Popular Artist Awards and the Best Performance Awards categories. While the Most Popular Artist Awards are selected based on public voting, in order to ensure public participation, the Best Performance Awards are judged by a professional panel comprising over 120 entertainment practitioners, community leaders and celebrities.

Reflecting on the inaugural event, Chong remarked that the event faced considerable challenges in terms of funding and time constraints, even though it has received the support of government and many organisations. He felt that there is still room for improvement, and that ideally the award event should engage more overseas professionals to serve as judges in the future, in order to promote original music in Macao. To illustrate his point, Chong revealed that, upon discovering the impressive standard of music performed by the singer Chan Wai Man, one of the panel judges went on to acquire the rights to release Chan's new album in Taiwan (where the judge comes from). Doubtless, awards can go a long way to enhance an artist's publicity. "For example, Lo Ka Ho, who has won the Most Popular Male Singer in the inaugural event, will have the privilege of introducing himself in that capacity locally and overseas. What we hope to offer is affirmation of talent, and an additional title for the singer to leverage on when he or she pursues his or her future."

At the inaugural event, Chong mentioned the fact that there are over 30 full-time artists in Macao's entertainment industry means only one among 10,000 chooses to pursue his career in this sector. Nevertheless, efforts to arrive at this close-knit circle cannot be overlooked.

In 2000, Chong and his friend, Terence Chui Chi-leong (i.e. the Macao-based singer nicknamed "Siu Fay") formed a band called C-PLUS, and set up their own agency, Chessman Entertainment, to promote original music in Macao. "There are no full-time singers in Macao, and so many people teased us saying, 'Any singers who can succeed in Macao are those who would have succeeded without any help anyway.' While singers in Macao do not enjoy the tremendous success their counterparts elsewhere, the sector is still capable of supporting a handful of artists. In a way, it is a promising beginning." Same as other arts and cultural enterprises in Macao, Chong felt that the career for singers suffers from the lack of an audience. "We hope that these award events and various other activities can introduce the artists to the public. I believe that, as long as the awards continue to be held every five or ten years, it will do a lot of good to the entertainment sector."

Other than showcasing Macao's artists publicly, we also want to encourage people to show their support through spending. At the moment, Chong said that Macao does not enjoy a very robust ticketing culture. Many people in Macao want to get tickets to concerts or shows through personal connections rather than paying, even if the performers are internationally-known singers from abroad. What Macao needs is a trend to reverse that, in support of spending in arts and culture. Although the situation in recent years has improved, a genuine, lasting trend can only be brought about through steady efforts. As the old saying goes: "a thousand miles comes from a single step." How does one achieve that? Chong said: "The best way is to organise more performances and activities."



• The inaugural SIM Music Awards



mush.Room

Running Stylish
Market Bazaar

With aquamarine and white as the major hues and adorned with climbing plants, mush.Room is a softly lighted boutique located in a quiet community away from the crowds. But on a weekend in February, this store, which is less than a thousand square feet in size, was jam-packed with people coming especially for a market bazaar that is held irregularly. "I have never seen that my shop is so packed. At the beginning I worried that nobody would come here," Sony Cheong recalled with a smile.

Cheong and her husband Faye Choi, a musician, founded mush.Room in 2009. The shop mainly sells fashion and accessories from Japan, Korea and other parts of the world. Some of the items are designed by themselves. Five years ago, the store was moved from another location to here, and the rear area of the store has become the studio of Evade, Choi's electro band. The store name "Room" says it all: this cute couple wants to provide visitors with a space to chill. "We put all good things together in one room for everyone to share." Holding a market bazaar has always been one of their ideas, but they were not able to find a right place to do it.

But the situation changed last year when a Japanese filmmaker asked to film a performance by Evade. With no suitable place to perform, they simply transformed their own store to a mini-concert venue. They removed all clothes in the store to make space for the concert. "After the event, we found out that it's possible to hold a bazaar in our store once we remove all items. In this way we do not need to hire another venue and we can take control of the entire process." Choi pointed out that because the store is small, maximising the usage of the space is needed during the time when the bazaar is held. Hooks and wall racks are used for providing more space for storage and exhibition.

When venue was no longer a problem, the couple started coming up

with the content of the "mush.Room Mini-Market". First of all, the market needed a theme. Then they had to look for like-minded brands in Macao and overseas to participate. For instances, the first edition of the mini-market held in February was a collaboration with Girl'z, a Taiwanese group specialising in girls' items. A series of dreamy and girly items were selected to showcase in Macao. In April, the theme of the second edition of the market was nostalgia. It was a collaboration with both brands in Macao and Hong Kong. On the market day, live music was performed. Since the store is also the studio of Choi's band, there is a complete set of audio equipment in-store. The couple also played music and sang on the spot.

"[Holding a market bazaar] is like organising a party. We've got a lot of themes for the upcoming markets, and we have to think out of the box," Cheong said. Choi supplemented: "We do not compromise quality. We hope that each market will bring new elements to everyone. We do not hold the market on a monthly basis because we will only do it if we have a good theme for it." Organising an event is both physically and mentally demanding. This is also one of the reasons why they cannot afford doing it regularly. Usually the theme and partners have to be confirmed two months in advance. The making of promotional materials also takes time. On the eve of the market day, the store has to be tidied up. Sometimes, accommodation has to be arranged for vendors coming from overseas. Together with the day-to-day management of the store, all of these have become heavy workloads.

But the audiences' recognition to the couple's hard work has given them confidence to continue to hold the event. Choi said that promotional channels in Macao are very limited. Apart from advertising in social media, they also stick posters to cafés they have close links with. "We rely on word-of-mouth advertising. What we are doing is very niche. We did worry if no one would be interested in it. But we have held the event several times and the responses were good. A lot of people told us to do it more often." Cheong supplemented that they organise market bazaar is not for the sake of making money. Vendors are not required to pay rents. "We understand that handmaking is no easy task." Choi further explained: "The event is experimental and indie in style. It's because we love fun."

During the interview the couple showed tacit support to each other, and they have performed perfect teamwork when it comes to the business. "I have a lot of funny ideas. I often told her not to question because when my mind is clear I will share my thoughts with her. And she will help me out to walk the talk," said Choi. Regarding to what her husband said, Cheong agreed with a smile: "I simply follow what he says."

Regarding the future plan, Cheong expects to find a place that is bigger in size so as to allow them more space to organise market bazaars, concerts and even provide food and beverage. Running a venue like a Japanese-styled live house is what they have in mind now. "I found that there are no places to go during holidays in Macao. I very much want to have a place in the city where you can spend the whole day to enjoy good food and bazaar hopping." Her husband concluded: "Our aim is to promote Macao's cultural industry and to make the city more fun."





Johnny Tam

Theatrical Play as a Dialogue with the Audience

Apart from the Macao Cultural Centre and the Blackbox Theatre in the Old Court Building run by the government, art spaces hidden in industrial buildings are also frequented by theatre lovers in Macao. Private theatrical groups like Macau Experimental Theatre have launched the BOK Festival in order to connect art spaces in Macao and allow audiences to have non-mainstream theatrical experiences. It's an opportunity to have a dialogue with the city and to experiment with theatrical possibilities.

The Festival was launched in 2013. With the aim of "Interconnection, Working Hard, and Fighting with All You've Got", the festival is held from June to July every year and both local and overseas experimental theatrical works are featured. Johnny Tam, Artistic Director of the BOK Festival and Macau Experimental Theatre, said that events initiated by private groups are more flexible than those organised by the government, and each performance allows more opportunities to experiment and explore the aesthetics of the theatre. "Macao audiences usually see theatrical plays as a form of story-telling. However, a play does not necessarily start with a script at the outset. Sometimes a group of designers, poets and photographers can interpret a space with their own insights and this will bring more possibilities to a play."

Each year the festival has a theme. In 2015, it was about the "Installation Stage". Last year, it was about "Connecting Alternative Theatres". This year the focus will be the audiences – how the audiences participate in the theatre would change the nature of the theatrical work is the issue that needs to be explored. Tam pointed out that he expects the theme would continue to be discussed by the audiences. "Every artistic director and theatrical director has a wish. That is to engage audiences in a dialogue via a theatrical festival."

Organised by the government, the Macao Arts Festival's shows sold out as soon as they are on sale and the festival has become one of the most anticipated art events in the city. Tam frankly admitted that a lot more has to be done to let the audiences understand and recognise the BOK Festival. "In respect of marketing and communication, the more experimental and uncertain in nature, the more packaging and brand building are needed for the event. This is to let the audiences to understand that some factors are unknown in the play but it can potentially be fun. Effort has to be made to promote such concept of art." Therefore, co-organisers of the event have launched a series of promotion to explain the concept of the festival. In the last two years, shows specifically for students were scheduled to certain schools in Macao and post-show discussions were arranged. The setting was relaxing so as to encourage the audiences to interact with the artists after the shows finished. Tam believes that this can immediately let both sides to make dialogues and is more than just asking the audiences to fill out the feedback questionnaires. "This kind of talk enables the audiences to understand more our artistic concept."

In fact, the diversity of shows in the BOK Festival is similar to Macau Experimental Theatre's style. Founded in 2008, the group was formerly called Theatre Horizon. In early days the group mainly played adaptations of western classics. When the group was renamed Macau Experimental Theatre in 2013, attention started given to new works (i.e. modern translated plays) and original musicals. "The major change over the last

ten years is we gradually transformed from an association to a professional theatrical group. An association enables a group of theatre lovers from all walks of life to hold together via the means of theatrical performance; while a professional theatre has its own positioning, target audiences and goals."

In recent years, the group was invited to perform in art festivals in Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Mainland, Japan and Canada. Tam discovered that if a translated play was performed overseas, the responses from the audiences were far from satisfactory. "We understand that we need to have our own positioning and original theatrical work especially when participating in overseas art festivals. Original works can highlight your own thoughts and perception of the world." Together with his good friends Wong Teng Chi and Njo Kong Kie, Tam composed the musical *The Time of Shi* in 2015. The work was performed in places including Macao, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Canada. This year, it will be performed again in Canada for 40 runs. Audiences in different places react differently even they are watching the same play. For example, Tam pointed out that Taiwanese audiences are very sensitive to texts, while audiences in Hong Kong and Macao give more attention to the image expression, and audiences in Canada are more interested in the metaphors employed in the play script, as well as the issues of identity and labelling. "Although we have our own story to tell, interpretation of the work by the audiences is necessary. And the audiences are smarter than us. They can see a lot more than we do."

Tam has been working in the theatre in Macao since his graduation from college in 2009. He believes that Macao's audiences and theatrical groups have become more diversified. "I feel that the sector is flourishing now. Each theatrical group has its own artistic style and its own niche market." Although his own group is named "Experimental Theatre", like the works created by Tam, he refused to be labelled as such. "I do not want to define what I am doing. We keep on doing experiments in art, and we continue to have dialogue with the world."



• Poet Elvis Mok performed in the BOK Festival in 2016



• BOK Festival features experimental theatre. *The Time of Shi* is Macau Experimental Theatre's original musical.



Macao Style

Brand Story – Macao Original Fashion Exhibition

During this spring and summer, six local fashion designers take turn to showcase their design, their aesthetic pursuits and their ideas of good quality of life in Macao Fashion Gallery. Held between April and October, the “Brand Story – Macao Original Fashion Exhibition” exhibits and sells items designed by MACON, JADE.L, SOUL, Worker Playground, ZICS and Salut ça va?. In this issue, Jade Leong of JADE.L and Jane Chan of MACON tell us their insights into the operation of the fashion business.

By Ariel
Photo courtesy of
Calvin sin Production



• JADE.L's collection is inspired by the safety signage and colours commonly seen in construction sites



• MACON's design concept goes around "Live Slow, Travel Light".

A Burning Desire to Design Jade Leong: Brand Building in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan

“When I was studying in junior high school, I had already been interested in fashion design. I bought fashion magazines. Every issue. When I read stories about those international brands, I wondered how they come up with a fashion collection,” said local designer Jade Leong. She spoke with a smile on her face about her first experience in designing clothes. “When I was in high school, Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Centre and my school co-ran a course. It was regarded as an extra-curricular activity. The course taught how to draw fashion sketches and it inspired me to learn fashion design.”

After graduated from high school, Jade continued to study fashion design in Shih Chien University in Taipei. When she returned to Macao upon graduation, she started working as a fashion buyer. With a burning desire in fashion design, she wielded her pen during her leisure times and started sketching again. Started with making samples and got her clothing made, Jade created her own brand “Jade. L” step by step. She expressed that the Cultural Affairs Bureau's Subsidy Programme for Fashion Design on Sample Making has helped her a lot when she designed her very first collection. “It has substantially lowered the costs of fashion production. If I were not able to get the support from the Cultural Affairs Bureau, I may not be able to get started in a fashion design career.”

Apart from getting subsidies, opportunities, sales channels and feedback are also important to an emerging designer. Jade described that the Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer

Center is like a mentor. It not only provides designers with information of various competitions and exhibitions, its Macao Fashion Gallery is ready to help promote their brands and get customer feedback. “The very first time that my work was shown to customers in Macao was via Macao Fashion Gallery. Every time the gallery gives designers feedback and it really helps us to reach potential customers. Also, the gallery attracts tourists to visit so we are able to know the difference between local and overseas consumers' preferences.”

Last year, Jade. L's brick-and-mortar store was opened in Macao. Points of sale are also established in the Mainland and Taiwan. Jade revealed that soaring rents, small market size and high costs in Macao are the factors that make her proactively and strategically tap into overseas market. She participates into different types of exhibitions so as to promote the brand. “The first time I participated in a trade show was the fashion fair in Shanghai and this opportunity was referred by the Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Center. The result was satisfactory. A lot of consumers in the Mainland are interested in my products. I got more opportunities to collaborate with different parties beyond Macao.” At the time of writing, Jade was negotiating possibilities to collaborate with shopping malls in Xian.

“I hope that points of sale of my brand would be established in the Mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macao in five years' time. It can be in the form of franchise, consignment or bulk purchasing. I hope there will be growth and more points of sale.”



Jane Chan: “Fashion is Not Just Clothes”

The small room on the second floor of Macao Fashion Gallery was adorned with wonderful illustrations of Macao's architectural heritage. A series of leisure wear was displayed there and a relaxing vibe permeated the whole room. “I wanted to use travel as a theme to showcase my work,” said Jane Chan, one of the participating designers. “I want to promote slow life and travel light. These are concepts of living a more relaxing life.”

Jane is one of the major designers of the local fashion brand MACON. Graduated from Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology in 2010, she worked as a fashion designer in Beijing for several years and finally returned to Macao in 2013. Jane was one of the eight beneficiaries of the first edition of the Cultural Affairs Bureau's Subsidy Programme for Fashion Design on Sample Making. A fashion show dedicated to her own brand was also held in Macao Fashion Festival in 2014. “Designers in Beijing have a lot of opportunities. You can run your own studio, or work for certain brands. You work in a team and there are different things you can try. Fashion design is a relatively new concept in Macao. Not many companies hire fashion designers and this forces designers to equip with all-round skills. Apart from having excellent design, you need to have brilliant business ideas to make your business grow.”

Jane joined MACON in 2015. She frankly expressed that the market in Macao is too small and supporting facilities are very limited. For instances, suppliers have

been to sourced outside Macao, and promotion strategy also directs to overseas markets. “If you want to build up a brand in Macao, it's impossible to just work nine to five.” However, Macao's support to the industry is stronger than other regions. In addition to subsidising the start-up costs and sample making, places like Macao Fashion Gallery and C-SHOP also help promoting local brands.

“We are not just selling clothes. We are promoting a lifestyle. It's difficult to tell a story if you sell clothes in a boutique. Macao Fashion Gallery has a cultural vibe and it's easy for people to take in the atmosphere and understand the stories behind our brand. Holding exhibitions here is a good opportunity for us to promote our brand.” Macao Fashion Gallery also gathers customer feedback and report to the designers every season. “It is very useful for building product structure and understanding what our customers need.”

MACON is very active to participate in trade shows and events like Hong Kong Fashion Week so as to promote the brand in different cities. Its major sales channel is online but it also has collaboration with local boutiques. Jane hopes that in two years' time she can collaborate with other brands to run a shop specialised in creative products so as to allow customers to experience different brands. “I love working collectively. There is a big difference between running one's own shop and managing a shop collectively. After all small shop is difficult to catch attention. I hope that in two years' time there will be two to three collective shops and we will be able to do more online to offline businesses.”

Kaik's Writing Career:

From Creative Writing to Multimedia Adaptations

By Simon Wong
Photo courtesy of Calvan sin Production and interviewee



In recent years, many aspiring writers in Macao choose to self-publish their works in order to showcase their work. Kaik, a young sci-fi writer, decided to self-publish her sci-fi novel, *KillLers*, in Hong Kong in 2014, and was eventually signed by a Hong Kong Publisher, Today Publications. In 2015, she co-published a book entitled *Love Confessions of a Young Girl*, and a sci-fi story, *Redemption*. As a Macao-based writer, her work succeeded to reach a readership far beyond the local market.



"I am still an emerging writer in many ways. In 2016, I did a multimedia adaptation based on my own work, *Redemption*. The novel has been adapted into a radio drama and an animation. Back then, it was the first time that the publisher joined hands with other parties to produce an adaptation. I was delighted to take part in such a creative initiative, and found it to be a most rewarding experience." Kaik proceeded to introducing the plot and filling me in about the animation. I could feel that she was somewhat disappointed. For one reason or another, the radio drama and animation adaptation of *Redemption* never went beyond the Foreword and the first chapter.

How can one imagine the amount of work that went into a slim volume? It is incredible to think of the author's efforts in publishing *Redemption*. Guided by the editors, Kaik made numerous amendments to the manuscript. She said: "My editor pointed out all kinds of shortfalls he found with the manuscript, and shared with me, from personal experience as editor, the importance of avoiding *deja-vu* materials, the logic of the plot, and problems with the use of language, etc. He also thought that my characterisation needed more work." Subsequent amendments helped to improve the flow of the narrative.

In addition to taking the right steps at the beginning and being fortunate enough to find good mentors, it is crucial for contemporary

fiction to gain popularity. This, however, proved difficult for Kaik.

"After the Hong Kong Book Fair in July last year, I was on the verge of giving up writing. I felt that my work was unappreciated by the public. I started doubting myself: am I really suited to writing? Is my work not appealing?" It took Kaik a long time to come to terms with these emotions and to understand herself better.

"For quite some time, I felt very empty inside. I discovered that while I do love writing, I have to adjust my own perspectives. If my writing is not appreciated by the others, then I won't find the motivation to write. Nowadays, I won't think about whether people are reading my work or not. I have to continue to write because of my passion for writing."

This period helped Kaik understand that the meaning of creative writing lies in the work itself. If she cares too much about what others think, how many "Likes" she can generate via social media, or to constantly compare herself with other writers, it will only diminish the joy of writing.

"I begin to re-focus on the important questions: what should I write about? What can I bring to the readers?" Kaik said that her friends saw her book, *Redemption*, as a complete narrative with a remarkable beginning, but a less convincing ending. For her, she is used to writing spontaneously within a loosely-organised framework. As a result, she is less able to coordinate the pace and details of the narrative.

• Group photo with the team in charge of the radio drama and manga adaptations of *Redemption* in Hong Kong Book Fair 2015



With two years of writing experience behind her, she begins to understand the need for a closely-knit plot and a sense of completion to the narrative. This realisation also motivates her to write better.

"Nowadays, I write very differently. I will make a plan on everything: from the number of words in each chapter; how to write the introduction, the transitions, the conclusion, as well as the characterisation. I would spell out the details on post-its and put them on the wall. What's more, I'd also put myself in the shoes of a character, and to consider how events might evolve, so that I can evaluate which is a more probable plot."

Precisely because she has a clear idea of what makes a good piece of writing, Kaik is no longer interested to count the number of "Likes" on her social media pages. Instead, she would like to do her work well.

In adapting *Redemption* for other media, Kaik admits that she has learnt a lot. Since then, she becomes more proactive to reach out to other media contacts for collaborations. "In the past, I didn't watch any Korean dramas, because I thought that the narrative pace is too slow. In recent years, however, I think Korean dramas are becoming very interesting,

dealing with a variety of themes. So I have downloaded a Korean play to learn more about it. It's fascinating to see how much goes into a drama script, and how each character is portrayed with such detail. It is almost as if the playwright cares about how a character drinks his coffee and where to put it after finishing it. This is certainly a great lesson for me in working on my characterisation."

As a fiction writer, it is vital for her to seek out her readers. Kaik takes great care in managing her author page on social media, and learns how to maximise publicity using finite amount of resources.

"I find out that pictures speak much more than texts, so I decided to use more pictures to introduce my books. Even if people cannot find the time to read the whole book, at least they'd get the gist of it."

Having reorganised her writer's life, Kaik resumes writing. Recently, she uploaded her fiction, *Meeting You Again*, online. She also finished and submitted a new manuscript to a publisher, which is expected to become a 100,000-word book (book title, contents and publication date subject to more discussion). This book is likely Kaik's answer after much soul-searching.

• Recording a radio drama



How to handle the work, the venue and the audience is often food for thought for artists and art administrators alike. It takes time to compose a good work, but limited availability of performance venues hinders the growth in audiences. While land is scarce in Hong Kong, it's never easy to take care of these three aspects impeccably. With nearly 30 years of experience in art administration, Louis Yu Kwok-Lit believes that managers of any cultural venues should not only play the role of a "landlord/buyer", but also help promote experimental works for the betterment of the theatre and audience growth.

By Chow Chung Wah Photo courtesy of Leung Sai Kuen and West Kowloon Cultural District Authority

Louis Yu Kwok-Lit: Producing High Quality Plays to Entice Audiences to the Theatre

Performing Arts and the Venue are No Longer a Landlord/Buyer Relationship

Formerly the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council and the Executive Director of the Hong Kong Arts Centre, Louis Yu Kwok-Lit is now the Executive Director, Performing Arts of West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCD). He counted in front of the West Kowloon construction site: "In five years' time Hong Kong will have 11 more new performance venues. Six of them are in WKCD, the other five in the East Kowloon Cultural Centre managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. Most of the venues are medium or small in size, very suitable for long runs."

Is there a market for long runs in Hong Kong? Are there enough audiences to support the shows? It depends how you define it. "Long Runs are not limited to those shows that almost never go off Broadway. There are various forms of relationships between

performing arts and the venue. For instances, the theatrical group and the venue are inseparable in Germany because the venue is usually owned by the group. The theatre usually has more than one work running year round. The Royal National Theatre in Britain has adopted the same model. Each season features one play and every year there are theatre seasons."

Yu believes that Hong Kong's theatre industry has to develop its own model that fits Hong Kong's character and reality, including show-goers' habits.

"In the past, the relationship between performing arts and the venue was simple. It's all about hiring venues or buying theatrical works. It's a short term rental service that involves a seller and a buyer. As to the audiences, most of them just see theatre as a form of entertainment among many available options like movies and concerts. Theatre season is not popular in Hong Kong because most of the audiences only make



• Louis Yu Kwok-Lit believes that the venue operator has to have discerning tastes in order to groom artists and grow audiences

decision on what to see only a few weeks in advance. Hong Kong has options galore, and everybody is busy. There are similarities between London and Hong Kong. But London has a long performing arts history, while Hong Kong's most historical repertory theatre is just 30 years old. And Hong Kong, by comparison, has relatively short time to build up audiences and relevant theatrical systems. Theatre is part of the national education in the Britain. Literature is a compulsory subject at school. Shakespeare's works and *Shelock Holmes* series are not uncommon in TV and movies. Theatre and literature have become core elements of entertainment and cultural programmes in Britain. Hong Kong's culture is different from any other cultures so it's difficult to make reference to other models overseas. However, there is one thing in common universally: all audiences love excellent works."

Distinguishing a Laboratory from the Stage

Many artists and art administrators believe that the shortage of venues is one of the reasons that prevent the audience from growing. However, Yu does not totally agree with it.

"The fundamental question that needs to be answered is how to make a good show and eventually make it sustain. We as the venue operator, or theatre manager, have to understand what an excellent work is so as to groom our audiences to appreciate good quality work. In this way it's possible to let those works run longer. It would be destructive if the venue operator does not have discerning tastes. If we support some substandard works just because we want to support the theatre, it will do nothing good to the artist and the audience."

So what is considered a good-quality work? Yu said: "It has to be appealing to both refined and popular tastes." That is to say scholars, commentators and general audiences also find the work enticing. However, high-quality work is not always guaranteed. If you spot one, you gotta give it a chance to continue to run. "*My Grandmother's Funeral* is an excellent piece of work. Both commentators and audiences who know nothing about theatre also enjoyed the show and got something from it. It's also considered a successful long run. Each time there are eight to ten runs and it has been running for seven years. It has almost reached 100 runs in total. Another example is *29+1*. It has been running for a long time and inspired a lot of people. There is also a stage-to-screen adaptation. As a venue operator, if you spot an excellent work like this, you have to think about how to let it grow."

To make growth is to encourage new plays. In other words, experiment is necessary. But Yu also pointed out that this has to be dealt with carefully.

"Experiment is necessary. It can lead to success, or failure. Experimental work is not the same as a work that is ready for public performance. They have to be distinguished clearly. Before the audiences arrive at the theatre, they have to know whether this work is an experiment or a complete theatrical performance. A lot of theatre operators mix these two things up – they see an experiment as a 'finished product'. The audiences may feel misled and they will never return to the theatre."

The small-and-medium-sized venues under construction in Hong Kong are actually a response to facilitating experiment in the theatre industry.

"One of the tasks that WKCD will be doing is to commission new plays. We will provide venues to artists to refine their experiments and turn them to public programmes. This is the concept that needs to be strengthened as it seems that people do not have this in mind very often. Most of the time people have a burning desire to participate in a performance. For example, if a venue has a two-week timeslot that is free for use six months later, they will have two months, or even less than that, to come up with the first draft of the playscript. In the meantime, the marketing team needs to have the title, publicity stills and taglines ready to make promotional posters. But the artist only has the very first draft in hand and he is still not sure whether it's a comedy or tragedy. The script is not yet finalised, and the actors are still rehearsing. Eventually, the premiere looks like a rehearsal and the audiences will find that what they see is not the same as what the promotional materials say. They feel misled and will no longer come back to the theatre. You have to pay the price because you do not do proper experiment."

"Instead, you will have a better quality performance if you spend these six months to rehearse closed door and only the playwright, director and actors are involved. Spend some time in the 'laboratory' first. Use these six months to fine-tune the script and perform next year. Of course, no one can guarantee that it will be a successful performance. But if more time and manpower are invested in the initial stages, it's more likely that the work is of higher quality and can entice audiences to the theatre. WKCD is going to directly finance the core creative team's activities in the initial stages. This will allow the playwright, director and actors an opportunity to do trial-and-error experiment."

EVENT CALENDER



BOK Festival

Date: 28/6/2017-9/7/2017

Time: Please refer to schedule

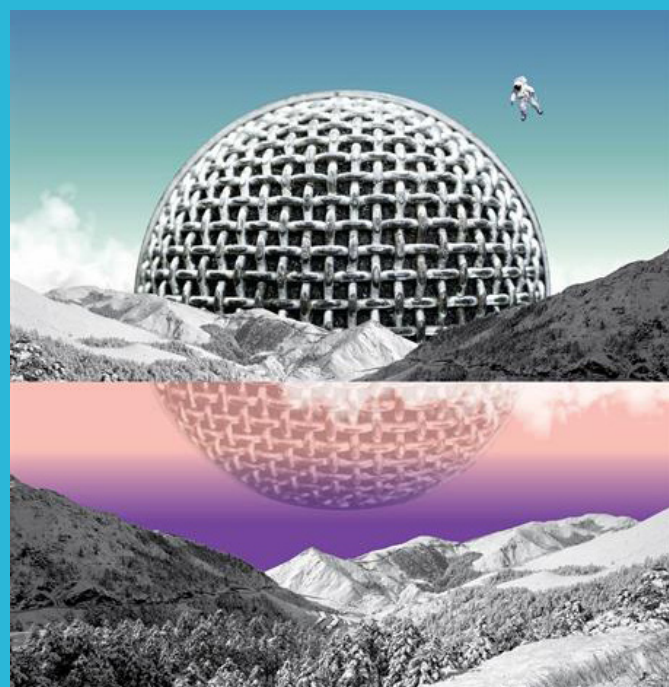
Venue: Please refer to schedule

Ticket: Please refer to schedule

Details: Since 2013, BOK Festival explores the prospection and potential of theatre with ideas that connect and inspire. This year, the audience dynamics is the focus. Apart from staying in the darkness to watch, weep, and giggle, audiences can imagine participating or even taking over the theatrical works. Choreographer Chloe Lao explores physical aesthetics and artificial material in *Artificial Roses*; Writer and indie musician Sonia Ka lan Lao recreates a "skin-gnawed" world with music and experimental video in *Chemtrails, Morellons*; and Taiwan's Riverbed Theatre brings Macao audiences *Hypnosis: The Just for You Project*, a performance for those who dream with their eyes open.

Organiser: Macau Experimental Theatre

Web: www.bokfestival.com



2017 Subsidy Programme for the Production of Original Song Albums

Submission Period: 12/5/2017-11/7/2017

Time: 9am-1pm, 2:30pm-5:45pm (Mon to Thur);
9am-1pm, 2:30pm-5:30pm (Fri)

Submission Venue: Cultural Affairs Bureau Building, Tap Siac Square,
Macao Cultural Affairs Bureau—
Department for Promoting Cultural and
Creative Industries

Details: The programme was launched in 2014. This year, beneficiaries will be granted a subsidy of up to MOP220,000 as a support on the production and promotion of the original song albums. The programme aims to cultivate more talented local music creators and producers and promote the development of Macao's music industry. By giving such support, it is hoped that musicians are encouraged to produce and release more outstanding works and lay the groundwork for market development.

Organiser: Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR Government

Web: www.icm.gov.mo/cn/CCI-Subsidy; www.macaucci.com/sps



Simple Things – Sketchbook Drawing by Fan Sai Hong

Date: 26/4/2017-30/6/2017

Time: 12pm-8pm (Closed on Mondays)

Venue: Taipa Village Art Space
(10, Rua dos Clerigos, Taipa)

Ticket: Free

Organiser: Taipa Village Art Space

Web: www.taipavillagemacau.com



Sound & Image Challenge International Festival 2017

Submission Period:

Till 16/6/2017 (SHORTS) and
20/8/2017 (VOLUME)

Organiser: Creative Macau, Institute of
European Studies of Macau

Web: www.soundandimagechallenge.com



The 57th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale Di Venezia 2017 - Exhibits from Macao, China

Date: 13/5/2017-12/11/2017

Time: 10am-6pm (Closed on Mondays)

Venue: Arsenale, Campo della Tana,
Castello 2126/A, Venice, Italy

Ticket: Free

Organiser: Cultural Affairs Bureau of
the Macao SAR Government
and Macao Museum of Art

Web: www.MAM.gov.mo



Marcel Khalife World Music Concert

Date: 17/6/2017

Time: 8pm

Venue: Grand Auditorium,
Macao Cultural Centre

Ticket: \$250, \$200, \$150, \$100

Organiser: Macao Cultural Centre

Web: www.ccm.gov.mo



Break and Make : Pioneering Women Directors

Date: 10/6/2017-25/6/2017

Time: Please refer to schedule

Venue: Cinematheque · Passion
(13 Travessa da Paixão, Macao)

Ticket: Please refer to schedule

Organiser: Cinematheque · Passion

Web: [www.facebook.com/
CinemathequePassion](http://www.facebook.com/CinemathequePassion)



"NINAGAWA Macbeth"

Date: 23/6/2017-25/6/2017

Time: 7:30pm (23/6/2017 & 24/6/2017);
2:30pm (25/6/2017)

Venue: Grand Theatre,
Hong Kong Cultural Centre

Ticket: HK\$580, \$480, \$380, \$280, \$160

Organiser: Leisure and Cultural Services
Department, Government of
the Hong Kong Special
Administrative Region

Web: www.lcsd.gov.hk



Chiayi Arts Festival 2017

Date: 29/4/2017-25/6/2017

Time: Please refer to schedule

Venue: Please refer to schedule

Ticket: Please refer to schedule

Organiser: Chiayi City Government

Web: www.twchiayifestival.com



Hong Kong Book Fair

Date: 19/7/2017-25/7/2017

Time: Please refer to schedule

Venue: Hong Kong Convention and
Exhibition Centre

Ticket: HK\$25

Organiser: Hong Kong Trade
Development Council

Web: hkbookfair.hktdc.com



Recipient of Macao Literary Prize and Macao Novel Prize, Joe Tang is a writer and cultural commentator, and has published novels, including *The Floating City*, *Assassin*, and *The Lost Spirit*. The latter two titles were translated into English and Portuguese. Joe's portfolio also includes commentaries on art and plays. They include *Words from Thoughts*, *Philosopher's Stone*, *Journey to the West*, *Rock Lion*, *Magical Monkey* and *The Empress and the Legendary Heroes*.

Joe Tang

Forward-looking Cinema

Recently, a major event made headline news in Macao's arts scene: after a few years of preparation and piloting, Cinematheque · Passion has finally launched. This government-led initiative, supported by Macao Cultural Affairs Bureau and run by Cut Ltd., took on an innovative concept, offering film-lovers and intellectuals a fascinating entertainment space. Comprising a 60-seat boutique cinema, a small media archive of film documentaries, film books and magazines, a basement area (where the box office is located, a venue for hosting small exhibitions during film premieres), and a small courtyard downstairs. Time will tell as to whether and how this small film museum can be leveraged to become an exciting, creative venue for arts programmes and activities.

The global video sharing platform, YouTube, has recently launched its paid service, YouTube TV, a service that integrates various paid TV channels on one single platform for continuous streaming. Even in the initial period, it provides over 40 direct channels, covering news, TV episodes, lifestyle, entertainment, sports and children's programmes. Viewers can watch these contents via smart mobile devices, computers or even from the TV. For those pressed with time, they can save the programmes on their cloud storage drives for viewing afterwards. Such technological breakthroughs in media networks have deeply changed our everyday lives and, needless to say, our entertainment consumption patterns.

Activities that we have taken for granted — such as watching movies in cinemas or viewing TV programmes from the comfort of our own homes — are likely to undergo more changes in the near future.

Imagine what it would be like when you return home from work one day, and catch sight of a pop-up message on your TV screen that reads: "An HD version of blockbuster *Avatar 3* is ready for immediate download viewing for just MOP\$10." So your living room has suddenly turned into a cinema. Or say you are longing to watch a certain movie produced some time ago, which is not available in cinemas (due to limited screening schedules). You can't buy or rent a DVD copy either. All you need to do is to access a certain video sharing website from your handset or tablet or even your TV at home, in order to retrieve and download (for free or for a small fee) the film you want from an archive of thousands of films onto your device. At this moment, you will realise that a cinema can happen anywhere.

Indeed, it is not unlikely that in the future, the traditional form of "cinema" will disappear. On one hand, the cinema will become accessible to everyone, or indeed it will be a next-door institution. On the other, it will become a part of social media and entertainment. Whether you are going to a big shopping mall to enjoy a 3D or 4D film at IMAX, or choose to enjoy a quality film and spend a leisurely afternoon with friends in a more cultural institution such

as Cinematheque · Passion, the idea of "film" will change and become more closely knit with our everyday lives.

Soon, the act of entering a cinema to watch a film may become a deliberate privilege for a small, niche and upscale market, just like the way bookshops are no longer places for selling books. Consider for a moment that a cinema will no longer be a place for film screening, but a lifestyle space for private enjoyment as well as sharing, for artistic exchange and appreciation. It will transform from a singular hardware infrastructure into a lifestyle software. The significance of Cinematheque · Passion lies in that it offers a way to test out these new ideas. Not only will it serve as a hub for film-lovers, it will help us understand more about future trends, and show us possibilities how films can become more seamlessly integrated into our everyday lives.



Supervisor of Audio-Visual CUT Association. One of the directors of *Macau Stories 1*, also involved in *Macau Stories 2 – Love in the City* and *Macau Stories 3 – City Maze*. *Macau Stories 2 – Love in the City* received a special mention at Portugal's Avanca Film Festival, and was shown at film festivals in Tokyo and Osaka.

Ho Ka Cheng

New Milestone of Development of Local Film Culture

The official opening of Cinematheque · Passion on 31 March, 2017 marks a milestone of the development of film culture in Macao, as the venue will be a major breeding ground for such development. Film production (industrial policy) and film culture (cultural policy) are two key directions for the development of film industry in a region. Only if both complement with each other will there be possibilities for the long-term development of a locally entrenched industry.

The Chinese film industry enjoys a dynamic growth at present. China's box office in 2016 amounted to RMB45.712 billion (the North American box office clocked in RMB78.546 billion in the same year) with a total of 41,179 movie screens across the nation, more than any other countries in the world. Box-office receipt is still a major means for the Chinese movie industry to recoup investments, clouded with a number of negative news, such as box office cheats, securitisation of box office, and huge losses incurred on distributors when they guarantee producers a minimum amount of box-office receipts. Despite all the fuss, there is still a bright prospect for the Chinese movie industry.

Besides, the Chinese National Arthouse Film Alliance, headed by the China Film Archive, was officially launched on October 2016. Integrating resources like major cinema chains in Mainland China, art-house movie creators and online sales systems, the Alliance picks 100 cinemas in the country for a pilot scheme, in which each cinema has an art-house movie hall (accommodating no less than 100 spectators) to screen four art-house films every day (one session must be scheduled at peak times).

Wanda Cinemas, Broadway Cinematheque, Edko Films Ltd, Fabula Entertainment (a movie firm owned by renowned director Jia Zhangke) and Beijing Weiying Shidai Technology Co., Ltd. are among companies joining this alliance. A wide range of films is also screened, including local art-house movies, classic Chinese art-house movies, films by new directors, award-winning movies in international film festivals, classic overseas art-house movies, films by internationally famed directors, and others. Albeit a movie censorship mechanism, as well as disputes in the definition of art-house movies and the ideologies behind, the Alliance is still regarded as a breakthrough and a brave attempt to take a big step forward in the development of Chinese film culture.

The movie market in a common sense is referred to a market dominated by feature films. Art-house movies, documentaries, experimental films, animated short films are seen as choices for new directors to sharpen their skills, enriching the elements offered by commercial feature films and appealing to a more diversified portfolio of audience. However, in the history of movie world, art-house films, documentaries and experimental films could explore more issues with a broader scope of influence in different segments of the society. Compared with commercial feature films, these productions boast far more influence in terms of arts, culture and history.

Nowadays, it's visionary for China to begin using the experiences and resources from the commercial movie market in exploring the art-house film segment, in tandem with what many advanced countries have gone through in the past. A symbol marking the same vision shared by the

art-house movie development in Macao and Mainland China, the Cinematheque · Passion is also a major breeding ground for such development in the Greater China region, bridging the film institutions in the area, namely the China Film Archive, Taiwan Film Institute, and Hong Kong Film Archive, for better cooperation and exchanges. In Macao, the Cinematheque · Passion integrates different segments of the local movie industry and helps it advance forward; it also serves as a movie culture gateway, offering more non-commercial film choices for residents, who could enjoy some high-quality, non-mainstream films and have their artistic visions broadened. Another local function of the Cinematheque is to shape the local movie culture via hosting directors' meetings, talks, workshops and a residence scheme of foreign directors, as well as facilitating different types of movie discussions; these could help generate more in-depth movie studies and scripts, and facilitate the publications of more studies on films and movie scripts, which will become valuable assets for the future film education and research. Moreover, it is of paramount importance that the Cinematheque · Passion preserves the locally produced works for the next generation to watch and study, as there could only be a future with a clear grasp of history.

Not all the wishes will be materialised promptly following the opening of Cinematheque · Passion. It's only the beginning, requiring the cooperation, participation and care from all sides to make it work. As a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, this present step is of paramount importance and significance. I hereby wish a smooth operation and bright future for the Cinematheque · Passion.



Yi-Hsin Lin graduated from SOAS; now living in England as a writer. Lin has participated in the curation of Chinese painting in Victoria and Albert Museum and British Museum. He is also a lecturer in Chinese art at Christie's Education and contributes to several Chinese-language art magazines.

Yi-Hsin Lin

A Collaboration Between Shekou in Shenzhen and the V&A Museum

It seems that the art scene in the Pearl River Delta is undergoing exciting changes. Located in Shenzhen, the Shekou Design Museum is scheduled to open to the public in October 2017. It's a collaboration between the China Merchant Group Shekou (CMSK) and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). The collections and exhibitions will focus in contemporary design and creative products, with the aim to develop a brand new form of multinational operation and create a unique local cultural experience. Together with the M+ in the West Kowloon Cultural District in Hong Kong, the contemporary art and design scene in southern China will look no longer the same and deserve our continuous attention.

City, Design and Creativity

Just a stone's throw from Hong Kong and Macao, Shekou is located on the Nantou Peninsula in Shenzhen. CMSK started developing the area as an industrial zone. After decades of economic growth, Shekou has been transformed from a fishing village to a city. In 2008, Shenzhen was appointed as a UNESCO City of Design, which has helped enhance Shekou's reputation in the art and culture scene. To further strengthen trade and urban renewal, CMSK launched the ambitious "Remake Shekou" campaign in 2009. Major initiatives are "internet information, technology and creativity". In 2014, CMSK and the V&A, a prominent museum in London, signed a collaboration agreement to build China's first museum dedicated to design.

Founded in 1852, the V&A is a leading organisation in art and design in the world

and well-known for its fabulous and diversified collections, including classical paintings, sculpture and decorations. The collections also include an array of creative items like contemporary photography, furniture, fashion and costumes. Recently, the museum is very proactive about getting exposure overseas, with the aim to expand its excellent operation beyond London and to establish new branches elsewhere. The partnership between the V&A and CMSK is built on the strong willingness to collaborate with each other. The core team members hope that this will become an opportunity to learn from each other's experiences and professional knowledge. It is also hoped that an active base can be built for the creative industry in the City of Design in order to foster more innovative design ideas and thoughts.

Design Society

In March 2016, CMSK announced that it has commissioned the Sea World Culture and Arts Center to renowned Japanese architecture studio Maki and Associates, led by Fumihiko Maki. The idea is to connect rivers and mountains, the seas and the city to the visitors and guide them to enter into dialogue with the nature and the culture. At the same time, the organiser, together with the V&A, launched a new art initiative "Design Society". The institution aims to "use design to inspire everyday life and to connect the industry" and it is hoped that an open and integrated platform can be built in the civil society. It is said that the V&A is

planning to exhibit its refined collections of designer items of the 20th and 21st centuries in the special exhibition hall in the institution. Two massive-scale exhibitions are also scheduled in 2018 and 2019. This is the first collaboration of its kind between the Chinese corporation and a British art and cultural organisation.

Ole Bouman is the founding director of the Design Society. He is a Dutch scholar specialising in cultural and architectural history. He taught in the Netherlands Architecture Institute and published *Volume*, an independent magazine with a focus in design and architecture. Starting from 2009, Bouman has participated in the Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture and he has got himself familiar with the art scene in southern China. He believes that "design is not only a profession. It's a real action that connects people". We hope that the Design Society, a brand new international collocation, will become a driving force of the City of Design to not only foster interflows between different sectors, but also to promote innovative design and put it into practice.



Photo courtesy of Maki and Associates
Sea World Culture and Arts Center, Shekou, Shenzhen



Yap loves design, travel and everything beautiful in life. He writes for various media about travel and design and has published works, including *Wander Bhutan* and *Myanmar Odyssey*. Formerly publisher of Lonely Planet (China Office), Yap is now Chief Content Officer of Youpu Apps, a Beijing-based travel app company.

Yap Seow Choong

Stylish Stores in Shanghai

There are new discoveries every time I visit Shanghai. People opt for a greener transport mode, riding on bicycles at every corner of the streets. This prevalence is due to Mobike, a bike-sharing service allowing people to rent a bicycle parked at anywhere in the city at RMB0.50 for half an hour. With the mobile app, users only need to scan a QR-code on the bicycle, pay the rent online and enjoy the ride before returning it to anywhere possible. It is also convenient that the mobile app has a map showing where all the bicycles for rent are located.

I cycled from Fuxing West Road, Shanghai's most beautiful boulevard, to Wukang Road, a district that boasts many superb coffee shops. The Chinese parasol trees on the sides of the boulevard are bare without any signs of leaves, but the trees are in good shape with sturdy branches and trunks, alike the untamed Chinese semi-cursive script that are gracefully drawn on the sky.

My ride came to Jing'an District, an area brimming with many new residential projects and the most expensive land sites in the city, but quite many interesting shops have opened in recent years. The Paramount described in Pai Hsien-yung's classic novel *The Last Night of Madam Chin* was one of the most extravagant nightclubs in Shanghai, but it has become a more modish place following a revamp. A design store that has been lately discussed a lot in Wechat, Wondullful Dept is composed of a coffee shop, a design select shop and an exhibition space. On the first floor, there is a simplistic, industrial-style coffee shop AUNN, featuring a spacious area and delectable coffee. Its corky cups for takeaway are stylish and practical, and won't scald your hands

(They seem not too environmentally-friendly, though). Wondullful design select shop is located on the second floor, consisting of more than 1,500 design items selected from around the world, including rubbish bins, fragrances and kitchenware, in the 400-square-meter area. Among the items, some are designed with a sense of humor to make you laugh at home every day. An exhibition space is found on the third floor.

A number of upscale department stores are also situated in this district, such as Réel Mall, where the so-called most beautiful bookstore in China can be found—Zhongshuge Bookstore. Its splendid interior design is a crowd-puller but this seems preposterous and illogical, because books alone should be captivating enough to draw the crowd without any gimmicks. Both paper books and bookstores have been placed in an existential predicament, so the operators have to exhaust all means for their bookstores to gain a foothold in this frantic Internet era.

Zhongshuge Bookstore has been one of the fastest growing bookstore chains in China in the past few years, with outlets in Shanghai, Hangzhou, Yangzhou and other cities. The interior design of its stores, requiring large sums of investments, has garnered a lot of interests from the public. Zhongshuge Bookstore in Shanghai is located within a department store in the most lavish district of the city. Adjacent to many luxury brands, the location of the bookstore shows knowledge bears no difference from luxury goods.

Occupying a sizable floor space, the hall of Zhongshuge Bookstore adopts a simplistic style with bright lighting and white color. The lighting will get warmer when walking deeper

into the maze-like bookstore, which simply showcases all types of books. Mirrors are also installed on the ceiling to make the space look more vast and dazzling. The books are categorised in accordance with their themes so that visitors could promptly find the books they want. There is one section called "Books by Selected Chinese Publishers", allowing me to find my favourite books in a convenient and effortless manner. Engaged in the publication industry, I feel it like an instinct to buy paper books in bookstores. Although it is convenient and low-cost to buy books from online stores in China, only will there be possibilities of finding an interesting book when you are shopping in brick and mortar.

Leaving the bookstore, I enjoyed dim sum at a nearby fast-food restaurant, Taoyuan Village, which is stylishly designed and caters soymilk, youtiao (Chinese cruller) and egg pancake rolls. These are all ordinary snacks in daily life but prepared with a sophisticated touch here. Acclaimed for its old Taiwanese style, the owner of Taoyuan Village is a Chinese, though. In its low-key, Chinese-style setting, you finish your soymilk and promptly delve into the art world with a sentence emerging from the bottom of the soymilk bowl: "I am willing to grind off my entire life for you". Sentences like "Taste of time" are also found on the walls appealing to the likings of hipsters. In spite of its average pricing and taste, this restaurant chain is still gaining strong traction in China with branches in all major cities. These show a nice ambience with good old memories could still win hearts of many people. I bet the designer or owner of the store like to read books; otherwise, how could he or she open such a store?



Japan-based writer and traveller, specialising in design, lifestyle and travel journalism. Ron previously served as an editor of *MING Magazine*, *ELLE Decoration* and *CREAM*.

Ron Lam

— Revolution of Sento —

I seldom use the bathtub at my home. Whenever I want to take a bath, I go to *sento*, or also known as communal bath house. Funaoka Onsen, located at Nishijin in Kyoto, is the bath house I often visit. Formerly an inn, it ceased the accommodation operation during the World War II, as it could not cater any dining services. Its large bath house has been preserved and operated independently since then. Given its stunning vintage decorations, Funaoka Onsen is widely acclaimed in Japan and overseas. However, almost all newly built homes in Japan have bathrooms, according to the owner of Funaoka, so most visitors to the bath house are now tourists instead of locals.

The number of bath houses in Japan is suffering a steady decline year after year. In 2015, the Japanese government issued 26,221 licenses for running public bath houses, among which only 4,293, or 16.7%, were *sento*, while the remainder were bathrooms of gyms and swimming pools. Before the prevalence of bathrooms at homes in the 1970's, *sento* accounted for 87% of the total bath houses in Japan. It is worrying that this traditional Japanese culture might disappear in the future amid such a drastic slump in the past few decades. Nonetheless, some young people have recently proposed novel ideas to breathe a new life into this traditional culture.

Ume no Yu, situated in Kawaramachi-Gojo in Kyoto, is currently run by Sanjiro Minato, who took over the business in 2015 at the age of 25. As there was no bathroom in his dormitory, he had to pay his first visit to a communal bath house when he was a university student, and he was immediately captivated by this culture. He noticed strangers are able to talk frankly in their birthday suit in the large steamy bath house,

realising bath houses are not merely venues for washing body but also where social gatherings take place. His enthusiasm for bath houses led him to establish an association of bath house lovers at his university. His obsession has not faded after graduation, as he took over Ume no Yu that faced closure at the time.

The first step of conserving a place is to forge an emotional tie between the people and the place: people will only cherish it when they feel needing it. Under the helm of Sanjiro Minato, Ume no Yu has truly become a hot spot for social gatherings. Information about activities held in Kyoto and beyond is displayed in the lobby, while it also hosts flea markets and DJ music parties from time to time. This *sento* breaks the stereotypes usually associated with bath houses; they are not only where the elderly meet, or foreigners look for exotic experiences, but also where the new generation can be linked to. Kenyu Minato, brother of Sanjiro Minato, also took over a bath house, Kikarku Yu, in Kawaguchi in Saitama prefecture. He transformed the changing room of the 70-year-old bath house into a venue for the public to rent and host events, such as performances of *rakugo* (a type of Japanese verbal entertainment) and *manzai* (a traditional Japanese stand-up comedy).

Most *sento* passively wait for the arrivals of customers, but the Minato brothers adopt an active approach to build ties with the community, namely setting up websites and social media platforms for promotion. Kenyu also gives out leaflets of Kikarku Yu at train stations, a promotional means that is commonplace for shops but not for *sento*. The bigger breakthrough of the operation of Kikarku Yu is the pop-up stores set up at

its car park by various shops; for instance, it collaborated with a vintage clothing store in March and has worked with cafés in the past. The goal of the reform undertaken by the Minato brothers is to appeal to the new generation so that the bath houses could survive in long run.

The management of bath houses has become more diversified in recent years. I Love Yu, a bath house in Naoshima, is the brainchild of artist Ohtake Shinro, who showcases the bizarre world in his mind through the façade, interior décor, bathtubs and wall paintings of the bath house. Located at Naoshima, which is internationally renowned as an "art island", I Love Yu is an art project that transcends the daily aspects of bathing. The old generation, who are used to frequenting bath houses, will surely be amazed by it, too.

Most bath houses are incorporated in ancient properties, but Hinode Yu is located within a new building in Taitō in Tokyo Metropolis. The bath house is located on the ground floor and first floor of the building, while the upper floor is a shared office space. Office tenants could relieve their fatigue, or simply chit-chat with their hard-working companions, at the bath house after a long day of work. Hinode Yu is where you will feel stressed out and relaxed at the same time.

We're living in an era of multi-tasking—many people have more than one job and feel difficult to be defined in one simple category, but they find satisfaction and freedom in this kind of life. It's the same for running a place that you can't be closed-minded and bound by existing rules. With multiple functions, there are always chances for desolate places like bath houses to become alive again.



Having majored in Chinese Language and Literature as well as in Arts (Creative Industries) at Peking University, Lam went on to work in the Creative Industries Department in the Macao SAR Government. She is now pursuing an MA in Arts Administration in New York University.

Lam Sio Man

— Giving Artists Their Studio Time —

The latest art market report published by Art Basel at the end of March reveals a surprising piece of data: as much as half of the overall sales revenue in the global art auction market comes from 1% of artists. In other words, in this glamorous trade, people are only able to know about the work of the top 1% of artists. How then do the remaining artists support their lives and make their creative work sustainable? For many artists, their support will have to come from funding from the government and non-profit organisations.

Recently, I interviewed an artist sponsored by Lower Manhattan Cultural Council to find out more about his life in New York and his creative needs. He mentioned to me that funding is his top priority, followed by the need for creative space. While these are obviously important for an artist, we spent a lot of time discussing an artist's vital need for administrative support. It is not apparent for many outside the industry as to how much administrative work is involved for a professional artist. From organising artworks, to applying for grants and exhibitions as well as taxation matters, administrative work demands from the artist a huge quantity of time and efforts. This also explains why some artists with financial resources would hire administrative assistants to help them. However, how many are actually in a position to do so? The sad truth for many artists in New York is that, as they spend months preparing applications for grants and residencies, they lose the important time for creative work. As grant application outcome is revealed in May, they often cannot concentrate on making new work until the summer.

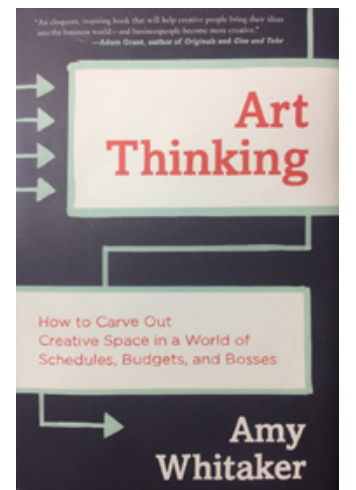
Bearing all these in mind, does it not prompt us to contemplate the problems that are affecting the existing system for arts development? Is the system helping us nurture creative talent or, rather, administrative talent? A few years ago, I took part in a workshop on evaluating the effectiveness of arts funding. The speaker highlighted how, compared to other industries, artists are fortunate enough to obtain financial sponsorship by simply writing and submitting a few pages of proposals. This inevitably made people think that arts funding bodies or departments need an effective workflow and language for administrative work, including logistics, budget, time management, effectiveness control, etc. However, once we view the practice of art from the administrative perspective, or once this has become the mainstream guideline on art, we will easily forget our service target and their needs. After all, what is the best way to support the arts and to encourage creative enterprises?

To address these questions, I can think of a book by Amy Whitaker, an American scholar who researches on the relationship between arts and commercial management, entitled *Art Thinking: How to Carve Out Creative Space in a World of Schedules, Budgets and Bosses*. In this book, Whitaker differentiates commercial thinking from artistic thinking. While the former adopts a typical A to B process, the latter is a process of creating B. In other words, artistic work is a process of experimentation, or what some people might call a process from zero to one, as the outcome is often hard to predict. Moreover, no one could tell how B would be

like until it is created.

These different modes of thinking can help us understand different concerns that occur in the existing arts funding mechanism. Perhaps we will start to doubt the feasibility to arrive at a thorough arts project proposal, workflow chart and budget. Perhaps we will become more open-minded or adventurous in evaluating effectiveness. The core of creative work lies in exploring possibilities. If anyone can come up with a successful formula for it, then I suspect it must be cloned from somewhere, and there is no room for cloning activities in an artistic world.

Perhaps the management-oriented thinking on arts funding is too ingrained in many of us, but the calls from artists surely prompt us to reflect on the value of art: "Each artist has the same dream of going to his studio to create." We should not lose sight of the ways we can help artists achieve that.





Based in Beijing, Cheong works in academic research and enjoys listening to classical music. His publications include *An Oral History of the Concert Band in Macao*. He is the editor of *Macao Music Yearbook 2014* and *Macao Music Yearbook 2015*. He loves learning.

Cheong Sio Pang

— Out of Norms in Contemporary Art —

If you happen to be in Beijing now, you might visit “The New Normal: China, Art, and 2017”, an exhibition currently held at the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in 798 Art Zone until July 9. The exhibition presents works by 23 artists and groups from China and overseas, who uses art as a medium to explore the “state of exception” under the constant changes of the political environment and scrutiny. In contrast to “normal”, the “state of exception” illustrates how artists create artistic forms beyond the norms, a cornerstone of this exhibition. Undertaking a period of development in recent years, the 798 Art Zone has steered some artists away given its growing reputation and commercialisation. Amid this environment, there is an exhibition center still fully committed to the art, the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, which leaves me with a great impression. What makes contemporary art interesting is how the audience is captivated and drawn by the meanings behind the art pieces albeit their apparent lack of face value.

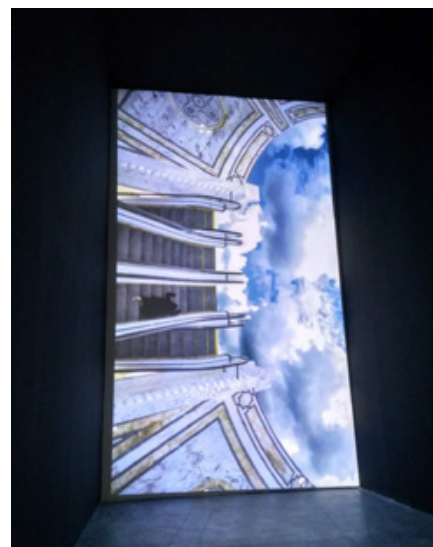
“Black Friday” by Sophia Al-Maria explores the evolving lifestyle and value of residents on the Persian Gulf under the stunning urban and economic development over the past few decades, as well as the challenges imposed upon the traditions and history of the region. The large-scale shopping malls serve as secular temples of capitalism for people in this era of consumerism. As a projected video of shopping malls and majestic churches, “Black Friday” demonstrates the evolution of human faith from the pursuit of religion in the past to materialism, when the greatest value of

mankind is embodied in pragmatism amid the marginalisation of idealism. While the video employs horror movie-style techniques to highlight its surrealistic ambience, the backward movement of bystanders on two escalators in the beginning and end of the work asks a question from the skeptic perspective of the artist: whether the advancement of capitalism represents the degeneration of humanity.

“Messiah - Fusion Dream of <J> <Z-772> <5>” of Gao Lei shows his thorough thoughts in regards to the contemporary political process. The liquid flow from a metal basin at the top right of the pavilion to a syringe as the exit via a high-pressure water gun symbolises the enormous pressures arising from the convergence of public opinions. This process, transforming understanding at large to the ultimate value, might disintegrate the water gun and syringe. In the vicinity of this installation, there is a metal box with five drawers, representing the system of five working days a week, which is encircled with barbed wires to underscore the restraints of human life. The drawers could not be opened due to the rules established by mankind, highlighting the plight and conflicts in life. Follow a corridor in front of the syringe, you will find a gold door that represents power. This set of installations amounts to the desires and threats of mankind, as well as the new power arising from the outbreak. In a contemporary context, this work foreshadows the huge changes in norms induced by the chaotic social values.

Contemporary art allows in-depth interpretations of the works, which make it

interesting and highly experimental, when artistic expressions serve as challenges to different aspects in real life in a manner similar to the relationship between a high wall and an egg that breaks against it. Reflecting the problems of real life, most contemporary art pieces object to the status quo with forward-looking visions, for example, the pieces in “The New Normal: China, Art, and 2017” unmistakably voice their contradiction to the real world. Yet, contemporary art, in the meanwhile, causes several problems like the inexplicability of artworks and the threshold of becoming artists. The high degree of freedom in creation also leads to the proliferation of arts. The solution to the problems is to permit credible art institutions to carry out capability assessments on artists and to select artworks, ensuring the public acceptance of high quality contemporary art pieces.



• “Black Friday” by Sophia Al-Maria