

# 2016 Nomination of Representatives of Art Interests for the HKADC

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The 2016 Nomination of Representative of Art Interest for Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) was held in November, 2016. The nomination exercise has been taking place since 1997 and was organized every three years (every two years before 2001). The last one (i.e. 2013) started to attract more attention from art practitioners and media. A registration system reform is introduced in 2016, requiring all eligible arts organizations to re-register and the voter criteria were tightened. The total number of registered voters (including individual and group voters) was 5864, lowest since 2007, though the number of registered individual voters increased from 989 in the last nomination exercise to 2254 this year. Some voters expressed that they had not received voting notice and candidate information even in the polling week. Suspicious seeding votes were reported by the media. Six representatives of art interests, including that of “Visual Arts,” were contested. Candidates within the same art interest demonstrated sharp difference upon political stand. The results were announced on November 29 and the voter turnout rate increased by eight per cent compared with that of last time. Between the two contestants Chan Kam-shing and Lam Man-kong, Chan was elected as the Representative of Visual Arts group, serving a new term from January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2019.

## Information:

- Local newspapers and online news portal. For details of newspaper coverage please see Chinese version.
- Press releases of the Information Services Department, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)
- Official website of Nomination Exercise: <https://www.voteforhkadc2016.hk/tc/index.php>

## March, 2016

### On March 29

The Council of the HKADC comprises of twenty-seven Members, fourteen of which are directly appointed by the Chief Executive and three are government representatives. The remaining ten are elected through a nomination exercise in accordance with the “Art Interests” they represent, namely Arts Administration, Arts Criticism, Arts Education, Chinese Opera (Xiqu), Dance, Drama, Film Arts, Literature Arts, Music and Visual Arts. HKADC was established in 1995 and is funded by the Home Affairs Bureau. Its annual funding ranged from 100 million to 120 million between 2012 and 2016. Members’ responsibilities include deciding on grant allocations to different art groups or art programs as well as initiating and implementing art policies.<sup>1</sup>

The Home Affairs Bureau appointed Instinctif Partners (Hong Kong) Limited as the 2016 Nomination Exercise agent. The application period for registration of art organization and individual art practitioner (Phase 1) was from March 29 to May 27. All eligible art organization, including those participated in the 2013 Nomination Exercise, were required to re-register, otherwise they would lose the eligibility to take part in the 2016 Nomination Exercise.<sup>2</sup>

1 News coverage, *Ming Pao Daily* D04, August 12, 2016  
News coverage, *Ming Pao Daily* A10, October 23, 2016

2 Official website of Nomination Exercise: [https://www.voteforhkadc2016.hk/tc/exercise\\_details.php](https://www.voteforhkadc2016.hk/tc/exercise_details.php)

## August, 2016

- **On August 12**

Phase 2 of the Nomination Exercise is from August 12 to September 15, during which art organizations put forward their eligible members and employees as voters as long as: 1) the members have joined the art organization for more than one year, or 2) the employees have been directly involved in art creation, direction or performance in the organization for more than one year or are full-time employees of the organization responsible for co-ordination or promotion of art events or stage management in the organization for more than one year (not including employees involved in general administration, finance, human resources and other technical support duties in the organization). The above eligible individuals must apply through their respective organizations with a signed voter registration form bearing his/her personal correspondence address. According to the official website of the Nomination Exercise, for Nomination Exercises in 2019 and after, in addition to the existing eligibility criteria, members of arts organizations must have joined the organization concerned for three consecutive years before the organization can register them as voters.<sup>3</sup>

## September, 2016

- **On September 15**

Voter registration was closed on September 15. The number of registered voters for this year is 5864, lowest since 2007. The number of registered individual art workers was 2254, a sharp increase compared with the number in 2013 (989), yet the number of voters registered through art organizations was substantially reduced from 7523 to 3610. The proportion ratio of individual voters to organization voters changed from 1:9 to 6:4.

Ng Mei-kwan, then chairlady of the Literature Arts group in HKADC, believed that the change in voter distribution was related to the registration system reform. Before the reform, the criteria for organization voters was loose. A citizen can be regarded as an organization member by merely enrolling to an interest classes, and subsequently becoming an eligible voter; art groups can register on behalf of all their members using the same organization address and members need not sign on the registration forms. Ng said that the “Working Group on the evaluation of the Nomination of Representatives of Art Interests exercise,” set up on her suggestion during her term, reviewed the unequal requirement of qualifications for individual and organization voters. Art organizations were asked to re-register this year and the organization voters have to sign the form themselves so as to ensure that the voters were active members of the field.<sup>4</sup>

## October, 2016

- **On October 7**

The candidate nomination period is from October 7 to 21.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Official website of Nomination Exercise: [https://www.voteforhkadc2016.hk/tc/exercise\\_details.php](https://www.voteforhkadc2016.hk/tc/exercise_details.php)

<sup>4</sup> News coverage, *Stand News*, October 7, 2016. <https://www.thestandnews.com/art/藝發局選戰-選民人數九年新低-委員-改革成功-選舉更公平/>, accessed July 10, 2017

<sup>5</sup> Nominations Exercise website information: [https://www.voteforhkadc2016.hk/tc/exercise\\_details.php](https://www.voteforhkadc2016.hk/tc/exercise_details.php)

- **On October 23**

The then HKADC Member (Visual Arts) Chan Kam-shing said the members had no real power: “they can only advise. Only if one really niggles will the Council take solid actions.” Chan felt that he had realized some changes in the past term which led to his decision to run for a second term, for instance he successfully demanded the review of nomination exercise and the evaluation of performance review mechanism of some art interest areas. As an election strategy, Chan affiliated with musician Chow Pok-yin, writer Chan Wai and drama educationist and director Lee Chun-leung. Chan believed that under the current system where every voter vote for Representatives from all ten groups, it was beneficial to both candidates and voters for the candidates to form affiliations among Art Interests: “The vision of the Members should not be constrained by his/her own art interest. Election campaign that connects candidates across different art fields encourages a voting orientation that considers the development of culture as a whole. I want to consolidate power from various areas and initiate more discussion on cultural policies in LegCo or District Council.”<sup>6</sup>

- **On October 26**

The Home Affairs Bureau announced that a total of seventeen candidates had been validly nominated. Candidates in the arts interests of Arts Criticism, Arts Education, Film Arts and Chinese Opera (Xiqu) are returned uncontested in this Nomination Exercise. Eligible voters may vote to return the Representatives for the other six arts interests, i.e. Arts Administration, Dance, Drama, Literary Arts, Music and Visual Arts for the Chief Executive’s consideration of appointment as members of the HKADC for the next term. Two candidates, Chan Kam-shing and Lam Man-kong will compete for the position of Representative of the Visual Arts group.<sup>7</sup>

## November, 2016

- **On November 5**

Nomination Exercise agent Instinctif Partners (Hong Kong) Limited held a candidate forum on the afternoon of November 5. The session of Visual Arts lasted from 2:40 to 3:10 pm, consisting of (1) presentation of candidate platforms; (2) candidates answering questions from the floor; and (3) debate among the candidates of the respective arts interests.<sup>8</sup>

The platform of Chan Kam-shing was as follows:

- Maintain constant communication with art practitioners to increase their awareness and understanding of the HKADC’s decision-making process
- Establish regular communication mechanisms with LegCo Members to enhance their knowledge of the development of local arts and culture so as to formulate policies that are conducive to the local ecology of arts and culture
- Strengthen communication with District Councils and explore private resources
- Support the archiving of Hong Kong arts development and encourage the writing, research and analysis of local art history

<sup>6</sup> News coverage, *Ming Pao Daily* A10, October 23, 2016

<sup>7</sup> “ADC-seven Seventeen valid nominations received for HKADC Nomination Exercise,” the Hong Kong government press release, October 26, 2016. <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201610/26/P2016102600559>.

<sup>8</sup> “Candidate forum for HKADC Nomination Exercise this Saturday,” the Hong Kong government press release, November 4, 2016. <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201611/04/P2016110400300>.

- Concern the overall environment of local arts and culture, including criticism, promotion, publicity and administration and conduct comprehensive study to improve the network of art production
- Actively promote local art; create more opportunities for Hong Kong art workers to travel abroad to exchange, conduct field trip, undertake research, initiate projects and present exhibitions
- Concern about the local spatial problems of art creation and the plight of studios in factory buildings
- Advocate for the government to relax the use of existing idle property and to identify more arts space in a bottom-up way
- Strive to relax the voter criteria of LegCo “Sports, Performing Arts, Culture and Publication” Functional Constituency with reference to that of the HKADC Representative nomination exercise and to increase the proportion of individual voters<sup>9</sup>

The platform of Lam Man-kong was as follows:

Forever revamp the situation of “layman leadership” of Hong Kong art field. Attract more and more truly outstanding professionals to join the leadership team. Promote, support, and develop high-quality culture.

First, I have been engaged in art creation for fifty years and have lived in France for twenty years. I am a professional painter and writer, experienced in both creation and practice. I have held personal exhibitions at home and abroad for fifteen times and participated in joint exhibitions for over 100 times. I have published two personal monographs and fourteen albums of paintings. I am willing to work with you to create a better future for Hong Kong.

Second, I firmly support the Revitalization of Industrial Buildings project of the Hong Kong government. We have to tackle the fire safety problem. We cannot shy away from the problem because we had encountered obstacles. Hong Kong artists have no space to engage in art creation. To provide the majority of Hong Kong artists a working space is a necessity. The Government should consider giving some concessions to local artists. Set up a real culture and art zone for the survival and development of local artists. Otherwise, how possible could Hong Kong become the “Asian Cultural and Art Center”?

Third, cherish the hard earned money of Hong Kong taxpayers. Share resources. Reasonably allocate resources so as to meet the academic and professional standard.

Four, I propose that Hong Kong should hold a larger “Hong Kong Art Biennale.” (In accordance with the strategic development of the Hong Kong West Kowloon Cultural District, set up museum of oil painting and museum of ink painting, etc.) Use the resources for Hong Kong people in a meaningful way to raise the overall standard of the arts and culture in Hong Kong. Nurture local art talents in a practical way. Stop participating in the vague and illusory “Venice Biennale.” The participation wastes taxpayer money and fosters no artist – it reached limited audience and praised high-minded ideals; very few people are interested in it while we are to follow the preference of the organizer. Hong Kong needs the kind of art that is close to the public and capable of resonating with the vast majority. It is not desirable to lose the confidence and pride of one’s national culture, nor to run behind fashionable trend.

Five, establish the “Hong Kong Academy of Fine Arts” or the “Hong Kong Arts and Culture Institute” so that Hong Kong culture and arts will be more academic, professional and authoritative.<sup>10</sup>

9 Candidates Information: Chan Kam-shing, from Official website of Nomination Exercise: [https://www.voteforhkadc2016.hk/tc/doc/15\\_VA\\_%E9%99%B3%E9%8C%A6%E6%88%90%20%28final%29.pdf](https://www.voteforhkadc2016.hk/tc/doc/15_VA_%E9%99%B3%E9%8C%A6%E6%88%90%20%28final%29.pdf), accessed July 10, 2017

10 Candidates Information: Lam Man-kong, from official website of Nomination Exercise: [https://www.voteforhkadc2016.hk/tc/doc/16\\_VA\\_%E6%9E%97%E6%B0%91%E5%89%9B%20%28final%29.pdf](https://www.voteforhkadc2016.hk/tc/doc/16_VA_%E6%9E%97%E6%B0%91%E5%89%9B%20%28final%29.pdf), accessed July 10, 2017

During the forum, Chan Kam-shing reported his achievements in the past two and a half years with the HKADC: he actively participated in various working groups in addition to the visual arts group he represented; he believed in the importance of cross-disciplinary links. Lam Man-kong stressed dialogue with the government and the use of public resources in support of Hong Kong artists' creations instead of exhibiting or purchasing works of foreign artists. The two candidates also debated on topics of the factory building revitalization, the current art ecology of Hong Kong and the support to local artists.<sup>11</sup>

The session of "Literature Arts" in the candidate forum was the focus of media attention: the candidate Wu Yongtong (pen name Heng Hong), President of Hong Kong Poet Union, presented his election platform in Mandarin and he criticized his opponent Chan Wai's (Chan Wai-ye) participation in Occupy Central, rendering her unqualified as the leader of the field. Chan Wai responded that her goal to run for the nomination exercise was to serve the literature field.<sup>12</sup>

- **On November 22**

Candidate of music group Chow Pok-yin revealed to the *Apple Daily* that he and his teammates, Lee Chun-leung from Drama group and Chan Kam-shing from Visual Arts, found out that in the voter contact information CD provided by the Nomination Exercise agent Instinctif Partners (Hong Kong) Limited, there were only 2196 voters' mailing addresses or e-mails, accounting for merely 37% of the total voters. Chow's campaign team suspected that there was a loophole in the voter registration system and some voters had been classified as "unwilling to receive candidate information" without their knowledge. Clarisse Yeung Suet-ying, a member of Chow's team and "Hong Kong Cultural Monitor" Chairperson speculated that the contact information would only be available when the newly registered voters indicated their willingness to receive materials from the candidates. Voters registered in the previous exercises had not been allowed the option to refuse contact.<sup>13</sup>

- **On November 24**

The Association of Chinese Culture of Hong Kong (ACCHK) (the then Chief Executive of HKSAR Leung Chun-ying as its founding president, Gao Jingde as its current president) and its sixty affiliated associations combined, held 449 votes or 7.7% of the total votes, same as that of the previous Nomination Exercise. According to information available on the Internet, a certain number of ACCHK-affiliated organizations which had close to no record of artistic activities were on the list of registered arts organizations. Those organizations included "Band Friend Music Association," "Flying String Orchestra," "Hong Kong New Age Orchestra," "The Hong Kong Academic Research Centre on Yu Da Fu" and "Yingfair Production Company." ACCHK and its affiliated groups, namely "Chinese Culture Hong Kong Aixin Arts Center," "Hong Kong Arts Culture Exchange & Promote Association," and the "Cultural Association of Hong Kong" were registered under the same office address (37th floor of Cosco Tower in Central). Reporter of the *Apple Daily* visited the site and saw only "The Association of Chinese Culture of Hong Kong" on the building directory. A staff member of the Association said that visitors should make prior appointments in order to meet the person-in-charge, but he refused to disclose the inquiry method. He also claimed that he knew nothing about the other groups. "The International Calligraphy Educationist Association" and "She Po Calligraphy Association of Hong Kong" (also affiliated association of ACCHK) were registered using the same village house address at Wang Tai Shan, Pat Heung, Yuen Long. The Instinctif Partners (Hong Kong) Limited and the Home Affairs Bureau said they

<sup>11</sup> Candidate forum fragments, from official website of Nomination Exercise: [//www.voteforhkadc2016.hk/tc/candidate.php](http://www.voteforhkadc2016.hk/tc/candidate.php), accessed July 12, 2017

<sup>12</sup> News coverage, *Ming Pao Daily* A08, November 6, 2016

<sup>13</sup> News coverage, *Apple Daily* A06, November 22, 2016

verified the qualification according to the information and activities documents submitted by the art organizations, such as association regulations, annual reports, members' communications, posters, event brochures, etc. and the addresses provided by the organizations were mainly used for correspondence. "The registration system allows the employees and active members of art organization to become voters, which would have broadened the voter base. However, the low transparency of the electoral roll rendered the candidates impossible to trace the organization affiliation of individual voters. The roll may give itself up to the pro-establishment party to mobilize voters to vote for its preferred candidate," said Chow Pok-yin.<sup>14</sup>

Voters complained that they had not yet received the candidate's information and the poll notice even in the polling week. Senior lecturer of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Chan Yin-ha told the *Stand News* that by November 21 she still had not received the relevant information and was afraid of being deprived of voting right, so she called the agent to inquire her eligibility. The agent promised to send a written notice again, but she still was waiting for the letter till November 24 (only three days away from the polling day). The Home Affairs Bureau responded to media inquiries, saying that the agent had sent written notice to all successfully registered voters to confirm their voter status and polling day arrangement. 2196 newly registered voters agreed to be contacted by the candidates and provided their personal information, while 2357 did not agree to the disclosure. Among the individual art workers registered before 2016, about 1300 "did not make it clear to the Bureau whether they agreed to disclose their personal information or not." The Bureau iterated that the names of voters are recorded on the electoral rolls and stored in the office for browsing in accordance with the provisions of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance. They "begged for candidates' pardon" that they cannot provide voter contact methods. Yeung Suet-ying Clarisse expressed that "voters can choose not to provide any contact method to the candidates" contradicts common sense and she deemed the practice of checking electoral roll absurd. Yeung expressed worries that "ghost voters" may influence the election results.<sup>15</sup>

- **On November 27**

According to the HKADC's 2016 electoral roll, at least seventy-six votes were held by fifteen neighborhood cultural and recreational organizations. Yeung Suet-ying Clarisse told the *Stand News* that most of the cultural and recreational organizations are amateur art groups, with activities funding from the District Council. In her view, neighborhood cultural and recreational organizations have wide access to resources, yet the support for full-time artists is limited. As an institution promoting the development of arts in Hong Kong, HKADC should focus on subsidizing professional artists. She suggested that the LegCo and the District Councils should set up a communication platform with HKADC to ensure appropriate use of resources for the promotion of the arts.<sup>16</sup>

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14 News coverage, *Apple Daily* A10, November 24, 2016

15 News coverage, *Stand News*, November 24, 2016. <https://thestandnews.com/politics/藝發局選戰-投票日在即-選民投訴仍未收通知-楊雪盈斥民政局監管不力/>, accessed July 10, 2017

16 News coverage, *Stand News*, November 27, 2016. <https://thestandnews.com/art/藝發局選戰-街坊組織都有票-楊雪盈-藝發局應集中專業發展/>, accessed July 10, 2017

- **On November 28**

A total of 2456 voters casted their votes in the exercise on the nomination of representatives of arts interests for the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) during the two days of polling which ended at 10pm, November 28. The voter turnout rate was 41.9 per cent.<sup>17</sup>

- **On November 29**

The Home Affairs Bureau announced winning candidates. Chan Kam-shing was elected the representative of Visual Arts group at 1542 votes. The list of nominated representatives will be submitted to the Chief Executive for consideration of appointment to the HKADC for the next term commencing January 1, 2017.<sup>18</sup>

At least eight of the newly nominated representatives are considered “open-minded reformists.” Art critic Kuh Fei commented that even if these reformists became Members, he foresaw little substantial change in the future of HKADC, though the result may help to improve the Council’s public image. He also said that HKADC had long followed the same subsidizing principles to the extent that it is called by some as a “distribution machine.” It was unlikely to alter its funding model. What is possible is administrative reforms which may help push for the simplification of application procedures.<sup>19</sup> Cultural practitioner Wong Ying-kay Ada said that reform will only be possible if the elected members could give some thoughts to how to make a difference even at the minority position. HKADC has placed its focus on increasing performance venues, yet a number of artists were losing their studios due to industrial building land use regulations. Wong urged the newly elected HKADC Members to spare their efforts on following up of this “urgent” issue.<sup>20</sup>

17 “Hong Kong Arts Development Council nomination exercise voting figures,” HKSAR press release, November 28, 2016. <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201611/28/P2016112800784.htm>

18 “Hong Kong Arts Development Council nomination exercise 2016 polling results,” HKSAR press release, November 29, 2016. <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201611/29/P2016112801115.htm>

19 News coverage, *Apple Daily* A04, November 30, 2016

20 News coverage, *Ming Pao Daily* A03, November 30, 2016