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香港藝術館  
HONG KONG MUSEUM OF ART  
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## People, Encounters, Stories – 50 years of the Hong Kong Museum of Art

Tang Hoi-chiu Translated by T H Lee

I was having a casual conversation with a close friend on the evening of 21 March 2013, and it suddenly came to my mind that I should make a visit to Mr. Laurence C.S. Tam again. For months his health condition had been going downhill. I went to the hospital immediately to see Laurence lying on the bed, weak and unable to speak. For a few days he had been sleeping deeply but I managed to see him awake when I arrived. His eyes were very gentle even though he could not express himself with words. I thought he recognised me. I chatted with Mrs. Tam for about 30 minutes. Before saying goodbye to Laurence, I told him that his book *Example of Understanding Hong Kong Art Through Culture* has been a bang and many friends were asking me for copies. I saw his lips moved, his eyes saying farewell and remembrance. We both knew then that would be the last time we met. I was informed on the following afternoon that Laurence had passed away.

Mr. Laurence C.S. Tam is one of my most respected people. Being the first Chief Curator of the Hong Kong Museum of Art (the HKMA), he is to me both a teacher and a friend. I joined the HKMA in 1977 while Laurence joined as the Assistant Curator in 1971. My thoughts swam through my memories to the time of “City Museum and Art Gallery”, City Hall, Hong Kong.

### Reflection of the sprouting green

The City Hall opened on 2 March 1962 as a new cultural landmark of Hong Kong. Its facilities included a concert hall, a theatre, a library and a museum. Combining history and art streams, the museum was called “City Museum and Art Gallery”. Actually in Hong Kong there used to be an old “City Hall” on 1 Queen’s Road Central, the point where the Bank of China Building and HSBC headquarter now stand. Its erection was advocated by a group of enthusiastic Hong Kong Club members (Plate 1). Inaugurated in 1869 by the Governor Sir Edinburgh, the Victorian-style building was designed by the French architect Hermitte, whose design was selected through

Plate 1 (left)  
The Old City Hall  
housed the Hong Kong’s  
first Museum

Plate 2 (right)  
Hong Kong City Hall  
High Block





an international competition. The then Government was responsible for the construction. She raised the capital needed through public donation and issuance of 100-dollar public bond. The old City Hall was comprised of a public museum, a theatre, a library and a conference room. It was an important cultural establishment and an activity centre for the foreigners and elites in the 19th century Hong Kong. The nature, function and collection of the museum back then differed vastly from a modern museum. Exhibitions and collections focused on historical artefacts, nature specimens and curio objects from local and abroad. Due to shortage of funding and rapid city-development, the old City Hall was partly demolished in 1933. HSBC built its new headquarters on that piece of land. Then in 1947, the remainder was also torn down for a new Bank of China building. After that, the museum collection could not be traced. To our knowledge, the only item left was the specimen of a tiger's head, killed by a British police officer in New Territories in the 1920s. It is now displayed in the Police Museum on the Peak. Our city loses an important part of its memory with the demolishing of the old City Hall and museum.

Since then, Hong Kong has not had any specific cultural establishment for three decades until 1950s when the government decided to plan for a building to serve the arts for her citizens. And it was the City Hall. When it was first opened, the topmost three floors were deployed as the City Museum and Art Gallery. Being an integrated museum, it hosted both historic and artistic exhibitions and collections (Plate 2). The first Curator was John Warner, British, who had been acquainted with important painters including Douglas Bland, Lu Shou-kun, Wucius Wong, etc before taking the role of Curator. Warner also taught elementary art courses at teachers' schools and the Extra-murals Department, The University of Hong Kong. It was demanding to be the first Curator, the worst challenge being the lack of museum collection. Warner had but one option, namely to hold temporary exhibitions. However, being a visionary curator, Warner was well aware that the mission of the City Museum and Art Gallery was to preserve, display and promote the art of Hong Kong, so it could substantiate its positioning of a museum for Hong Kong people. The first exhibition thus conceived by Warner was "Hong Kong Art Today" (Plate 3). Invited artists included Douglas Bland, Lu Shou-kun, Wucius Wong, Cheung Yee, among others. About 120 artworks were displayed, seven of which became the museum's collection in 1974. During the Warner era, a series of solo exhibitions were organised, including that of Lu Shou-kun's, Cheung Yee's, Kwong Yiu-ting's, and Douglas Bland's. "Hong Kong Art Today", held biennially, was the flagship exhibition of Hong Kong's art development. It set the mission and objective of the City Museum and eventually evolved into "Contemporary Hong Kong Art Biennial".

Building its own collection became a priority of the City Museum. The "Chater Collection" was started by Sir Paul Chater in 1924. While items in the Collection were later on donated to the Hong Kong Government, they only officiated as museum collection after much ado. Other early collections included the Wyndham Law & Geoffrey Sayer Collection and Sir Robert Ho Tung historical painting collections. Dubbed "historical pictures", they mainly were comprised of oil



Plate 3  
Publication for the same  
titled exhibition “Hong  
Kong Art Today”, 1962

or water colour paintings, and prints of the scenery and people's lives of Hong Kong, Macau, Guangzhou and other coastal cities of China. Their painters were expatriate artists in Hong Kong or Chinese artists selling their paintings to overseas customers for their amusement. These are rather unique collections and not many of them are represented in the museums in the world, hence the collection is an important documentation of the history and painting style of that time (Plate 4). Other collections included over 160 pieces of Chinese ceramics purchased from Mr. Yeung Chuen, a well-known Guangzhou collector, and the archaeological pieces from Fr. Maglioni, which have now become a Hong Kong Museum of History collection. Back then the City Museum sat under the Urban Council and was managed by the Urban Services Department. The Urban Council was granted financial autonomy at the same time. Its Museum Select Committee allocated funds to various museums and enjoyed a considerable level of flexibility. An Honorary Advisor system had been set up soon after the City Museum opened. Advisors gave advices on different aspects of the museums' services, such as collection and acquisition, exhibition and programming. At that time, policy stipulated that the City Museum's collection should have Hong Kong art at its core while extending to cover Lingnan culture and Chinese art. Collections should focus on artworks by Hong Kong artists, Guangdong calligraphy and paintings, Guangdong cultural objects, ceramics, crafts, as well as paintings and calligraphy, ceramics and crafts from various Chinese dynastic periods, and South East Asian artefacts reflecting influences of Guangdong and China as a whole. At that time, the large variety of Western artworks was considered pricey and too broad for collection. Instead, the Museum brought in loan exhibitions from abroad for the appreciation of the public.

Exhibition coverage was diverse during the Warner era of the City Museum and Art Gallery. It presented exhibitions from Japan, India, Austria, France, Germany, the UK and the US. The biennial children's art exhibition was also a much anticipated event. However, children's art exhibitions, alongside photo exhibitions, were infrequent after the museum had moved to a new location.



Plate 4  
Youqua (active 1840-1870) (attributed),  
*Victoria City*. 1845, oil  
on canvas, 57x100cm.  
Collection of the Hong  
Kong Museum of Art

A few of Warner's staff members are worth mentioning: David Lam Chun-fai was a Museum Assistant and a noted painter. He later emigrated to Canada. Last year an exhibition of his works was presented by the University Museum and Art Gallery, the University of Hong Kong. David passed away at the beginning of this year. Professor James Watt, an expert and scholar on Chinese art, was Warner's first Assistant Curator. He became a university professor after leaving the Museum and is now an international well-known expert and scholar on Chinese art. His writings are numerous and influential. Wucius Wong was appointed as Assistant Curator in 1967. A well-known designer and painter, Wong was one of the pioneers who introduced Western modern art to Hong Kong. He was responsible for programmes related to Hong Kong art, contemporary art, and curated exhibitions for the museum. He left in 1974 to work for The Hong Kong Polytechnic. Wong is still active and is widely respected as a senior Hong Kong master. The above few have contributed significantly to the City Museum and Art Gallery in its early days.

### Long strides forward, from a solid foundation

The City Museum and Art Gallery ran out of space three years after its opening. Based on study findings, the Museum and Art Gallery Select Committee under the Urban Council put up a Report on Museum and Art Gallery Service with Recommendation for their Development, recommending building a new museum of 85,000 square meters. The recommendation was declined. Multiple endeavours on museum expansion were made from 1965 to 1972 and no inroads could be made. It was not until 1975 when the historical and archaeological sections were moved to the Hong Kong Museum of History. From then the City Museum and Art Gallery was renamed to “Hong Kong Museum of Art”. Warner’s retirement in 1976 symbolised the completion of early days of the HKMA and the commencement of a new era.

Mr. Laurence C.S. Tam joined the City Museum and Art Gallery in 1971 as Assistant Curator and was promoted to Curator in 1976. He was an art teacher and a Chinese ink painter who has learnt from Lu Shoukun, the pioneer of Hong Kong’s “New Ink Painting Movement”. Laurence’s ink painting course offered at Wah Yan College, Kowloon inspired a group of creative students. Their class works reflected the emergence of new ink painting made in that period. Having been exhibited in many cities, these works are now under the collection of the Hong Kong Institute of Education. Laurence should be pleased to learn that his wish of having these works ended up with public institutions has been materialised.

Laurence ceased being an artist and devoted entirely to his job after joining the HKMA. Three years after his joining, the Urban Council started studies and proposals related to the need for a new museum, the construction work of which officially commenced in 1988. Hong Kong Museum of Art (the HKMA) was inaugurated adjacent to Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Tsim Sha Tsui, in 1991. Amounting to total area of some 20,000 sq. meters (Plate 5), it became a new cultural landmark with designated permanent galleries featuring her collections of Hong Kong art, Chinese antiquities and crafts, historical paintings, and Chinese painting and calligraphy. With the increase of donations and thematic exhibitions, the “Xubaizhai Gallery of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy” and “Chinese Antiquities Gallery II” were then set up. The first major exhibition to mark the inaugural of the HKMA was “Too French”. The position “Curator” was upgraded to “Chief Curator” in 1985 and Laurence was promoted to the first Chief Curator of the HKMA.

Plate 5  
The Hong Kong  
Museum of Art was  
re-provisioned to her  
present site on 15th  
November 1991



The HKMA saw progressive developments in areas of collection, curatorial professionalism and education under his leadership and established itself as a major visual arts museum in the region. Laurence's background as an ink painter made him aware that Hong Kong was an important city to drive new ink painting development. He hence strategically acquired works from new ink painters including Lu Shou-kun, Wucius Wong, Cheng Wai-kiwok, Irene Chou, Kan Tai-keung, Leung Kui-ting, among others. Together with works of established artists including Feng Kang-hou, Jian Jin-lun, Lee Byng, Wong Siu-ling, Luis Chan, Ng Po-wan, Van Lou, Cheung Yee, Hon Chi-fun, Kwong Yiu-ting being donated or purchased, Hong Kong art soon made up the core of the HKMA's collection. Starting 1975, "Contemporary Hong Kong Art Biennial" was formulated to a significant competition cum exhibition. Selected entries would be acquired as museum collection, thus documenting the development of Hong Kong art as well as nurturing budding artists (Plate 6).

Plates 6a/b  
"Contemporary Hong  
Kong Art 1975", 1975

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Plate 7 (left)  
Helicopters transporting  
the huge Henry Moore  
sculptures

Plate 8 (right)  
The Flagstaff House  
Museum of Tea Ware

Artworks reflecting Lingnan culture are also important collection items of the HKMA's. Considering the close cultural ties between Hong Kong and Guangdong. Since its early days, the HKMA has actively reached out to collect Guangdong calligraphy and paintings, Shiwan pottery wares and decorative arts, and works by important Lingnan School painters such as Ju Chao, Ju Lian and other early 20th century Lingnan School masters. The HKMA also presented retrospectives of the "Three Masters of the Lingnan School" including Gao Jian-fu, Gao Qi-feng and Chen Shu-ren, and second generation masters including Chao Shao-ong and Yang Shen-sum. These exhibitions also facilitated the acquisition of their representative masterpieces. Through purchasing from collectors, the HKMA added to its collections of Su Ren-shan and Su Lu-peng, representative painters of the mid-Qing Dynasty. In 1986, the HKMA presented an exhibition of unmatched scale in its history: "The Art of Henry Moore". The British Royal Air Force and Army Air Corps were mobilised in transporting the massive exhibits with helicopters from one side of the Victoria Harbour to the other. Crowds of the media and citizens witnessed the moment (Plate 7). Over time, the network built up with collectors over the years began to pay off. Lau Siu-lui, a late collector and owner of the Taiyilou Collection, donated over 1000 pieces of works of well-known modern painters in China, Guangdong and Hong Kong. The late medical doctor Ip Yee donated a collection of rare, world-class quality bamboo cravings dating back to the Ming and Qing Dynasty. Late Dr. K. S. Lo donated to the HKMA the Chinese teawares spanning many historic dynasties that he has spent his entire lifetime collecting. Only with this teaware collection could the old British Military Commander's Residence, a Grade 1 historical building, be refurbished as the "Flagstaff House Museum of Teaware" in 1984 (Plate 8). Famous collectors Woo Kam-chiu and Mrs. Kwok On enriched the HKMA's Shiwan pottery ware collection with their generous donations. An unprecedented encouraging donation was the "Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy" made by the late banker Low Chuck-tiew. Chinese paintings



and calligraphy in this prestigious collection spanned a historical period from around 420 A.D. to modern times, representing the mainstreams and various schools in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. This generous donation of a world-renowned collection elevated the quality of the HKMA's collection to an internationally recognised horizon.

Since the HKMA's opening exhibition "Too French", a close cultural collaborative relationship has been established with the Consulate General of France in Hong Kong and Macau. World-class visual arts exhibition were brought to Hong Kong under the annual "French May" umbrella and most of the blockbusters took place at the HKMA. The first of these was "Rodin Sculpture" in 1993, followed by major exhibitions of Marc Chagall, Zao Wou-ki and Venet Benet, "Masterpieces - The Origins of Modern Art in France", "The Golden Section - French Cubism", "Artists and Their Models - Masterpieces from the Centre Pompidou, Paris". These exhibitions broadened the visual art experience of Hong Kong people, so did the other retrospective exhibitions of local masters such as Feng Kang-hou and Cheung Yee. Another important contribution by Laurence was the establishment of Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre. As an art educator, Laurence was sympathetic with the strait artists faced when working space and facilities were inadequate. He had been lobbying to the Urban Council for a creative arts centre since he returned from Canada as a Master degree graduate in Museology in the 1970s. In the 1980s, a few barracks in the Hong Kong Park were relieved from military usage. Laurence thus proposed to refurbish the Cassels Block as an art centre. His endeavour finally paid off when the Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre opened on 28 April 1992. The Centre is equipped with exhibition hall, lecture theatre and professional studio facilities, available to artists for rental at very reasonable fees. Its opening proactively contributed to the nurturing of artists and art promotion. The Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre (Plate 9) is now part of the Art Promotion Office which has its focus on public and community art, no longer managed by the HKMA.



Plate 9  
Hong Kong Visual Arts  
Centre

In 1993 when Laurence retired, he has materialised his wishes of finding a new venue for the HKMA, establishing Flagstaff House Museum of Teaware and the Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre, and securing a solid foundation for museum collection and education programming. But he had never really retired – he continued to work on art promotion and education until the day his life ended.

### Revitalise the legacy and reach for higher skies

From 1993 to 2012, Mr Gerard C. C. Tsang, Dr. Christina K. L. Chu and I took over the rein, backed by Laurence’s establishments. Gerard is a professional arts administrator. He strengthened the HKMA’s collection of Chinese and Guangdong cultural relics. In 1995, the K. S. Lo Foundation donated a number of Chinese seal-carvings and fine ceramics. They were mostly dated from Ming to Qing Dynasty to the beginning of 20th century, but also included a very rare Ru Ware of the Song Dynasty. This donation triggered the building of a new wing of the Flagstaff House Museum of Teaware so that the items could be featured. A teahouse was also provided in the new wing for the promotion of Chinese tea culture. 1997 marked the reunion of Hong Kong with China and to celebrate this memorable moment, major blockbusters were presented at the HKMA. One was “National Treasures - Gems of China’s Cultural Relics”, jointly presented with the State Administration of Culture and Heritage. Precious relics were assembled from major museums all over China, among which the quantity of Grade 1 relics exceeded the amount that would normally be approved for overseas exhibitions. The scale of this exhibition was unprecedented. It also opened up future collaborations with the State Administration of Culture and Heritage, and prestigious Mainland museums (Plate 10). Another important exhibition was “Masterpieces of Western Oil Painting from the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum”. Showcasing representative works by major Western masters from the 17th to 19th centuries, the exhibition set a benchmark for classical Western painting exhibitions. Extending into 1998 was a collaboration with the British Museum, “Egyptian Treasures from the British Museum”. World-class relics, the mummies, were among the exhibits. It created a sensation among Hong Kong citizens and attracted over 300,000 visitors (Plate 11). These large-scale exhibitions expanded the audience base of the HKMA and raised its international image and status.

Plate 10 (left)  
“National Treasures  
– Gems of China’s  
Cultural Relics”, 1997



Plate 11 (right)  
“Egyptian Treasures  
from the British  
Museum”, 1998





Plates 12a/b  
“Twentieth Century  
Chinese Painting:  
Tradition and  
Innovation”, 1995

Dr. Christina K. L. Chu was appointed the Chief Curator when Gerard retired in 2000. Christina is an art historian specialising in Chinese painting and calligraphy. She is a student of the internationally renowned Professor Li Zhu-jin. Christina's vision and sensibility opened up new paths for the HKMA. Recruited as Assistant Curator in 1978, Christina curated “Twentieth Century Chinese Painting – Tradition and Innovation” in 1995. Three-day international symposium took place concurrently with the exhibition. The exhibition showcased works after 1900 by over a hundred painters in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and overseas, from Wu Changshuo's to Gu Wen-da's (Plate 12). Two concurrent exhibitions were “Homage to Tradition – Huang Binhong” and “Vision and Revision – Wu Guanzhong”. Together they formed the largest focused exhibition of modern Chinese painting ever presented by the HKMA. Over 1000 people attended the symposium and to house them, the venue had to be changed to the Grand Theatre of Hong Kong Cultural Centre. “Twentieth Century Chinese Painting – Tradition and Innovation” toured to Singapore Art Museum, British Museum and Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, MuseenKöln (Museum of East Asian Art, Museums of the city of Cologne), symbolising an impact the HKMA had on overseas counterparts. Christina and her assistant, Szeto Yuen-kit, have personally curated the afore-mentioned exhibitions. The relationship with Master Wu Guan-zhong was developed through his exhibition during this occasion, a friendship that brought subsequent donations.

Year 2000 was a year of re-structure for government museums in Hong Kong. The HKSAR Government decided to dissolve Urban Council and Regional Council and shifted the management of all government museums to the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD). This was also the year when the HKMA presented a number of exhibitions that attracted eyeballs. Christina clearly showed us her unmatched vision and will to innovate through her persistence in bringing to Hong Kong “Inside Out: New Chinese Art” curated by internationally renowned curator Gao Ming-lu. Avant-garde Chinese contemporary artworks were featured in this exhibition. Some of the controversial ones provoked adverse responses from the Chinese authorities when displayed overseas. While revealing the many facets of Chinese contemporary arts and their versatile directions under the influence of post-modernism, the exhibition

simultaneously triggered contemplation on contemporary arts and negative comments from some arts practitioners and members of the community (Plate 13). The exhibition regardless demonstrated the HKMA's drive for new attempts. The HKMA acquired some of the monumental exhibits upon closure of the exhibition, including *A Book from the Sky* by Xu Bing (Plate 14), *United Nation Series – China Monument: Temple of Heaven* by Gu Wen-da, and *Ink Banquet* by Wang Tian-de. They marked a new direction for the HKMA's collection. The challenging exhibition "Buddhist Sculptures: New Discoveries from Qingzhou, Shangdong Province" also fell under this period. Massive yet fragile exhibits had to be transported for long distance, while displaying them in the exhibition gallery required expertise conservation skills. It required the HKMA staff to meet high professional standards for this exhibition to take place. Back then, Ho Kam-chuen, Curator of Chinese Antiquities was the person-in-charge. Ho is an expert in Chinese antiquities and has been contributing much in enriching the HKMA's Chinese antiquities collection and curating exhibitions. Another exhibition that was worth mentioning was "Classical Italian Painting – Guercino and His School", a first-time co-presentation by the HKMA and the Consulate General of Italy in Hong Kong. Exhibits included the fine works of Italian classical oil-painting masters, the

Plates 13a/b/c/d  
"Inside Out: New  
Chinese Art", 2000



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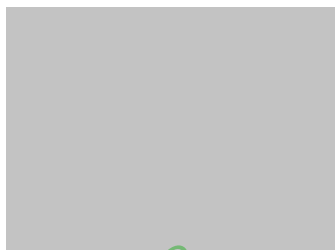


Plate 14  
Xu Bing (1955-), *A Book from the Sky*, 1987-1991, Mixed media, 1500x850x400cm. Collection of the Hong Kong Museum of Art

first of its kind featured in Hong Kong. Since “Vision and Revision – Wu Guanzhong” took place in 1995, the HKMA curators and this master of our times have developed a lasting friendship. Wu highly appreciated the sincerity and professionalism of the HKMA curators. In 2002, the two parties collaborated again for “Wu Guanzhong: A Retrospective”. Wu even agreed for the first time to conduct an open demonstration as he trusted the HKMA curators for their understanding of his art and their innovativeness and dedication to the planning of the exhibition. This trust even led to a subsequent, generous donation to the HKMA. While being the Chief Curator, Christina and the HKMA presented a number of solo exhibitions of Chinese ink painting masters including Li Ke-ran, Huang Yong-yu, Qi Bai-shi, and others, further assuring the HKMA’s continuous efforts in the promotion of Chinese ink painting.

2005 marked another highlight collaboration between the HKMA and Consulate General of France in Hong Kong and Macau: “Impressionism – Treasures from the National Collection of France” (Plate 15). Co-organising with the renowned Musee D’Orsay, Paris for the first time, exhibits included exquisite Impressionist masterpieces by Manet, Monet, Renoir, Degas, Cezanne, and others. As the first-time ever exhibition with such representative Impressionist paintings, the HKMA reached new record of visitors and gained invaluable experiences in management, exhibition installation, security and crowd control.

When Christina retired in 2006, I took over as Chief Curator and embarked on to another challenging and fast-changing period. An important cultural mega event to celebrate the 10th anniversary of reunion with China was the “The Pride of China – Masterpieces of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy of the Jin, Tang, Song and Yuan Dynasties from the Palace Museum” exhibition. The HKMA collaborated with the Palace Museum for the first time. For Grade 1 national treasures

to exhibit outside of China, challenges to areas including security, transport and conservation had to be overcome. On the list of proposed exhibits included the most important paintings and calligraphy of the various dynasties. The HKMA did not have high hopes of eventually having the most valuable loans approved but still strived for that. After many rounds of negotiation, the Palace Museum agreed to lend the HKMA a number of very precious national treasures, including *Letter to Bo Yuan* by Wang Xun of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, *Emperor Taizong Receiving the Tibetan Envoy* by Yan Li Ben of the Tang Dynasty, *Copy After Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Gathering* by Feng Chengsu of the Tang Dynasty, and *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* by Zhang Ze-duan of the Northern Song Dynasty, and many others by major masters from the Tang to the Yuan Dynasties. The curatorial team was overjoyed with such an outcome.

It was the first time ever that the State Council and the State Administration of Culture and Heritage agreed to have these precious masterpieces exhibited outside of the Mainland. The complexities of curatorial execution were also unmatched. The most stringent professional requirements related to humidity, temperature, pest control and ventilation had to be imposed to assure conservation and security for these ancient and fragile exhibits, which also could not be displayed for an excessive period of time. The team therefore had to, unprecedentedly, change over to a second batch of exhibits overnight. The military and the police in Beijing and Hong Kong were mobilised for escort of these exhibits but the choice between air or land transport posed a critical dilemma. It was subsequently agreed that shipment would be by airfreight and this was the first time that these national treasures got on the plane. The difference in political mechanism between Hong Kong and Beijing also posed many critical problems in terms of security, provision of insurance and related issues, and even the Chief Executive Officer's office had also to be involved. It was a nightmare that the formal agreement from the Beijing authorities could only be released at the moment right before the exhibits were freighted. A lot of critical considerations was also put into areas including ticketing, crowd control, scheduling of viewing sessions and crisis management after the exhibits arrived. Meticulous planning while being flexible were the criteria

Plate 15 (left)  
 “Impressionism:  
 Treasures from the  
 National Collection of  
 France”, 2005

Plate 16 (right)  
 “The Pride of China:  
 Masterpieces of  
 Chinese Painting and  
 Calligraphy of the Jin,  
 Tang, Song and Yuan”,  
 2007

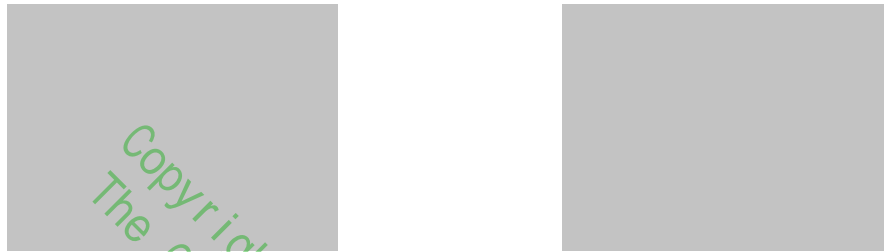


required to meet the audiences' expectation. The large room of the Hong Kong Art Gallery was utilised to display only one masterpiece – *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* by Zhang Zeduan of the Northern Song Dynasty to make sure there was enough space for the long queue of visitors lining up. Large reproductions of different sections of the scroll were blown up in details for display along the gallery walls with explanatory notes. Audience could therefore get the chance to learn more of the background, content and merit of this masterpiece patiently while they were waiting to see the original piece. The exhibition proved to be highly successful, a Chinese painting and calligraphy exhibition that set fresh curatorial perspective and practice, a token of the HKMA's achievement. It also started a long-term cooperation relationship between the HKMA and the Palace Museum (Plate 16).

Another exhibition to commemorate the 10th handover anniversary was “Treasures of the World's Cultures from the British Museum”. Exhibits included over 200 pieces of valuable relics from different cultures of the world of the British Museum's. This exhibition also posed challenges to conservation execution and display fabrication due to the varied historical periods, medium and physical conditions of the relics. Together these two exhibitions demonstrated the professionalism and team spirit of the HKMA staff members.

### **Embracing innovation with open-mindedness**

The HKMA understands that it should take up challenges with open-mindedness and flexibility so as to make progress, meet new audience expectations and build new partnership. Therefore, from 2008-2010, it launched “Hong Kong Art: Open Dialogue Exhibition Series”, comprising of four thematic exhibitions: “Digit@logue” curated by Ellen Pau, “New Ink Art – Innovation and Beyond” curated by Alice King, “Looking for Antonio Mak” curated by Valerie Doran, and “Charming Experience” curated by Grace Cheng (Plate 17). The key objective of these exhibitions was to develop a fresh partnership relationship with the guest curators who possessed different backgrounds, curatorial ideas and people network. It is anticipated that they would be introducing new curatorial concepts and sparking off creative interaction with the HKMA. “Digit@logue” by Ellen Pau explored the historical background, current state and future development of video and digital art in Hong Kong. King's “New Ink Art – Innovation and Beyond” showed us how ink painting has evolved since the New Ink Painting Movement, the current development and the new possibilities in the years to come. Doran started off with showing the art of Antonio Mak, an accomplished Hong Kong sculptor now being gradually forgotten. She tried to revisit the career path of an artist as an individual and trace the whereabouts of his artworks now. She also invited artists from Hong Kong and China to respond to Mak's artworks to make a dialogue. Cheng, as a specialist and artist to cater the needs of the disabilities and hospitalised, invited local artists to interact with the disabled and the general public through artistic creation and appreciation, hence initiating a two-way dialogue of art. These four curators created dialogue with the audience and their curated exhibitions won recognition not only from the public but also from fellow



Plates 17a/b  
Pamphlets from “Hong  
Kong Art: Open  
Dialogue” exhibition  
series

practitioners. The HKMA thus achieved the objectives to become a more progressive, transparent and open institution in collaborating with its partners as the series title suggested. Yet there was also scepticism on why the HKMA stepped back to a secondary role and allowed guest curators to take the lead. How could outsiders, unfamiliar with the government’s procedural mechanism could reach for a win-win collaboration with the HKMA? Discussions in the art and museum discipline was provoked and opinions varied. While benefiting from an image of open-mindedness, the HKMA also had a series of critical reviews on curatorial approaches and the mode of collaborative mechanism and partnership to this series of exhibitions and how or even whether such partnership scheme could be carried forward in the future.

The HKMA co-organised a controversial exhibition with Fondation Louis Vuitton Pour La Creation in 2009, namely “Louis Vuitton: A Passion for Creation” (Plate 18). The Fondation is a visionary non-profit making organisation with a fine collection by contemporary artists. Being a “French May” spotlight programme, the exhibition invited much attention and controversy even before its opening. Many associated the Fondation with the international leather goods brand Louis Vuitton even though it is a non-commercial entity. Some said that the exhibition was a result of political pressure. Coupled with the fact that a number of featured artists had designed commercial products for Louis Vuitton, including Takashi Murakami, Marc Jacobs and Richard





Prince, the exhibition was accused of serving commercial interest as a promotional tool for a luxury brand. The HKMA daringly accepted the proposal by Louis Vuitton who commissioned Richard Prince to produce *Hong Kong After Dark*, a large-scale marquis which covered up the entire exterior wall of the museum building and turned it into an iconic art piece. On one hand this projected Tsim Sha Tsui a fresh artistic landmark and changed the conventional outlook of the HKMA. On the other hand some thought that the HKMA was “snowed under” commercial interest to an extent that even its logo disappeared (Plate 19). In fact the HKMA curatorial team was well aware of the sensitivity related to the balance of commercial and artistic implications at the early planning stage of the exhibition. I personally would not agree to ruling out possibilities of collaboration with organisations of different nature as long as artistic consideration remained the prime concern. I also was of the view that collaborating with a non-profit foundation, even if it was associated with a commercial brand, would show us new possibilities. Agreement was reached between the HKMA and the Foundation that no exhibits should be a commercial product or for the purpose of commercial promotion. The antique Louis Vuitton cases displayed were regarded as historical artefacts instead of branded products. The HKMA suggested to Louis Vuitton to introduce local touch to the exhibition by commissioning new works that were in dialogue with the masters’ works. Louis Vuitton agreed and commissioned new works from young Hong Kong artists including Tsang Kin-wah, Lee Kit and Leung Chi-wo and others. Their works successfully exposed Hong Kong art on an international horizon.

There were uncountable discussions and arguments from the art practitioners, the media and different sectors of the community during the course of the exhibition. Some saw this as a daring and open approach of the HKMA to present an avant-garde exhibition and welcomed a new “cultural landscape” as the museum building turned into an artwork. Some thought that the HKMA had lost its integrity through this “commercial invasion”. Some art practitioners rallied at the opening of the exhibition, accusing the exhibition as collusion between the government and a commercial brand so that public money could be deployed for commercial purposes. Rallies

Plate 18 (left)  
“Louis Vuitton: A  
Passion for Creation”,  
2009

Plate 19 (right)  
Richard Prince, *Hong  
Kong After Dark*, 2009,  
Hong Kong Museum of  
Art



Plate 20  
 “Ink vs Ink” exhibition  
 in Shanghai, 2010

continued throughout the exhibition. Facebook users suggested boycotting the exhibition and demanded conversation with the HKMA. The exhibition soon drew attention of the entire society, including LegCo members, and there were intensive debates on the contradiction and balance between art and commerce, deployment of public vs commercial resources, the positioning and role of public museums, the HKMA's vision, programming mechanism, management and future directions. All these questions were worth review and might facilitate different sectors of the community to explore and re-consider what should the artistic and curatorial direction of a public museum be in the contemporary era.

Hong Kong saw closer cultural cooperation with Mainland after handover while the recognition of Hong Kong art had yet to be deepened. The HKMA pursued its mission to bring Hong Kong's art to China for promotion. In 2008, the Ministry of Culture presented the first “Hong Kong and Macau Arts Festival”. The HKMA collaborated with the China Millennium Monument Beijing World Art Museum for the presentation of the exhibition “Made in Hong Kong”. Works from young Hong Kong artists were exhibited to showcase the identities and latest trend of Hong Kong art, opening up opportunities for Mainland audience to understand their works and the Hong Kong art scene. During Shanghai Expo 2010, “Legacy and Creations – Ink Art vs Ink Art” and “Legacy and Creations – Art vs Art” were held respectively at Shanghai Art Museum and Shanghai Museum of Contemporary Art (Plate 20). The former exhibition restated Hong Kong as the cradle of new ink painting where one saw the evolvement of traditional ink painting to diversified, multi-media contemporary ink art. The latter explored the identity and distinctiveness of Hong Kong's art in other media evolved from its specific historical perspective, cultural context and social environment. It was a great challenge for HKMA to materialise two large-scale exhibitions within

a short span of four months. Critical issues to handle included sourcing available venue partners and financial and human resources, developing fresh curatorial concepts and sourcing exhibits, resolving different formalities and mechanism in the Mainland and Hong Kong, and crafting effective promotional strategies. The HKMA strived to build partnerships, reduce costs and be flexible in arranging publicity and promotion. A seminar for Hong Kong and Shanghai artists was organised to coincide “Legacy and Creations – Art vs Art”. The exhibition also offered as a highlight event for the visit of the members who attended the AGM of the International Council of Museums. These two exhibitions and programmes have marked an important step raising the awareness of Hong Kong art in China, and internationally. The network built in 2010 also led to the HKMA’s first participation in the “7th International Ink Painting Biennial of Shenzhen – Hong Kong Ink Art”, strengthening the positioning of Hong Kong ink painting in the realm of contemporary ink art.

### **Paying back the society, generosity bearing fruits**

The HKMA could not have built up a reputable collection solely with its own resources. It relied much on the donations from collectors, artists and individuals. The museum is most grateful to the donations it has received over the past five decades. Important donations included the Chinese tea-wares, ceramics and seal-carvings of various dynasties from the late Dr. K. S. Lo, which triggered the establishment of Flagstaff House Museum of Teaware (Plate 21). The late Mr. Low Chuck-tiew donated to the HKMA a collection of Chinese paintings and calligraphy from around 420 A.D. to 20th century, enabling the HKMA to become one of the leading collectors of Chinese paintings and calligraphy. The collection is selectively featured in a permanent exhibition gallery, the “Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy”. Woo Kam-chiu’s and Mrs. Kwok On’s donation made up the HKMA’s representative Shiwan pottery wares and figurines collection.



Plate 21  
Dr. K. S. Lo (1910 - 1995)



Plate 22  
 Demonstration of on-site sketching on the podium of the Museum by artist Wu Guanzhong, 2002

The HKMA benefited from Brian S. McElney and the late medical doctor Yip Yee's donation for its world-renowned bamboo carving collection, which made the museum's collection of Chinese bamboo carvings world-class. Also enriching the museum collection is a significant donation of a batch of "New Literati Painting" from Ms Linda Chang and over 1000 pieces of modern Chinese painting and calligraphy from the late Lau Siu-lui. Considerable donations have also been made by established Hong Kong artists including Hon Chi-fun, Wucius Wong, Liu Guosong, Johnson Chow, and late artists Ng Po-wan, Wong Siu-ling, Lee Byng, Sun Xingge, Lau Ping-heng, Ho Chat-yuen, and Lin Jentong, generously given by their family members. Many of these donors have been advisors to the HKMA or long-year friends with the HKMA's curators. Their support to the HKMA revealed their generosity and kind thoughts. "The Friends of the HKMA" was an entity with a membership scheme set up over 20 years ago when the HKMA moved to the current premises. Our "friends" have been most supportive to donations and sponsorships for exhibition, seminars, education programmes, coach service, etc. The Chairmen, Trustees and ExCo members all are enthusiastic art lovers. After all, a touching donation was made by Master Wu Guanzhong (Plate 22). Wu was highly appreciative of the curatorship of his exhibitions "Vision and Revision: Wu Guanzhong" (1995) and "Wu Guanzhong: A Retrospective" (2002). To Wu, the HKMA curatorial team fully understood his creative mind, integrity and artistic excellence, even more than those in Mainland. He therefore donated his masterpieces such as *Two Swallows* and *Former Residence of Qiu Jin* and others to the HKMA after the 2002 exhibition. By 2010, Wu found himself at a late life stage and decided to donate 33 of his works, his padding blanket and painting tools to the HKMA. I had a chance to visit Wu in his down-to-earth Beijing home with Szeto Yuen-kit, our Xubaizhai curator, to look at the paintings and had a video-shooting of the master. After returning to Hong Kong, the museum presented "Lofty Integrity: Donation of Works by Wu Guanzhong"



(2010) as a token of our gratitude. Soon after that Wu passed away but he did not forget us even when he was seriously ill. He donated his final three works to the HKMA, enabling the museum's collection of his works one of the finest in the world (Plate 23). To pay homage to the master, the HKMA lent part of the collection to Zhejiang Art Museum for the exhibition "East Meets West: Wu Guanzhong's Art Retrospective" to pay homage to the master. The friendship between Wu and the HKMA is a noble example of how the museum's sincerity, sincere curatorship and dedication win the heart of the artist, and this intimate friendship benefits the society and future generations. On the other hand, many docents are also friends and supporters of the HKMA and have been there since the opening of the new premises. They strived to strengthen their knowledge so as to pass on quality guidance to museum visitors. They offered invaluable service to enhance the artistic appreciation of our audience.



Plate 23  
Wu Guan-zhong (1919  
– 2010), *Two Swallows*,  
1981, Ink and colour on  
paper, 68.5x137.4cm.  
Collection of the Hong  
Kong Museum of Art

### Remembering the bygone, looking forward to the future

The HKMA celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2012. It has been moved to its current location for over 20 years. Now it is high time the vision, mission and facilities of the HKMA to be revisited. In 2010, Home Affairs Bureau appointed three Museum Advisory Panels to advise on how art, history and science museums could improve their services and facilities, such as prepare annual reports and 5-year business plans, and other related issues. It is well observed that Many of the HKMA's facilities are already aging after twenty years' intense usage and it is seriously in lack of exhibition and storage space. Permanent exhibition galleries often have to be used to stage temporary exhibitions as well, and thus defeated the museum's mission to feature her collections, in particular Hong Kong art. Provision of more exhibition spaces are therefore of top priority. Also

the museum's coffee shop and bookshop have fell behind visitors' expectations. The outlook of the HKMA shares the uniformity of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre but does not stand out as an iconic cultural landmark at the harbour front. The foyer and grand staircase design should be reviewed so higher visibility and accessibility could be achieved. All in all, the HKMA needs an image upgrade that aptly reflects its position as the leading visual arts museum in the region.

History is a mirror that reveals to us the path to making progress. The old city hall was demolished in 1930 and a replacement one was not built until 1962, which only proved to provide insufficient space three years after its opening. However only until 1991 could the HKMA move to a new location so that it could further develop its collection and services. Gradually being forgotten is the plan for a "Hong Kong Museum of Contemporary Art" that was discussed in the 1990s. In almost every major city of the world there exists a contemporary art museum alongside traditional museums, for the purpose of reflecting progressive visions that keep pace with changing times. The initial plan for the museum of contemporary art had been discussed and supported in principle by the then Museums Select Committee. However, with the 1997 handover, governmental restructure, and dissolution of the two municipal Urban Council and Regional Council, LCSD took over the management of all public museums. Many plans, including the setting up of a contemporary art museum, were shelved after that.

By mid-2000s, the HKMA found it pressing to have its facilities upgraded. After many rounds of discussion with museum Expert Advisors, members of the art community and stake holders, as well as the Friends of HKMA, the renovation plan fell into place in 2011. Major scope of works include removing the grand staircase, re-installing the entrance lobby, provision of additional glass features to uplift its outlook, relocating the bookshop and coffee shop on 1/F to respectively on G/F and 1/F balcony to provide signature catering and souvenir sale service, building a new exhibition gallery on 1/F podium while refurbish the 1/F grand lobby to a multi-functional hall that can host exhibitions, receptions, functions, performances, banquets and seminars. Additional exhibition-related storage area on 1/F and new exhibition galleries on 1/F and rooftop would also be built. The new rooftop gallery would be fitted with glazed structures with outdoor public space for visitors to contemplate the beautiful Victoria Harbour. The entire outer wall and the neighbouring MTR ventilation facilities would also be uplifted with aesthetic appeal. Together with the opening of Art Square at Salisbury Garden in 2014, a space for large-scale outdoor art exhibition and performance, all the above upgrade works will highly enhance the HKMA's visibility, accessibility, and connectivity with nearby tourist spots and commercial areas. It will then be refreshed as an iconic artistic landmark along the waterfront of Tsim Sha Tsui, a physical presence that is compatible with its positioning and vision. The HKMA will be the next milestone for shaping Hong Kong as a cultural hub and a world class city. As the Chief Curator who is now taking over these important projects, I sincerely hope that they could be materialised on time and that we do not allow history to repeat itself.

## Never forgets people and encounters, memories linger on

From 1962 to 2012, the HKMA has been here for 50 years while I have been with the HKMA for 35 years. I have literally grown with the HKMA and witnessed people changes over the years. People is what makes my job meaningful and memorable because they leave footprints not only on my career, but on my personal life as well. Let me take this opportunity to share my memories of respectable people and their stories.

Laurence C. S. Tam was my first superior at the HKMA. He was a kind and dedicated Chief Curator. He was an outstanding student of master ink painter Lu Shou-kun and had been an art teacher at Wah Yan College for many years. He was highly respected by his many students. He devoted his attention entirely to the management and administration work of the HKMA after joining. As the first Chief Curator, Laurence was meticulous and never complaint of his heavy workload. When the HKMA was located at City Hall still, a regular scene was a pitch dark building with lights coming through only from the topmost floor on which Laurence's office was. He might be proof-reading, or writing, or handling paper work, alone. Back then, due to its location, one had to pass through Laurence's office whether entering or leaving that floor. We tried not to be seen when we walked pass his door because he would ask us to go into his office to talk about work or share his experience, for an hour or two. He was a perfectionist and his seriousness about proof-reading was a good example of that. As sub-ordinates we were worried that he asked us to work overtime and thought he was being overly critical. Only by looking now I come to realise how he had played a role model with his dedication. He showed us what we could possibly gain when you put your heart into it. It is sadly natural for a Chief Curator to be criticised or even attacked no matter how hard one tries. Laurence, however, was a very kind person. He followed his own standard of justification and swallowed those negative comments without complaining. I learnt a lot from that attitude. After retirement, Laurence migrated to Canada but returned to Hong Kong later on as he could not forget the city. Even at an old age he was tireless with arts research and education. By the invitation of the Education Bureau, he started writing his book *Example of Understanding Hong Kong Art Through Culture* a year ago. This arts education book was intended to help local art teachers understand Hong Kong arts from the perspective of Chinese culture and inject such learning into the curriculum to inspire students. After the writing started, Laurence was diagnosed with cancer but he put forward his best self to complete it. He had been hospitalised by the time when the book was published but he insisted to be personally present at the launch event. He made a touching speech at the event to bid farewell to his friends in the field, and expressed his last hopes for the future. It was a hunch of mine to visit him in the hospital on the evening before he passed away. He could no longer speak but he eyes showed lingering and gratitude to a long-term colleague. Laurence passed away in March 2013. We will always remember his personality and his contribution to Hong Kong's arts field (Plate 24).



## Plate 24

Mr. Laurence Tam at  
the day of the Grand  
Opening of the Hong  
Kong Museum of Art

Donators are good friends and supporters of the HKMA's. There are a few among the many donators with whom I am better acquainted with and I cherish our relationship. Low Chuck-tiew (Jun Liang) was the owner of Xubaizhai. He owned a rich collection of Chinese paintings and calligraphy by representative masters from around 420 A.D. to 20th century. He was a Chiuchow native. As he was the manager of Four Seas Bank, he leveraged the safe storage of the bank for his painting collection. He frequently invited the museum's curators to look at and discuss about his collection at the bank. He was a prudent handler of paintings. He had such delicate hands unrolling and rolling the scrolls that we almost had to hold our breath when watching. He once had a car accident when crossing the harbour tunnel. He was thrown out of the car and was seriously injured. At the moment of life and death, what he hanged on to were *Album of Landscapes and Flowers* by Wang Hui Yun and Shou-ping of Qing Dynasty, and another masterpiece in his collection. How he had loved his art collection! He transferred his collection to his home at Yau Yat Chuen after retirement and his interest moved gradually on to Chinese ceramics. I was often invited to his home to appreciate his new collection. I learnt a lot through our conversation. The museums in Singapore and Shanghai had tried to acquire Low's collection but he decided to have the Xubaizai Collection donated to the HKMA in 1992. To Low, the friendship with the HKMA curators built over decades gave him trust and confidence. We can therefore inherited this prestigious world-class collection for sharing with Hong Kong people (Plates 25, 26).

Lau Siu-lui, owner of Taiyilou, is another donor worth mentioning. He ran a painting and calligraphy mounting business and had therefore built close relationship with painters and calligraphers and started his collection of their works. His collection fell under several uniform mounting formats including vertically-hung scrolls or *doufang* frame size mounted sheets. His son Lau Luen is also in mounting and curios business and we have been acquainted for many years.



Lau Luen was supportive of his father's will of donating to the HKMA and tried his best to make that happen. Both father and son had been so generous and selfless that they bestowed us this valuable donation.

Medical doctor Ip Yee, also known as “Fengloujuren”, was a collector of multiple interest. Besides collecting Chinese calligraphy and paintings, ceramics and crafts, rhinoceros horns and bamboo carvings, he was also a keen appreciator of music and ballet. Dr. Ip's collection of rhinoceros horns and bamboo carvings were well-renowned. Soon after I had joined the HKMA, I assisted Mr. Laurence Tam and Dr. Ip to research and organise two large-scale “Chinese Bamboo Carving” exhibitions. I had to work many overnights with them together during the preparation to organise research materials and to select the exhibits. It was an amazing experience to touch the bamboo pieces. We managed to present two large-scale exhibitions, consolidated sources information and exhibits of bamboo carvings from different dynasties in various collections for documentation and research purposes. Subsequently two major catalogues were published, first-time ever for specialised publications on bamboo carvings. Dr. Ip left us at an early age of mid-forties. He mandated in his will that his collection of Chinese bamboo carvings would be donated entirely to the HKMA, fulfilling a wonderful way to complete the friendship (Plate 27).

Other memorable collectors included Shiwan pottery figurines donator Woo Kam-chiu. Wu started “Wai Lee Man”, an traditional style cake shop with long history in Wanchai. Being low-key and humorous, he claimed that he would have known nothing about Shiwan pottery without the advice from Ho Ping-chung, a Shiwan pottery master and expert advisor of the HKMA. Ho introduced the HKMA to Woo and convinced Woo to make the donation . He even wrote a long

Plate 25 (left)  
Bronze statue erected at  
the Xubaizhai Gallery  
of Chinese Painting  
and Calligraphy, second  
floor of the Museum of  
Art

Plate 26 (right)  
The Xubaizhai Gallery

article for the donation and exhibition catalogue. The two gentlemen together made the HKMA a museum with recognisable Shiwán pottery figurines collection (Plate 28). Dr. K. S. Lo was the founder of a well-known Hong Kong beverage, “Vitasoy”. His collection focused on Chinese paintings and calligraphy, ceramics, crafts, tea ware and seal-carvings of different dynasties. Just like his vision with Vitasoy, he believed that art collection should be shared with the community at low or no cost. He therefore donated his collection so the HKMA could set up the Flagstaff House Museum of Teaware at the historical building “Flagstaff House - Former Residence of the Commander of British Forces in Hong Kong”.

Plate 27 (left)  
*Brushpot Carved with Ladies in Landscape in Openwork*, 17th Century, 13.7x10.5 (dm) cm, donated by Dr. Ip Yee

Plate 28 (right)  
*Wang Zhaojun Marrying a Tribal Ruler*, 19/20 century, Chen Wei-yan (Late Qing – ca. 1926), ceramics, Shiwán ware, 30.7cm, donated by Mr. Woo Kam-chiu



It takes friendship for a museum to be charged with warmth and human touch, including friendship with artists with whom the HKMA curators deal with on a daily basis. Established woman painter Fang Shao-ling once lost her will to paint as she aged. The HKMA made a solo exhibition proposal to Fang, an idea which the HKMA has in mind for many years. This proposal brought back her strong will and motivated her to paint again, leaving with us many of her representative works. Tong King-sum was a physically impaired sculptor. He overcame his limitations with his will power and had made many vigorous and large size wooden sculptures. There was a period when I was deployed to work at the Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre and had met Tong many times in the studio. We had very good conversations and I was deeply moved by his strong mind and passion for arts. We frequently saw a photographer with heavy-duty equipment at exhibitions and art events over the years. He was Ha Bik-chuen, an artist himself by





Plate 29  
Ha Bik-chuen with his  
sculpture *Music Bamboo*,  
1985.

self-learn (Plate 29). He lived on the top floor of an old building at To Kwa Wan, a building with no lift. His art was inspired by his life experience or the founded objects at the streets in old districts. He excelled in print-making and sculptures. By making use of the various objects he picked up, his art had a touch of humour and passion. He turned to Chinese ink painting at his later stage. Ha was almost present at all exhibitions for photo-taking. Before he passed away I visited him at his place. I was panting climbing up all those stairs, and I could imagine how demanding it had been for Ha to carry his heavy-duty photographic equipment up and down the stairs everyday. The physical hardship showed his persistence and strong mind. His home was stuffed with photo albums, exhibition catalogues, print-making blocks and art materials, which were records of not just Ha's personal art history but that of Hong Kong's. These materials should be well taken care of and archived for research after he passed away.

Artists' personality varies as much as their artistic pursuit, their achievement and contribution to the arts scene. Wucius Wong who has dedicated his entire career to Chinese ink painting is daring with his talks on the subject. Liu Kuo-sung had, every minute on his mind, promotion of modern Chinese ink painting. Late Master Yang Shen-sum had a child-like heart and always friendly. Sun Xing-ge pursues self-cultivation without caring too much about what others said of him. Johnson Chow is truly a literati painter with a lofty spirit. Kan Tai-keung is forever creative and endeavours to assimilate art and design to create innovative styles. Frog King Kwok Meng-ho is carefree and possesses humour. While I cannot exhaust my list of acquaintances and friends, these artists have left important footprints on the history of Hong Kong's art development.

The HKMA has grown through encounter with people, true stories, passion and commitments. It is not a building just with history and embedded knowledge. It is a consolidation of artists' creativity and dedication. It witnesses the changes of times and inspires the future generation to innovate and evolve. The HKMA has been through half a century and is at a point of time

to breakthrough its existing mindset, management and value judgment to become more open-minded and embracive as it steps into the new century. With the kick-off of the major renovation, the leadership of Eve Tam Mei-yee, new Chief Curator, and the enrolment of fresh blood into its working team, I am confident that the next 50 years of the HKMA will be promisingly proactive. It will become the museum for the people of Hong Kong.

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