

# 2013 Nomination of Representatives of Art Interests for the Hong Kong Arts Development Council

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The Council of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) comprises of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and twenty-five Members. Ten out of the twenty-five members are selected through a “Nomination of Representatives of Arts Interests” exercise (dubbed “the Election” by arts practitioners and the media) held once every three years. The ten “arts interests” are “Arts Administration”, “Arts Criticism”, “Arts Education”, “Chinese Opera (Xiqu)”, “Dance”, “Drama”, “Film Arts”, “Literary Arts”, “Music” and “Visual Arts”. The term of office of the members before the election would expire on December 31, 2013. ADC therefore had to conduct the eighth nomination exercise within 2013 so that members serving a new term from January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2016 could be elected.

Information:

- Local newspaper. For details of newspaper coverage please see Chinese version.
- Press releases of the Information Services Department, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)
- The House News  
<http://thehousenews.com/>

## 2013/01

### • On January 17

“Hong Kong Culture Monitor”, a civic society interrogated the voters’ criteria laid out by ADC. While ADC had conducted public consultation on the criteria individuals and organizations to register as new voters, Hong Kong Culture Monitor commented, “The problem with ADC’s consultation paper is that there lacks guiding principle. Is ADC trying to enhance professionalism (of the voters) or is it trying to include as many stakeholders as possible? Are these two objectives mutually-exclusive? It was not made clear during the consultation session.” Hong Kong Culture Monitor believed that if the voters’ criteria could be thoroughly re-defined in this exercise, it could serve as an important reference to the definition of “artists” in Hong Kong, and to the eligibility of LegCo “Sports, Performing Arts, Culture and Publication” Functional Constituency voters. However, the individual voter criteria set forth by ADC did not follow reasonable logic. “For example, awardees of twenty local awards are eligible. But it was not explained how these awards had been selected, nor was it made clear why awardees of overseas awards were not eligible.”<sup>1</sup>

## 2013/03

### • On March 26

The Home Affairs Bureau announced that a briefing session for the “2013 Nomination of Representatives of Arts Interests for HKADC” would be held on March 27. Nomination had started on March 15. Individuals interested in running for the election should submit their application to the election agency office before 5pm on April 25, 2013. It was also announced in the press release that voters’ registration would be held between end May to early July, while candidate nomination would be between mid-July to mid-August. Campaigning and voting were tentatively scheduled to take place by the end of August all the way through to September.<sup>2</sup>

2013/09

• On September 12

Candidates running for the election would be attending a forum organized by the election agency on September 14. Four candidates from the visual arts sector, including Lee Kam-yin, Poon Siu-han (Poon Han), Chan Chi-man Oliver and Chan Kam-shing confirmed that they would be present at the forum.<sup>3</sup>

• On September 25

Four visual arts group candidates were present at the election forum on September 14, during which they presented their election platform. Main points from their platforms were as follows:

Lee Kam-yin:

1. Everyone's utmost concern was being fair and transparent;
2. He has spent most of his time in the recent years on WKCD;
3. The Visual Arts Group has been focusing on finding more exhibition and work space for artists;
4. There is a JCCAC at Shek Kip Mei but to me that is not enough. Ideally there should be a venue dedicated for artists in each of the eighteen districts;
5. Strive for more exchange with the Mainland, for example joint exhibitions with Mainland artists and Hong Kong artists presenting exhibitions in Mainland;
6. Provide more support to arts practitioners and arts students, for example encouraging more overseas exchange;
7. Please call me if you have any suggestions to make.

Poon Siu-han (Poon Han):

1. Improve the atmosphere and environment of the visual arts scene by consolidating the opinions and energy of everyone;
2. Strive for more venues for visual arts. For example shared production space with lockers, glass structure under flyovers, picture display facilities outside of Civic Centers so that foreign visitors could view our works;
3. Set up an "art website" for artists to upload their information, to enhance exchange of information;
4. Produce short video clips as education materials for primary and secondary schools;
5. Set up artist villages like those in Beijing, Taiwan, Shanghai.

Chan Chi-man Oliver:

1. Have been possessing strong interest in the arts since childhood;
2. Represent Hong Kong's visual arts field in a professional, fair and unbiased manner and communicate with the Government, the commercial and industrial sectors;
3. Concern about the sufficiency and fair-distribution of resources;
4. Apply legal knowledge when serving the visual arts field.

Chan Kam-shing:

1. ADC has not expressed its opinions on many social issues that are related to art creation;
2. ADC should adopt a bottom-up approach, listen to the art practitioners, strengthen communication, improve its image and credibility;
3. Review the election design to ensure participation from the practitioners;
4. Improve Hong Kong's cultural policies by designing a blueprint for Hong Kong's art and culture, getting deeply involved with the field, and promoting the society's understanding and evaluation of the arts;



5. Encourage the society to embrace the notion of cultural rights;
6. Increase the society's creativity in general;
7. Conduct regular work progress reporting, consultation and opinion collection;
8. Strengthen liaison with the commercial sector and introduce tax concession to encourage art sponsorship;
9. Raise the quality of art academic writing;
10. ADC should be responsible for art history archiving;
11. Promote the infrastructure for art agencies;
12. Defend freedom of art creation, express concern to internet censorship and the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance;
13. Dissatisfied with the lack of ADC representation in last year's Venice Biennale review meeting.

The candidates expressed their concerns to some of the recent incidents in the visual arts field during the "Questions from the Floor" session. An arts graduate said, "I would like to contact you (Lee Kam-yin) but have no idea how to." Other questions from the floor included "if there were plans to ensure the long-term development of organizations like 'Roofers Ten', which could no longer operate in the Shanghai Street Artspace", "could Lee Kam-Yin confirm if there is a review going on for the '2012 Venice Biennale' incident", "how to help Hong Kong artists make the best use of their talent within the premises of factory buildings", and more. The four candidates expressed their views on those questions.<sup>4</sup>

2013/10

- On October 4

*Ming Pao Daily* found that due to the relaxation of voters' eligibility in the upcoming ADC election, and that every voter could cast ten votes, one in each Arts Interest Group, some voter organizations mobilized over 1,000 people to register as voters. Their aim was to increase the probability of winning by lining up candidates in different Groups into one "name list." A candidate running for term extension doubted the fairness of this system while current member(s) denied that it was a problematic system. Wong Chok-sun, candidate of the Arts Education Group, was concurrently the teaching council member of the "Ballroom Dance Council" and the chairman of the "Perfect Dancing Studio". Over 700 voters had been motivated to register by the Ballroom Dance Council. Their votes would increase the chance of winning for the associated candidates in Art Interest Groups besides "Dance". Some candidates found this unfair. Wong retorted that the majority of those 700 voters were professional or amateur instructors. He did not find fault with himself. But he did think the one-vote-ten-vote system had to be changed. Ger Choi, a current ADC member, said that she drove the endeavor to relax the voters' criteria during her term but only a few hundred new voters had been added. She believed that ADC should promote harder so that the arts field could better understand the responsibilities of ADC. She did not agree that the voting system had been problematic. She thought the practitioners had not been active enough when it came to voter registration.<sup>5</sup>

The Home Affairs Bureau appealed to the 8,512 voters eligible for the upcoming election to vote on October 6 and 7.<sup>6</sup>

- October 5

Wong Ying-kay Ada, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Institute of Contemporary Culture, was one of the hostesses of the election forum presented by "Hong Kong In-media" on September 28. She wrote an article for *Ming Pao Daily* in which she pointed out that 17 candidates were present at the forum. Yet none of them were running for his/ her second term, nor could anyone respond to a question from the floor, namely where ADC should sit, what role it should take among the entire Government administrative structure. Wong felt that in recent years, ADC had been complacent and only acted according to the resources given. ADC had been fighting for the role of cultural venue management but it failed to develop any community art space besides the Shanghai Street Artspace. Both WKCD and

ADC are statutory bodies but ADC has remained low-key in controversial issues. For example its presence was dispensable in all WKCD discussions. Or it forsook its leading role in Venice Biennale curatorship and asked for the cooperation of M+. Wong questioned how these acts could have anything to do with the promotion of local arts development. She believed that the Government had never wanted ADC to grow because of the presence of “publicly-voted” members in its Council. Meanwhile, the Home Affairs Bureau ignored the criticism of “one policy executed by multiple departments” and launched “Arts Capacity Development Funding Scheme” a few years back, instead of channeling such resources to ADC. Wong then commented the “nomination” as ill-planned. The colonial government administration did not devote the effort to design a fair election process: there were not enough thoughts on who the voters should be, how to define, how to vote, should voters vote across art forms, etc. The Home Affairs Bureau took over the system after the Handover but it outsourced the election to a PR agency.<sup>7</sup>

- On October 7

The Home Affairs Bureau announced that the election ended at 10pm. Tentative count of voters total was 2,885 or 33.9% of all eligible voters.<sup>8</sup>

- On October 8

The Home Affairs Bureau announced winning candidates. Chan Kam-shing was elected the representative of Visual Arts Group. He received 930 votes. HAB also announced that “PR Concepts Co. Ltd”, being the appointed election agency, was responsible for the execution of the entire election process, including the arrangement on the voting days. Each voter was presented with ten ballot papers, each of a different color and stapled as a stack, at the polling station. The ten ballot papers corresponded to the ten art interests groups. On the voting days, three voters found that the stack they were given had eleven ballot papers instead of ten as one of them was a second paper for the same art interest group. The election agency checked all un-presented ballot papers and discovered five more problematic stacks. Another two problematic stacks had been discovered during the counting process (one stack contained two papers for the Visual Arts interest group but neither had been filled in by the voter. The other stack contained nine papers with the one for Arts Administration missing.) The election agency handled the problematic ballot papers in a manner agreed by all candidates. The election result had not been affected.<sup>9</sup>

- On October 9

The *Hong Kong Commercial Daily* reported that some of the candidates refused the counting to proceed with the issue of the problematic ballot papers unresolved. The election agency, representatives from HAB and the 29 candidates negotiated for three hours and came to a consensus. The counting hence started at 5am on October 8. The candidates agreed that if the same choice were made on the repeated ballot papers, the choice would be regarded as a valid one, otherwise it should be regarded as disqualified. HAB apologized to all candidates and all being affected by the small amount of problematic ballot papers in this nomination exercise, and said that it would require a review report on the entire process from the election agency.<sup>10</sup>

On the same day, *Sing Tao Daily* reported a comment from Lo Wai-luk (elected representative of the Arts Criticism Group). He said that while voters could vote across ten different art interests groups, some voters have limited knowledge of all the candidates. As a result, among the votes in two art interest groups, there were over 1,000 blank votes. “There is no judgment value one can attach to these blank votes and one cannot even regard them as protest votes – unless all ten of them are blank.” In this election, only one set of ballot papers was entirely blank. In the meantime, Yiu Sau-mui, the unsuccessful candidate of “Dance” Group, said that her failure was entirely due to the press bad-mouthing her as seeding votes, and the system of cross-art-group voting.<sup>11</sup>



- <sup>1</sup> News coverage, *Hong Kong Economic Journal* C05, January 17, 2013
- <sup>2</sup> "Briefing session for HKADC Nomination Exercise to be held tomorrow", HKSAR press release, March 26, 2013. <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201303/26/P201303260308.htm>
- <sup>3</sup> "Candidate forum for HKADC Nomination Exercise this Saturday", HKSAR press release, September 12, 2013. <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201309/12/P201309120593.htm>
- <sup>4</sup> "Highlight of the ADC Forum (Visual Arts Group)", *The House News "Special Feature: ADC Election"*, September 25, 2013. <https://thehousenews.com/art/%E8%97%9D%E7%99%BC%E5%B1%80%E9%81%B8%E8%88%89%E8%A6%96%E8%A6%BA%E8%97%9D%E8%A1%93%E7%B5%84%E8%AB%96%E5%A3%87%E6%92%AE%E8%A6%81/>
- <sup>5</sup> News coverage, *Ming Pao Daily* A14, October 4, 2013
- <sup>6</sup> "Voters called to take part in Hong Kong Arts Development Council Nomination Exercise", HKSAR press release, October 4, 2013. <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201310/04/P201310040430.htm>
- <sup>7</sup> News coverage, *Ming Pao Daily* D04, October 5, 2013
- <sup>8</sup> "HKADC nomination exercise voting figures", HKSAR press release, October 7, 2013. <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201310/07/P201310070813.htm>
- <sup>9</sup> "HK Arts Development Council Nomination Exercise 2013 polling results and ballot paper issues", HKSAR press release, October 8, 2013. <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201310/08/P201310080612.htm>
- <sup>10</sup> News coverage, *Hong Kong Commercial Daily* A17, October 9, 2013
- <sup>11</sup> News coverage, *Sing Tao Daily* A10, October 9, 2013