

West Kowloon Cultural District

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The development plan of West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) was officially approved by the HKSAR Executive Council in January 2013. By end June, West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCD Authority) made a decision on the building form and design plan of M+. The building of Xiqu Centre has been scheduled to commence in September. With the kicking-off of various construction works, WKCD Authority announced a series of income-generation and cost-saving initiatives to tackle the problem of over-budgeted construction cost. Meanwhile, M+ presented art events of diversified nature with the objective of enhancing the community's knowledge of the Museum through participation.

Information:

- Local newspaper. For details of newspaper coverage please see Chinese version.
- West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCD Authority) website
<http://www.wkcd.hk>, <http://www.westkowloon.hk/en>
- Press releases of the Information Services Department, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)

2013/01

• On January 15

The WKCD Authority Board announced new appointments: Tsai Wing-chung Philip as the chairman of the Audit Committee, Kung Lin-cheng Leo as the chairman of the Investment Committee. The Board also appointed five co-opted members from the fields of business, information and technology, and architecture. The term of appointment is one year from January to the end of December 2013.¹

2013/03

• On March 5

The WKCD Authority Board appointed Leong Chi-yan John as the new Chairman of the Consultation Panel, taking over from Cheung Yan-leung Stephen. The Board also re-appointed existing members to the Panel, except for Victor Lo, for a period of one year from 1 March 2013 to 28 February 2014.²

• On March 20

Ma Fung-kuok, Legislative Council (LegCo) member for the "Sports, Performing Arts, Culture and Publication" Functional Constituency, inquired about the progress of WKCD in a LegCo meeting. Tsang Tak-shing, Secretary for Home Affairs, responded in the meeting that the actual plot ratio of WKCD was higher than 1.8 times while the planning intention of the District was geared towards low-density development. The WKCD development plan had been approved by the Chief Executive and the Executive Council in January 2013. Tsang believed that the implementation schedule of WKCD plan would be impacted should large-scale amendment were to be made at this stage.

In response to the concern for the rise in cost, Tsang pointed out that once the first batch of design and construction schedule had been

confirmed, the WKCD would be able to make realistic cost estimation and decide if additional funding would be required. Tsang said that the WKCD Project Management Team was committed to monitoring the sustainable deployment of WKCD's financial resources, and the progress and quality of construction works.³

2013/04

• On April 11

WKCD announced that "Mobile M+: Inflation!" would take place at WKCD Park from April 25 to June 9, 2013. Tam Wai-ping from Hong Kong and Cao Fei from China have been commissioned to create new artworks.⁴

• On April 20

M+ and Hong Kong Arts Development Council (ADC) announced that a series of talks and sharing sessions would be held in support of the "55th Venice Biennale" opening on June 1, 2013, and "You (you)" by Lee Kit, Hong Kong's representative to the Biennale.⁵

2013/05

• On May 4

Leung Po-shan Anthony, art critic, expressed in her article in *Ming Pao Daily* that LegCo members had limited knowledge about contemporary arts and lacked trust in the operation of art museums. Leung said that "(museum) without its collection is just an empty shell. It's an arts center, or it's a landmark." She quoted overseas examples to demonstrate how the value of international art museums rested with their collections. While some LegCo members complained that there are not enough local people in the WKCD team, Leung felt that contemporary arts was one aspect of globalization and local candidates should not enjoy appointment priority. Leung was concerned about how M+, due to open in 2017, could achieve a balance between the expectations of the local art and political circles.⁶

• On May 6

The WKCD Board appointed Clifford Chiu and Chua Sue-wan as new co-opted members of the Investment Committee. Their terms are from 22 April till 31 December 2013.⁷

2013/06

• On June 4

The Consultation Panel of the WKCD held its 10th meeting. Agenda items included:

- Revised Guidelines for the Consultation Panel of the WKCD
- Naming of Yiqi Centre
- Temporary Uses of the West Kowloon Cultural District Site⁸

• On June 9

Tai Kung Pao reported that five grantees had been selected for the "Overseas Research Program for leaders in Performing Arts" project, co-organized by WKCD and ADC. They would participate in overseas exchange programs to explore management and development opportunities for future WKCD venues. Yu Kwok-lit Louis, Executive Director (Performing Arts), told *Tai Kung Pao* that "arts

development needs more than the provision of space and venues. More important is the training of personnel and accumulation of experience.” Leaders of performing art groups as grantees were required to submit written reports of their study experience and recommendations.⁹

Also on June 9, WKCD announced the closure of “Mobile M+: Inflation!”. Over 150,000 visitors to the exhibition have been recorded over the course of 6-weeks.¹⁰

- On June 11

Both *Oriental Daily* and *Tai Kung Pao* covered the meeting held by the “Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project.”¹¹ The Subcommittee invited over forty artists and representatives from art groups to the meeting, to discuss how WKCD and local arts practitioners could collaborate. Representatives of performing art groups expressed their opinions at the meeting. Some criticized that the WKCD had not sufficiently consulted different parties. The Park in WKCD was going to be designed by an renowned international architect but that might result in a lack of local cultural representation. Those presented at the meeting expected the design of the Park to be led by the local community.

LegCo members and representatives from performing art groups requested WKCD to strengthen the training of local talents. Michael Lynch, Chief Executive of WKCD, responded to the request by saying that the Authority highly valued local talents. 90% of the employees were Hong Kong locals. Overseas professionals would be hired when deemed necessary. Lynch did not respond to the LegCo members’ inquiries on the issue of over-budget. WKCD said that financial status and arrangements would be reported to the LegCo in the coming month.

- On June 12

Since the lump-sum amount of \$21.6 billion dollars had been approved in 2008 for the development of WKCD, construction cost has increased by about 60% over the past five years and WKCD is encountering a serious budget problem. According to *Sing Tao Daily*, the HKSAR Government had informed WKCD that no further funding would be allocated while it would take up the cost required for developing underground facilities, amounting to a few billion dollars. WKCD is planning to simplify the outlooks of the venues in order to lower construction cost. Venue design competitions have also been cancelled by the Development Committee of WKCD so that consultation fees could be spared.

Lam Siu-lo Andrew, member of the Development Committee, said that the allocated funding has not been deployed as the construction work of WKCD had not started. Xiqu Center, M+ and the Park, the three major architecture of Phase One, are only at their design stage and are yet to move on to the bidding stage.¹²

- On June 28

WKCD announced in a press conference that two renowned architecture firms, Herzog & de Meuron + TFP Farrells, had been commissioned to design M+, the visual arts museum, scheduled to be completed in 2017.¹³

To tackle the problem of increasing construction cost, WKCD launched the following guidelines for development:

1. To strictly control the cost of each facility and keep it closest possible to its original estimation
2. To focus on the contents instead of the outlook of the facilities
3. To complete the Park and certain cultural facilities as soon as possible for the public to make use of

The Authority has started investigating the feasibility of finding private funding for the development of large-scale performing arts and exhibition venues. The opinions of the stakeholders, market demand and private investors will be taken into consideration on review of

the future development directions of the facilities. Alternative funding sources, such as charity donations and partial naming rights, will be aggressively explored. In the meantime, the Authority is looking into relaxing the plot ratio and height limitation so that the total surface area of the buildings could be increased. It is believed to be a way to fully utilize the development potential of WKCD.

- On June 29

The design of M+ by Herzog & de Meuron (Switzerland) and TFP Farrells (Hong Kong) will require \$4.9 billion dollars to build and its outlook will be in inverted T-shape.¹⁴

2013/07

- On July 3

Carrie Lam, Board Chairman of WKCD, was present at LegCo meeting to present the financial situation of WKCD to the Panel on Home Affairs, and the “Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project”.¹⁵

- On July 4

The *Hong Kong Economic Times* reported that since its establishment in 2008, WKCD has spent at least \$287 million dollars on research and consultation. According to the documents submitted to the LegCo by the government, the majority of the consultation expenses until March (of 2013) had been spent on the research for three conceptual plans. The amount was \$137 million dollars. The research fee for the selected conceptual plan alone cost HK\$78 million dollars.¹⁶

Carrie Lam said that there were no plans to seek additional funding sources for WKCD before 2017. WKCD would have to aggressively introduce measures to find new income sources and reduce spending in order to resolve the over-budget problem. Examples of such measures included application for relaxing the plot ratio, which would supply an additional 70,000 to 100,000 square meters of surface area for residential purpose, or hotels.

According to *The Standard*, certain LegCo member(s) objected to the idea of income generation through land sales made available by relaxing the plot ratio.¹⁷

- On July 15

WKCD announced that Doryun Chong has been appointed as Chief Curator of M+, his appointment to commence in September. Since 2009, Chong has been the Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. He had also held different curatorial positions in the Visual Arts department at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis between 2003 and 2009.¹⁸

- On July 16

Doryun Chong, the newly appointed Chief Curator of M+, was interviewed by the *South China Morning Post*. The Korean Chong said that he was not going to be influenced by political pressure. To him, a museum is a location to trigger contemplation and to consolidate varied opinions, and to allow room for thoughts conventionally regarded as “dangerous.” He believed that arts did not serve only visual pleasure. The audiences’ consciousness changed as they experienced art.¹⁹

- On July 24

WKCD submitted the environment assessment report on the WKCD’s 1,400 meters of underground road network. According to the Report, the underground roads were required to materialize the design criteria of “connectivity” and “accessibility”.²⁰

2013/08

- On August 3

Tai Kung Pao featured Herzog & de Meuron, the appointed architect firm for M+, and the selected design concept. The architect Ascan Mergenthaler said that the “inverted T” design “created a sense of ascendance before the eyes of the viewers.” The main exhibition galleries would be located on the ground floor while the vertical building would be deployed for public education purpose.²¹

- On August 14

Sing Tao Daily reported that for the purpose of cost control, WKCD would reduce the scale of Xiqu Center, the construction work of which was scheduled to commence next month. Two of the floors, amounting to 1/3 of the surface area allocated for commercial usage, would not be built. Over \$100 million dollars of building cost would thus be saved.²²

2013/09

- On September 14

According to an environment assessment report, the two underground MTR lines (West Rail and Tung Chung lines) running pass WKCD were going to generate noise pollution. The sound vibration might disrupt the audiences’ attention. WKCD said that noise reduction measures have been factored in the buildings’ design. MTR Corporation had explained its track enhancement plans to WKCD. It was going to apply sound-proofing materials to the covers of the tracks.²³

- On September 24

Xiqu Center, the first major performance venue of WKCD, broke ground today. Xiqu Center is a seven-storey building located at the junction of Canton Road and Austin Road West, scheduled to be completed in 2016.²⁴

- On September 27

WKCD announced the details of the design competition for the “Arts Pavilion” in the WKCD, and launched an open invitation to register for participating in the single-stage design competition. The WKCD was looking for a design “that is cost-effective, original, inspiring, highly-buildable and sustainable.”²⁵

- On September 30

Two local newspapers jointly interviewed Michael Lynch, Chief Executive of WKCD, who talked about the District’s budget issue and development plans. Lynch hoped that temporary performance venues such as the Modular Theatre and the Black Box Theatre could be completed by the end of 2014 so that arts audiences could be attracted as soon as possible.²⁶

2013/10

- On October 1

Ma Fung-kwok, member of the WKCD Board, felt that the density of development was low at WKCD. He supported the idea of relaxing the plot ratio to maximize land use. More culture facilities could thus be built and more people traffic attracted. Land sales revenue could also be increased and contribute to the development cost.²⁷

- On October 3

WKCD announced the event line-up between Autumn 2013 to Spring 2014, including “Freespace Fest”, “West Kowloon Bamboo Theatre”, and “Building M+: The Museum and Architecture Collection” exhibition. The debut online exhibition “Mobile M+: The Neon Project” will be launched by M+ in investigation of the role of neon signs in Hong Kong’s cultural development.²⁸

- On October 4

Yu Kwok-lit Louis, Performing Arts Executive Director of WKCD, told the *Hong Kong Daily News* that the Xiqu Center, of which construction work has started, would cost 100% more to build than the estimated \$1.3 billion dollars. To resolve the over-budget problem, WKCD will seek additional government funding and solicit donation and sponsorship. No further details are available yet.²⁹

- On October 8

It was reported in the *South China Morning Post* that Ma Weizhong, the eldest daughter of the Taiwan President Ma Yingjeou, would soon take up the position of ink art curator of M+. A WKCD spokesperson said that Ma would be working on a part-time basis.³⁰

- On October 25

WKCD presented its first outdoor, free art festival last year, titled “Freespace Fest.” It attracted over 20,000 visitors. The Authority decided that “Freespace Fest” would take place again on December 14 and 15 at the West Kowloon Waterfront Promenade.³¹

2013/11

- On November 1

The Consultation Panel of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority held its 11th meeting to discuss the “Use and Management of the Park.”³²

- On November 18

WKCD announced in a press release that “Freespace Fest 2013” (the Festival) would take place on December 14 and 15 at the West Kowloon Waterfront Promenade. The site was going to be 25% larger (than that of last year’s). Ten art practitioners together curated the Festival. Over 400 local and overseas performing groups would present art activities of various forms, including music, dance, literature, media arts, parkour, workshops, talks and open-call programs.³³

A number of local newspapers reported the details of the Festival on the following day.³⁴

2013/12

- On December 4

In a WKCD press release, it was announced that “Building M+: The Museum and Architecture Collection”, the fifth in the “Mobile M+ exhibition” series, would open on January 10, 2014 at ArtisTree, TaiKoo Place, Hong Kong. The exhibition would showcase the first batch of the M+ architecture collection, M+ design, and development of Hong Kong’s architecture art.³⁵

A number of local newspapers reported the details of the exhibition on the following day.³⁶

- On December 16

Sing Tao Daily reported that “Freespace Fest 2013” closed on a windy and rainy day. Over 30,000 visitors were recorded at the two-day event. A number of performing art events had to be cancelled or put on hold due to the poor weather.³⁷

• On December 29

Samson Wong, art and culture critic, wrote in *Ming Pao*. From a cultural study perspective, he commented on the ideology expressed through “Freespace Fest 2013.”³⁸

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- ² “Appointment of Consultation Panel Members under the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority”, WKCD press release, March 5, 2013. <http://www.westkowloon.hk/en/newsroom/news/appointment-of-consultation-panel-members-under-the-west-kowloon-cultural-district-authority>
- ³ “LCQ3: Development of West Kowloon Cultural District”, HKSAR press release, March 20, 2013
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- ⁵ “M+ and HKADC Launch Public Program accompanying ‘You (you)’, Major solo exhibition by Lee Kit Collateral Event of the 55th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia”, WKCD press release, April 20, 2013. <http://www.westkowloon.hk/en/newsroom/news/m-and-hkadc-launch-public-program-accompanying-you-you-major-solo-exhibition-by-lee-kit-collateral-event-of-the-55th-international-art-exhibition-la-biennale-di-venezia>
- ⁶ News coverage, *Ming Pao Daily*, May 4, 2013
- ⁷ “New Appointment to Investment Committee of West Kowloon Cultural District Authority”, WKCD press release, May 6, 2013. <http://www.westkowloon.hk/en/newsroom/news/new-appointment-to-investment-committee-of-west-kowloon-cultural-district-authority/news-type/press-release/page/32>
- ⁸ The 10th Meeting of the Consultation Panel of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, WKCD website, May 31, 2013. <http://www.westkowloon.hk/en/the-authority/meetings/the-10th-meeting-of-the-consultation-panel-of-the-west-kowloon-cultural-district-authority>
- ⁹ News coverage, *Tai Kung Pao* A15, June 9, 2013
- ¹⁰ “150,000 visit Mobile M+: Inflation! The 4th M+ nomadic exhibition ends successfully with fan-fare” WKCD press release, May 31, 2013. <http://www.westkowloon.hk/en/newsroom/news/150000-visit-mobile-m-inflation-the-4th-m-nomadic-exhibition-ends-successfully-with-fan-fare/news-type/press-release/page/29>
- ¹¹ News coverage, *Oriental Daily* A31, June 11, 2013
News coverage, *Tai Kung Pao* A15, June 11, 2013
- ¹² News coverage, *Sing Tao Daily* A02, June 12, 2013
- ¹³ “M+ Building Design Team Appointed as WKCD Charts the Way Forward for Arts Hub”, WKCD press release, June 28, 2013. <http://www.westkowloon.hk/en/newsroom/news/m-building-design-team-appointed-as-wkcd-charts-the-way-forward-for-arts-hub/news-type/press-release/page/28>

- ¹⁴ News coverage, *Headline News* P02, June 29, 2013
- ¹⁵ “LCQ21: West Kowloon Cultural District”, HKSAR press release, July 3, 2013
- ¹⁶ News coverage, *Hong Kong Economic Times* A25, July 4, 2013
- ¹⁷ “Cultural hub may cost billions more”, *The Standard* P08, July 4, 2014
- ¹⁸ “Renowned Asian Curator to Join WKCD – Mr Doryun Chong appointed Chief Curator for M+”, WKCD press release, July 15, 2013. <http://www.westkowloon.hk/en/newsroom/news/renowned-asian-curator-to-join-wkcd-mr-doryun-chong-appointed-chief-curator-for-m/news-type/press-release/page/27>
- ¹⁹ “M+ curator to be ‘politically incorrect’”, *South China Morning Post* CITY3, July 16, 2013
- ²⁰ News coverage, *The Sun* A14, July 24, 2013
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- ²⁹ News coverage, *Hong Kong Daily News* A12, October 14, 2013
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- ³² “The 11th Meeting of the Consultation Panel of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority”, WKCD Consultation Panel meeting (open items), October 30, 2013. <http://www.westkowloon.hk/en/the-authority/meetings/the-11th-meeting-of-the-consultation-panel-of-the-west-kowloon-cultural-district-authority>

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- ³⁴ News coverage, *Tai Kung Pao* A27, November 19, 2013
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 News coverage, *Apple Daily* A17, November 19, 2013
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