

## West Kowloon Cultural District

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After years of continuous consultation and planning, the Town Planning Board announced the development blueprint of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) in 2013, officially signifying the commencement of the construction stage of WKCD. Despite facing financial pressure, the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA) held a design competition in 2012 for M+ (scheduled to open in 2017), appointed Mainland Chinese academic Pi Li as Senior Curator for Chinese contemporary art, and began their acquisition process.

Information:

- Local newspaper. For details of newspaper coverage please see Chinese version.
- WKCDA Website  
<http://www.wkcda.hk>
- Press releases of the Information Services Department, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)

### 2012/01

#### • On 19 January

Clara and Gum from “C&G Apartment” noted in *Wen Wei Po* that “for visual artists in Hong Kong who are desperately in need of exhibition spaces, affording rental fees are more effortful and time-consuming than creating an artwork. Although WKCD brings about hope to some, its development is too lengthy.” C&G Apartment was disappointed with the planning and development process of WKCD. “WKCDA’s resources should not be limited within the District; it should explore the possibilities of working with other communities and do more.”<sup>1</sup>

#### • On 20 January

Danish Culture Minister Uffe Elbak met with WKCDA’s CEO Michael Lynch during his visit to Hong Kong. During an interview, Elbak stated “if WKCD were to be constructed in Denmark, I would invite artists to converse with other organisations, including commercial ones, in a serious manner. The interesting thing is, businessmen want to speak with artists because artists represent ‘value’ and artists want to speak with businessmen because of resources. When we put it this way, everyone would find it meaningful and beneficial. I would establish strategic relations with different organisations if I were an artist.”<sup>2</sup>

### 2012/02

#### • On 8 February

The HKSAR Government issued a press release and announced that Chief Executive candidate Leung Chun-ying was a member of the Jury for the “West Kowloon Reclamation Concept Plan Competition” (the Competition) under his position as the Convener

of the Executive Council in March 2001. The Jury received 161 concept plan proposals in September 2001, which were delivered anonymously to members of the Jury in January 2002. To ensure an open and fair adjudication process, WKCD required members of the Jury to submit a Declaration of Interest. The press release confirmed that on 25 February, 2002, Leung Chun-ying declared that, to the best of his knowledge, none of his immediate family members or employees and no one who had an employment-type contract or close professional association or partnership with him had entered the Competition, and that he was not a director or major shareholder of any company. On 26 February, the Jury assessed the entries and selected the first prize winner, second prize winner and three honourable mentions by casting votes. Leung Chun-ying took part in the adjudication process (including voting). After the voting process had been completed, it came to the notice of the Competition team that a project team member of an entrant on the preliminary list of winning entries appeared to be associated with Leung Chun-ying. On 28 February, before the announcement of the Competition results, the Competition team informed Leung Chun-ying of the above finding. Leung Chun-ying reported the matter to the Jury that morning, and the Jury decided to disqualify the entry concerned in accordance with the conditions of the Competition. The results of the Competition were announced that afternoon. Leung Chun-ying wrote to the Competition team in March explaining that, before taking part in the adjudication, he had not been aware of the involvement of the company associated with him in the activities relating to the Competition.<sup>3</sup>

Leung Chun-ying stated in a press conference, held at his office at 10:47pm, that neither he nor his company had business contractual agreement with the company concerned, and denied any conflict of interest.<sup>4</sup>

- **On 15 February**

Legislative Council member Lee Wing-tat raised an emergency oral interpellation, urging the government to expose the 161 competing companies' information in the name of public interest. Tsang Tak-sing, Secretary of Home Affairs stated that it would be difficult and emphasised that the Competition had been held according to international guidelines and norms. The entries were delivered anonymously and members of the Jury only knew about the companies' identities three hours before the announcement of results. Unanimous consent from the 161 companies must be sought before their information could be exposed. However, serious consideration must be taken because the teams came from all over the world, their corporate information had business considerations, they might not want to expose the ranking in the Competition and this might affect future tendering competitions of WKCD. Tsang Tak-sing pointed out that when the Jury Secretariat discovered the relation between Leung Chun-ying and one of the competing teams, Leung's membership was not disqualified, nor did the Secretariat suggest a re-competition nor urge the government to take any action; no government officials were called upon nor were there any issues on honesty. The Financial Secretary Tsang Chun-wah John had been consulted, who stated that written in the Competition brief was the clause that the Jury's decision would be the final decision. Tsang Tak-sing respected the Jury's decision and did not report it to his superior, who was the then-Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa. He denied that there were senior government officials hiding the truth.

The government wrote to Leung Chun-ying and Ken Yeang, architect of T.R. Hamzah and Yeang, hoping that they would agree to releasing more information. Leung wrote back that it would be hard for the public to accept the government's release of selected and edited information ten years after the incident. As the public had the right to read the original minutes and documents of the Competition process, Leung demanded that the Competition's organisation, adjudication method, including its discussions, votes and minutes, the declaration of each member of the Jury and the results of each round of votes be released. Leung believed that the government should answer the media's questions towards the press release, and clarify whether "government sources" selectively releasing information to certain members of the press was against the confidentiality clause. Tsang Tak-sing denied that the government had been selectively releasing information. He added that the government had had a set of guidelines, including taking public interest and adopting an appropriate scope into consideration, and reiterated the government's neutral stance in the election; issuing a press release was a mere stating of facts without any political considerations.<sup>5</sup>

2012/03

- On 9 March

Tsang Tak-sing stated in the Legislative Council's Special Meeting of the Finance Committee that WKCDA had submitted its development blueprint to the Town Planning Board in December 2011 and aimed at finishing the planning and evaluation reports by the end of the year. Provided that the Finance Committee approved of the funding, the government could begin Phase One of the construction and site investigations by the end of 2012. He added that WKCDA would hold design competitions for WKCD's landmarks, and hoped that the construction work would begin as soon as possible.<sup>6</sup>

- On 13 March

Ivan Ho Man-yiu, Chairman of the Public Affairs Committee of the Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design, pointed out that WKCDA should be aware of the likely initial upfront costs of Foster's design at a time when the Authority was facing a shortfall of funds. As the facilities earmarked for the first phase of construction would not concentrate in one area, the basement transportation area would have to be built in one go. It would lead back to a single tendering process that had been strongly opposed by the public. Furthermore, Samuel Leong, Head of the Hong Kong Institute of Education's Cultural and Creative Arts Department stated to the *South China Morning Post (SCMP)* that Hong Kong had not had a clear policy driving the city's cultural development and that WKCD had been tied up too much with real estate and other commercial interests. Arts critic Ho Hing-kay Oscar believed that the arts hub should define "Hong Kong culture" amid rapid development of the Mainland. Hui Cheuk-ken Desmond, Director of Chinese University's Centre for Culture and Development, believed that the fact that WKCDA was chaired by a very senior government official showed that the SAR government was putting great emphasis on the project's development, but that an arts hub should be chaired by someone who has cultural vision. Hui urged the authorities to focus on cultivating home-grown talents with global vision while being familiar with Hong Kong's history and cultural environment.<sup>7</sup>

Professor Chau Kwong-wing of the University of Hong Kong estimated that if WKCD were to be constructed as planned, an extra HK\$9.2-16.4 billion would be needed. According to the Architectural Services Department's tender price index, the construction costs of public tenders had increased by 76% since 2006 when consultancy firm GHK put the project cost at HK\$21.6 billion, which was still the current estimate. The government's original estimate was based on assumptions that construction costs and inflation rate rose by 2% a year and the annual rate of investment return would be about 6%. In reality, the inflation rate over the past three years had soared 3-8%. The annual rate of return of WKCDA's investment had been 1.1% and 3.4% in 2009 and 2010 respectively.

Michael Lynch agreed that the original budget was insufficient and that WKCDA's investment direction had been "a little too prudent"; he noted that he had hired a team of professionals to look for better investment options, and that WKCDA had begun talks with the government about issuing bonds as a solution and reviewing the commercial feasibility of the performance venue.<sup>8</sup>

So Wai-man Raymond, Dean of the Business School at Hang Seng Management College spoke to the *SCMP* and stated, "Without the government as the guarantor, few members of the public will be willing to buy the bonds. An arts hub relying on ticket revenue does not seem an attractive investment tool." He found allowing a private party to purchase the right to name an arts facility would be a more feasible and timely financing option, but predicted that local artists would hate seeing names of the rich placed on arts venues. Democratic Party lawmaker Lee Wing-tat, vice-chairman of a committee that was formed under the Legislative Council to monitor the arts hub's development, said the chances of the Legislative Council approving extra funds for the project were slim and urged WKCDA to seek sponsorship from private sector.<sup>9</sup>

- **On 14 March**

Michael Lynch wished to rebrand WKCD to distance the project from various political and funding scandals, but refused to say whether any potential names were under consideration.<sup>10</sup> Lynch also said to the *SCMP* that based on a comparable experience in Australia, it was reasonable for WKCD's development to overrun its budget. He noted that WKCD would look at the feasibility of having each of the hub's venues financed by different method, including issuing bonds, public-private partnership and sale of naming rights.<sup>11</sup>

- **On 15 March**

Woo Yan-wai Mathias, head of "Zuni Icosahedron" said to the *SCMP* that renaming WKCD would be a waste of money. Lee Wing-tat, panel member of the consultative panel advising to WKCD, doubted whether a new name would erase memories of the controversies and that WKCD should not rely on spin doctors. He emphasised that history would remain, content should be of top priority and that a multimillion-dollar renaming exercise was unacceptable in financially tough times. Another panel member Wong Ying-kay Ada urged the Authority to stick with the existing name as "the controversies attached to the name are meaningful to the city. It shows the people's increasing public awareness in policymaking."<sup>12</sup>

- **On 20 March**

WKCD announced the appointment of Mainland curator, academic and critic Dr. Pi Li, as a Senior Curator of M+, focusing on Chinese contemporary art, effective 3rd July. Pi Li holds a PhD in Art Theory from the Central Academy of Fine Arts.<sup>13</sup>

- **On 23 March**

*SCMP* questioned how the three Chief Executive candidates would deal with WKCD's financial issues. Leung Chun-ying stated that he would ask the Legislative Council for more money to fund WKCD. Tang Ying-nin Henry referred to his election platform, which said that he would increase resources to speed up construction, but did not explain where the additional money would come from. Pan-democrat Ho Chun-yan Albert said that the government should provide tax incentives to encourage donations to meet the shortfall. Yau Tsang Ka-lai Carrie, who was the Permanent Secretary of the Home Affairs Bureau in 2008, promised that the government would not have to inject more money into the project after the initial approval of the HK\$21.6 billion budget. Legislators of the two major political parties, including Ip Kwok-him of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong stated that he would not approve of extra funds unless there were sufficient grounds. Lee Wing-tat added that "the government once promised that it would not come back for more money. We won't be easy."<sup>14</sup>

- **On 31 March**

The Town Planning Board announced the development blueprint of WKCD, which was an arts, cultural, entertainment and commercial landmark spanning over 40.91 hectares, situated in between Austin Road West and the South of the Western Harbour Tunnel Toll Plaza.<sup>15</sup>

2012/04

- **On 12 April**

*SCMP* conducted an interview with Pi Li in Beijing, who would commence work in July as Senior Curator at M+. He stated that he accepted the job because he had been inspired by Hong Kong's "open environment" and her freedom of speech and press. He considered these to be values vital for arts development. "They are the values of human civilisation and the foundation for the discussion of contemporary art." When asked how WKCD should face the financial shortfall, Pi suggested establishing co-ownership

of collections. “It’s not uncommon for museums to share ownership of particular works of art.” He remarked that museums should take the lead to discover new works before their prices took off. Another mission he hoped to achieve would be to bridge the gap between contemporary “Chinese art” and “Hong Kong art”, the latter often left out of the discourse despite the handover 15 years ago. He hoped to work with local artists and build up a platform to showcase local and international art.<sup>16</sup>

- **On 20 April**

Lars Nittve, Executive Director of M+ announced that the exhibition “Mobile M+: Yau Ma Tei” would run from 15th May to 10th June, and would be the first exhibition curated by M+ before the completion of the building in late 2017. The exhibition would take place in shops on Portland Street and Shanghai Street, Temple Street and sitting-out areas in Man Ming Lane, etc. Nittve described the exhibition as a “Museum without walls” with the aim of bringing art closer to the community and the general public. As the first of its kind in Hong Kong, it aimed at strengthening the public’s impression of WKCD. The exhibition would feature six installation works by seven local artists: Kwan Sheung-chi with Wong Wai-yin, Leung Mee-ping, Erkkka Nissinen, Pak Sheung-chuen, Tsang Kin-wah and Yu Lik-wai. Nittve invited local artists with the aim of showcasing Hong Kong culture to the world and there would be no conflict with M+’s position as an international museum. The exhibition was budgeted at HK\$3 million and would be held during the Hong Kong Art Fair; its information centre would be situated on Portland Street.<sup>18</sup>

## 2012/06

- **On 12 June**

The world’s leading collector of Chinese contemporary art, Uli Sigg, donated 1,463 works, with an estimated value of HK\$1.3 billion, to the permanent collection of M+. A further 47 works were acquired for the sum of HK\$177 million. The collection, ranging from works from the 1970s to the present, had been produced by 350 Chinese artists. Among them were Ai Weiwei, Ding Yi, Fang Lijun, GengJianyi, Gu Wenda, Huang Yongping, Liu Wei, Wang Guangyi, Xu Bing, Yang Shaobin, Yue Minjun, Yu Youhan, Zeng Fanzhi, Zhang Peili, Zhang Xiaogang, as well as Hong Kong artists Lee Kit, Pak Sheung-chuen, and many young artists.

WKCD Board Chairman Lam Sui-lung Stephen announced at a press conference that Uli Sigg’s collection signified 30 years of success after the opening of China. Lars Nittve, Executive Director of M+ stated that the government had earmarked HK\$1.7 billion for M+’s acquisition purposes. He planned on organising mobile exhibitions before the opening of M+ and to digitise M+’s collection. M+ promised Uli Sigg that within the first three years of the opening of M+, an area of 5,000 square feet would be assigned to showcase the collection. Uli Sigg had been invited to join as a member of the Foundation Trust to play an advisory role to M+.

Uli Sigg held that Hong Kong was the best platform to showcase Chinese contemporary art. He pointed out that there had been neither independent criticism platforms nor good exhibition platforms for Chinese contemporary art. With the job of valuing art works falling into the hands of international auction houses, many works with great potential which could represent the developmental process of Chinese contemporary art had been overlooked. He hoped that this donation would arouse more interest in contemporary art.<sup>19</sup>

- **On 25 June**

Lars Nittve stated that M+ would keep its focus on Hong Kong artists and Hong Kong art; Chinese contemporary art would be its second core. He emphasised that the central idea was to have a collection of Hong Kong artists. M+ aimed to have 5,000 works when it opened in 2017 and has been exploring ways to collaborate with the Hong Kong Museum of Art in building its collection, including signing a long-term loan agreement.<sup>20</sup>

2012/07

- On 22 July

Lars Nittve revealed to the press that, conservatively estimated, M+ would attract 1.5 million audiences annually. He disagreed that Hong Kong people were uninterested in the arts but did not deny the insufficiency of current cultural venues in Hong Kong. Compared with other metropolitans, Hong Kong lacked exhibition space to aptly showcase its vitality and creative energy. There were not a lot of exhibition venues apart from auction previews and a lot of Hong Kong artists were in need of exhibition space.<sup>21</sup>

- On 25 July

Michael Lynch expressed his desire to hold a public consultation regarding the renaming of WKCD; he, however, emphasised that this was not of top priority and was not a move to hide the negative history of WKCD. His aim was to build a brand for Hong Kong culture and establish a landmark for Hong Kong. He disclosed that WKCD had not had any preference towards the renaming nor did it have any concrete schedule, but would take advice from experts instead of using an open competition. Lynch also welcomed Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor Carrie as the Chairperson of WKCD and believed that her understanding of WKCD would be of much help to its development in the next five years.<sup>22</sup>

2012/08

- On 28 August

Tobias Berger, M+ Curator, announced that “M+ Mobile: Inflation,” a large-scaled exhibition of inflatable art, would be held from 23rd March to 2nd June in 2013. Renowned artists like Paul McCarthy and Jeremy Deller, etc., would take part in the exhibition.<sup>23</sup>

2012/09

- On 3 September

In an interview with the *Hong Kong Economic Times*, Pi Li, Senior Curator of M+ stated that he understood the anxiety of Hong Kong people regarding their identity. He reckoned that as an ex-colony, Hong Kong’s culture had been different from “Mainland Chinese culture”, and should develop its own characteristics. He also believed that true artistic development in Hong Kong had only started after the 1997 Handover. “The colonial era did not focus on culture because of issues of identity. However, with Hong Kong’s freedom of speech and assuming that the Chief Executive was to be elected through general election by 2017, Hong Kong’s art has great potential and value.”

M+’s collection would be focused on Hong Kong art and would extend towards works by Chinese artists from the Pearl River Delta, Mainland China and overseas. At its first Acquisition Committee meeting last month, the Committee decided on acquiring five works from local Hong Kong artists, including Chu Hing-wah, Gaylord Chan, “King of Kowloon” and Yu Lik-wai. Some works were donated by the artists. Pi Li planned on revealing the Uli Sigg inventory in November, and had the digital images of the collection available online within one to two years.<sup>24</sup>

- On 18 September

WKCD announced the Architectural Competition for M+ and invited local and international teams to submit proposals. Overseas architects had to be in a partnership or collaboration with a Registered Practice of HKIA with an office in Hong Kong. Interested parties

should submit an Expression of Interest to WKCD on or before 15th October. The adjudication panel would consist of 8 jurors, chaired by Rafael Moneo, the Pritzker prize-winning Spanish architect. Other members included Eve Blau, Adjunct Professor, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University; Kathy Halbreich, Associate Director of the Museum of Modern Arts, New York; William Lim, leading Hong Kong architect; Victor Lo, Chairman of Board of Directors, Hong Kong Design Centre; Leslie Lu, leading Hong Kong architect; Lars Nittve, Executive Director, M+; and Uli Sigg, the world's leading collector of Chinese contemporary art. WKCD would shortlist six design teams, who would be invited to submit concept designs and models in March 2013 and would be awarded a fee of HK\$1 million upon satisfactory submission.

Major assessment criteria lie in the architectural design aspects, i.e. the originality and effectiveness of the overall design, the organisation of the local context of M+, and merits in the master planning. Other criteria included sustainability and cost effectiveness. Competition results would be announced mid-next year, and the winning team would be appointed as the Design Consultant for M+ to design and administer the project. Scheduled for completion in 2017, M+'s facilities would include over 15,000 square meters of exhibition space with another 14,000 square meters for conservation and storage, an education centre, artist-in-residence studios and outdoor green space.<sup>25</sup>

- **On 22 September**

WKCD acquired a pair of wooden doors bearing the calligraphy of Tsang Tsou-chou, who passed away in 2007. The doors, which were 1.7 meters tall and 2.2 meters wide, and covered with calligraphy written in ink and acrylic, would be exhibited in M+ upon its opening in 2017. Red Dog Studio commissioned Tsang to create the work in 2003. David Clarke, Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Hong Kong noted that although the work originally belonged to the street, M+'s focus on visual culture made it an appropriate home for the work. M+ also acquired paintings by local artist Chu Hing-wah.<sup>26</sup>

## 2012/10

- **On 22 October**

The government appointed the new Board for WKCD with its appointment running for 2 years till October 2014. Chief Secretary for Administration Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor Carrie chairs the Board; of the 15 non-public officers are 3 new members Tsai Wing-chung Philip (Immediate Past President of the Council of HKICPA), Ip Ngo-tung Chris (member of the Yau Tsim Mong District Council), and Kung Lin-cheng Leo (Deputy Chairman of the Board of the Ocean Park Corporation). Other members include Ronald Arculli, Fung Wing-kee Raymond, Lam Kin-fung Jeffrey, Lam Siu-lo Andrew, Lee Chack-fan, Lo Chung-wing Victor, Ma Fung-kiwok, Sin Chung-kai, So Fong-suk Jenny, Yip Wing-sie, Yung Ning-tsun Danny and Allan Zeman. According to the WKCD Ordinance, Cap. 601, the Board is the governing and executive body of the Authority in charge of planning, developing, operating and sustaining WKCD's facilities.<sup>27</sup>

- **On 26 October**

WKCD received, internationally, 80 expressions of interest (to M+ design competition); only 3 design teams were comprised of purely local firms, the rest were all partnerships between local and overseas firms. According to sources, "interest" were expressed by teams from the UK, Germany, Italy, USA, France, Japan, Norway, Taiwan and Singapore, etc.<sup>28</sup>

## 2012/11

- **On 29 November**

Lung Ying-tai, Minister of Culture for Taiwan, visited WKCD and met with Michael Lynch and Lars Nittve. She raised the possibility

of having a platform for cultural exchange, the “Southern Alliance”, between Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau and Guangzhou, through which programme and personnel exchange could be catalysed. She believed that Taiwan’s rich and deeply-rooted culture could pair with Hong Kong’s modern efficiency. With the opening of the high-speed rail link, audience from Shanghai could go directly to WKCD and she hoped that Hong Kong would extend its network with cities in Mainland China and establish closer cultural interaction with Taiwan.<sup>29</sup>

2012/12

• **On 10 December**

WKCD announced the shortlisted design teams for the Architectural Design for M+. The six teams were Herzog & de Meuron + TFP Farrells (Switzerland and Hong Kong), Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue Nishizawa/SANAA (Japan); Renzo Piano Building Workshop (France); Shigeru Ban Architects + Thomas Chow Architects (Japan and Hong Kong); SNOHETTA (Norway) and Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects + Benoy Limited (Japan and Hong Kong). The teams would submit a proposal in the first quarter of 2013; WKCD hoped to announce the results by mid-2013. Chief Secretary Lam Cheng Yuet-ngo Carrie said that M+ would be a museum for Hong Kong people, and hoped that the design would reflect Hong Kong perspective with a global vision.

• **On 13 December**

The tendering process of M+ officially began. WKCD Board member Sin Chung-kai expected that WKCD would settle the financial shortfall after determining the cost of M+ by mid-2013. He suggested three possible solutions: apart from applying for additional funding from the Legislative Council, they could consider borrowing from or collaborating with the private sector i.e. receive funding for its construction from the private sector, but keep the operations under WKCD upon its completion.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>1</sup> News coverage, *Wen Wei Po* A28, 19 January 2012

<sup>2</sup> News coverage, *Hong Kong Economic Journal* C03, 20 January 2012

<sup>3</sup> “Government’s response to media enquiries on West Kowloon Reclamation Concept Plan Competition”, HKSAR Press Release, 8 February 2012  
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<sup>4</sup> News coverage, *Apple Daily* A01, 9 February 2012  
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<sup>5</sup> News coverage, *Hong Kong Economic Journal* A16, 16 February 2012

<sup>6</sup> News coverage, *Wen Wei Po* A22, 10 March 2012

<sup>7</sup> “Men in suits put arts hub on wrong foot”, *South China Morning Post* EDT4, EDT5, EDT, 13 March 2012

<sup>8</sup> “Arts hub may cost taxpayers extra HK\$16b”, *South China Morning Post* EDT1, 13 March 2012

<sup>9</sup> “Bonds may still leave taxpayer picking up bill”, *South China Morning Post* EDT4, 13 March 2012



- <sup>10</sup> “Arts hub authority casts for new name”, *South China Morning Post* EDT1, 14 March 2012
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