

Meeting the Challenges – The New Roles of Museum Collections of Hong Kong

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Abstract

The museum in Hong Kong was started by the Hong Kong government as early as in the late nineteenth century. Throughout the past decades, the museums have grown in both quantity and variety. The number of museums now stands at XX covering art, local history, educational history, maritime history, medical history, Chinese medicine, culture, science, space, geology, community services, correctional services, police force etc. and run by not only the government, but also by universities, tertiary institutions, non-government organizations, non-profit organizations and the private sector.

The museums in Hong Kong have very magnificent collections, e.g. an impressive collection of both Chinese antique and contemporary ink art, a very comprehensive puppet collection, the largest and unique collection of Cantonese Opera, the most comprehensive collections of Hong Kong's currency and philatelic items, the largest collection of Yuan dynasty Nestorian crosses in the world etc. The museums have been utilizing their collections to connecting visitors with the past history, the arts and scientific development through displays, publications, educational workshops, guided tours and researches. On the other hand, the public was also keen to search for knowledge and experiences through the collections on display. Such a relationship between the museums and visitors through collections has been relatively static in the past years.

The past decade witnessed major changes to the development, strategies as well as the policy on museums in Hong Kong, which prompted the museums to search for new roles for their collections in order to catch up with the rapidly revolving museum ecology. The challenges first came when the idea of a cultural district, namely

West Kowloon Cultural District ("WKCD"), an integrated district with arts, culture and entertainment was mooted in the late 1990s. In early 2006 the Invitation for Proposals for the proposed WKCD was discontinued by the government owing to the public's strong reservation on the single development approach for the cultural district although the public was generally in favour of an implementation of the WKCD. In April 2006, the Chief Executive appointed one consultative committee and three advisory groups, one of which was Museums Advisory Group ("MAG"), to re-examine and re-confirm if appropriate the need for the core arts and cultural facilities for the WKCD.

To gauge public's views on the scope of the museum of WKCD, MAG held 1 focus group meeting; 2 open consultative forums; 3 presentation hearings apart from maintaining the Public Affairs Forum. A total of 66 themes were received in the between 2004 and 2006. After intensive deliberations, MAG recommended a forward-looking cultural institution initially named **M+** (Museum Plus) focusing on 20th – 21st century visual culture, broadly defined, from a Hong Kong perspective and with a global vision to replace the museums proposed in the Invitation for Proposals for WKCD for "visual culture" was a broad area that embraces many areas of interest identified during public consultations, and the 20th – 21st century brings the **M+** experience closer to its audience and coincides with a rich period of development in Hong Kong's cultural and social history. The collection of **M+**, as recommended by MAG *"may focus on 20th and 21st century visual culture, beginning with visual art, design, moving image and popular culture from Hong Kong, expanding to other regions of China, Asia and the rest of the world. Hong Kong has rich collections of ink art works. **M+** should try to attract these collections, to showcase this important visual form and its interplay with other art forms."*

The openness, flexibility and forward-looking attitude of **M+** did bring about challenges to the relatively static museum ecology. It is against this background that the museums start to use their collections in many different ways to connect with the community and even with the world. The Hong Kong Museum of Art, for instance, started a

guest curatorship scheme, named Open Dialogue, some years ago to invite guest curators, using the museum's collections amongst other collections, to curate exhibitions in parallel with the museum curators. The process was most fascinating in bringing in new ideas to the museum, communicating with the community and achieving dialogues. On the other hand, since ink and brush have long been used by the Chinese for about two thousand years and a large number of contemporary Chinese artists, both local and overseas, are still employing ink and brush to express their artistic senses and that ink art has thrived in Hong Kong with innovative developments in a contemporary mode, the museum, thus, uses its unique collections on ink arts to position itself as the centre in the study of ink art in Asia. The professional standards of the museum in the study and curatorship of ink art have recently attracted a very significant donation of 55 pieces of contemporary ink art by a well-known ink art master WU Guanzhong.

Another challenge to museums' collections came with the application of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage to Hong Kong in 2006. In response to the application, a new unit on Intangible Cultural Heritage was set up in Hong Kong Heritage Museum. To collect the local intangible cultural heritage, the museum first commenced a territory wide survey. Since the convention emphasizes the significant role of the community in the identification of intangible cultural heritage, the museum has to fully engage the community in the survey by visiting each of the 18 districts to appeal for information, advice and associated objects. It is envisaged that a new collection on intangible cultural heritage will soon be built up which will establish a close connection between the museum and the community.

Setting The Scene

The museums in Hong Kong have a humble start. Between 1874 and 1933, there was accommodation in the first City Hall of Hong Kong for displaying a repository of "odds and ends from every corner of the globe...a collection of Australian parrots, mineralogical specimens from

Wales, old clocks etc...."⁴⁵ Although the Museums Association acknowledged that there was a small "museum" in the colony, it stated in its report prepared in 1933 that Hong Kong was representing "the low-water mark in museum provision throughout the whole of the [British] Empire."⁴⁶ This small "museum" finally disappeared in 1933 when the first City Hall was demolished. Sadly, it left no traces of its collections. It was not until March 1962 that a new city museum and art gallery occupying a total area of 12,400 square feet was opened in the second City Hall of Hong Kong. When the first curator of the new museum and art gallery, John Warner arrived in Hong Kong in 1957 before he took up the post, he "realized that there was no cultural centre to the city. No public library, art gallery, theatre, or museum. Nothing."⁴⁷

The City Hall Museum and Art Gallery as it was named, was formally opened on 2 March 1962. Its collections mainly consisted of the Ho Tung, Law and Sayer Collections of the nineteenth century paintings, drawings and prints; a collection of early photographs of Hong Kong; the Henry Yeung Collection of Chinese ceramics and bronzes; Father Maglioni's collection of local archaeology; and a small collection of works by local artists.⁴⁸ Although the collections were relatively thin at that time, the policy was to use the collections as a medium to reflect the history and culture of Hong Kong and its relationship to the neighbouring region in its broader scene. As such, display was considered the most important function of the new gallery and museum. The exhibit had to first catch the eye of the casual visitor, attract him and invite him to make a closer

⁴⁵ The Museum and Art Gallery Select Committee of the Urban Council and Members of the Museum's Advisory Panel, *Report on Museum and Art Gallery Services with Recommendations for their Development in Hong Kong*, Hong Kong, September 1965, p.7.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Warner, John, 'Back in Time', *Open Dialogue – A Launching Publication for the "Hong Kong Art: Open Dialogue" Exhibition Series, 2008-09*, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong, 2008, p.13.

⁴⁸ *Report on Museum and Art Gallery Services with Recommendations for their Development in Hong Kong*, p.8.

examination. In parallel, the exhibit should also be imbued with a sense of history-in-the-making.⁴⁹ On the other hand, the discovery of a Han Tomb in 1955 prompted the Government to set up a small site museum to display the finds from the tomb.

Apart from the Government museums, with the generous donations from a Fung family, The University of Hong Kong thus set up a Fung Ping Shan Library in 1932 which collected both books and antiques. With the books moved to the new university library, the building was turned into a museum in 1964 to serve as a teaching museum for the Chinese Department of the university.

In 1975, the City Hall Museum and Art Gallery was subsequently split into Hong Kong Museum of History and Hong Kong Museum of Art. Other museums like Hong Kong Science Museum, Hong Kong Space Museum, Museum of Coastal Defence, Hong Kong Railway Museum and a few branch museums were gradually set up by the two municipal councils with funding from the Government between the 1970s and 2000. After the dissolution of the two municipal councils in 2000, the Hong Kong Government set up a new department, namely Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) to take over the management of those museums, amongst others, from the two municipal councils. The LCSD further set up the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, the Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum and the Alexander Grantham Fireboat Gallery, adding the number of museums under its management to 14. On the other hand, private museums or institution museums are also growing fast. Major ones include the museums in The University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Maritime Museum, Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences, Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Museum, Museum of Education, Museum of Correctional Services Department, Police Museum etc. Please refer to Appendix I for the full list of the museums in Hong Kong.

Although this paper focuses on the new roles of collections of the museums of LCSD, it will also touch on some of the major non-LCSD museums

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.3-13.

in Hong Kong as well as the representative examples of the museums in the Mainland China to present a more comprehensive picture to readers. The conventional roles of museum collections will not form the core of this paper.

The Challenges

The Collections

Collections are always considered as one of the core assets of the museums of Hong Kong. Much effort has been devoted to build up and strengthen the museum collections in the past few decades. As at June 2010, the collections of the museums under LCSD have grown to be about 213,000 which are multiple times of the collections since the start. The collections have now become very varied, from Chinese painting, calligraphy and antiques to household utensils of ordinary families to aeroplane and to fossils. The rapid growth of collections has posed both opportunities and challenges to our museums. The rich collections coupled with the changes of expectation of the public to the museums, the evolution of the cultural ecology and the creativity of curators, have prompted the development of new roles of museum collections since the past decade.

The Challenges

One of the major challenges merged in the recent decade that prompted the re-thinking of the use of collections, amongst others, was the West Kowloon Cultural District project.⁵⁰ The idea to set up an integrated cultural and arts district was first mooted in the late 1990s. The Culture and Heritage Commission (CHC), a high level advisory body advising the government on the policies and funding priorities on culture and strategies to promote the long-term development

⁵⁰ Situated at the heart of the city centre and probably the last piece of reclaimed land in the city heart, the proposed West Kowloon Cultural District occupies a site area of 40 hectares, 23 of which will be designed as public space for the enjoyment of everyone. In addition, 15 performing arts venues, one cultural institution with museum functions initially named **Museum Plus** or **M+**, one exhibition centre, communal facilities, residential, hotel, office, retail, dining and entertainment facilities will be included in the cultural district.

of culture of Hong Kong had detail deliberation between 2000 to 2003 on the need for new museums in Hong Kong and their best location. In its Policy Recommendation Report, CHC considered West Kowloon Cultural District an unprecedented opportunity for cultural development in Hong Kong. An international Concept Plan Competition was thus launched in 2001 to invite proposals which could “enhance Hong Kong’s position as Asia’s premier centre of arts, culture and entertainment and create a new look for Victoria Harbour”. Although the competition had successfully attracted 161 entries which were further assessed vigorously for selecting the winning entry, the then chronic economic downturn arising from the Asian financial turmoil coupled with the outbreak of SARS had brought substantial fiscal deficits in the Government, which forced the Government to tap private investment to develop this cultural, arts and entertainment hub. An Invitation for Proposals was thus launched in 2003. All proposals were required to meet the mandatory requirements in provision of core arts and cultural facilities and the development parameters as set out by the Government. Five proposals were received in 2004, three of which were considered meeting the mandatory requirements and could be further assessed. It was then the economy of Hong Kong started to picking up and people were more concerned on the quality of life and participation in public affairs. Despite the extensive consultation before launching the Invitation of Proposals, the public had great reservation on the single development approach of the cultural district, the huge canopy design to cover the cultural district, the proposed arts and cultural facilities as well as the policy underpinning those facilities and the development parameters. The Government, after considering and analysing the views received from the consultation on the screen-in proposals, announced in October 2005 to impose new parameters to the development of the cultural district, which included to limit the plot ratio to 1.81, to confine the residential development to 20% of the site and to pay \$30 billion upfront for setting up an independent foundation to ensure the sustainability of arts and cultural facilities, and to set up a statutory body to take forward the project. As no clear and positive response on the

new parameters was received from the proponents of the screen-in proposals, and in view of the public aspirations and the market attractiveness of the project, the Government decided to discontinue the Invitation of Proposals in February 2006, and after an opinion survey, the Government announced the setting up a Consultative Committee on Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of West Kowloon Cultural District (the Consultative Committee) and three advisory groups on museum, performing arts and finance under it to take an alternative route to development West Kowloon Cultural District.⁵¹

On the museum front, the Consultative Committee recommended to the Government to set up an innovative, open and forward looking museum-like cultural institution initially named **Museum Plus** or **M+**, i.e. more than a museum, in the West Kowloon Cultural District to focus on the twentieth and twenty-first century visual culture, a broad area that embraces many areas of interest identified during public consultations, from a Hong Kong perspective, the perspective of now and with a global vision. The twentieth and twenty-first century is a period closely linked to our current experience for it was the time when Hong Kong experience, including cultural experience, was built up and consolidated. Visual culture, a fluid concept, offers flexibility for people to defining its scope as well as the institution to responding to the changing circumstances. In view of the board and flexible nature of visual culture, four “initial broad groupings”, i.e. design, moving image, popular culture and visual art were identified for development. The openness, flexibility and forward-looking nature of **M+** aims to encourage cross-fertilization of ideas, dialogue, communication, inspiration, interaction and partnership between the museum and the public, sector professionals as well as experts worldwide to fulfill its mission to inspire, delight, educate and engage the public to explore diversity and foster creativity.⁵² **M+** was initially proposed to occupy a

⁵¹ Consultative Committee on Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of the West Kowloon Cultural District, *The Report of the Consultative Committee on Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of the West Kowloon Cultural District*, Hong Kong, 2007, p. 1-7.

⁵² Museum Advisory Group of Consultative Committee on Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of

site area of 125,000 square meters with net operating floor area and net exhibition area of 75,000 square meters and 30,000 square meters respectively and to be developed in two phases. Having to regard the need to ensure the financial sustainability to develop the cultural district, the net operating floor area **M+** was thus trimmed down by 30%, bringing the resultant GFA to 78,750 square meters which comprised 61,950 square meters on-site area and 16,800 square meters off-site area. The resultant **M+** still amounted to a substantial increase by 52% of the total space provision of all existing public museums in Hong Kong.

The focus of **M+**, particularly the four initial broad groups identified, has certain overlapping with the areas the museums of LCSD are working on. Such overlapping, if not managed properly, may turn into competition in collecting and programming although the curatorship of **M+** and the museums of LCSD is different. The Museums Advisory Group of the Consultative Committee also noted such overlapping. At the same time, they were fully aware that **M+** needs networking, partnership and interaction with similar institutions. The museums of LCSD are, in fact, one of the profound ones which should have multiple relationships with **M+** no matter whether the relationships mean collaboration or healthy competition in areas like programming, collecting and curatorship. The Museums Advisory Group, however, held varied views on whether the museums of LCSD should be aligned to enable public resources to be shared or utilized fully and to avoid confusion in identity of the two. On the whole, the Museums Advisory Group respected the professional independence of all museums and the autonomy of curators in deciding on exhibitions and presentations.

In parallel with the deliberation on the West Kowloon Cultural District project, the Director of Audit has conducted a review on the provision of museum services by LCSD in 2005-2006, in which acquisition and management of museum collections was one of the major areas of study.

West Kowloon Cultural District, *The Report of the Consultative Committee*, 23 November 2006, Hong Kong, p.1-7.

The Audit Commission observed that there was acute shortage of storage for the museums. Some of the collection items were kept in off-site storage with environmental conditions far from satisfactory. The shortage of storage space also hindered the museums to accepting donations of considerable size. Although a central repository for collection items was being planned, the progress of which came to a standstill in December 2005. The Audit Commission considered it essential for LCSD to “critically review the overall requirements of the storage requirements of its museums and expedite action to develop a central museum collection repository.”⁵³

Also in parallel with the deliberation on the West Kowloon Cultural District project, the Government set up a Committee on Museums in November 2004 to formulate strategy and plan for the development of museum facilities and services, with reference to the policy recommendations of the CHC. The Committee on Museums submitted its recommendation report to the Government in 2007. Major recommendations included to setting up a two-tier statutory governance structure to take over the management of the museums from the Government, to developing a strategy for further integrating the museums with the community, to adopting a pluralistic approach in programming, to broadening the audience base, to nurturing a donation culture, to training and developing museum staff members and to addressing the acute shortage of collection storage as collections are important assets of Hong Kong.⁵⁴

The Government accepted, in principle, the Recommendation Report of the Committee on Museums in 2007. It set up a task force to study the feasibility of the recommendations. In February 2010, the Government decided not to set up a statutory body to take over the administration of the museums and maintained that the museums should continue be managed by LCSD. But the Government undertook to

⁵³ Audit Commission, *Director of Audit's Report: No. 46*, Hong Kong, March 2006, p. 36.

⁵⁴ Committee on Museums, *Recommendation Report*, Hong Kong, May 2007, p.1-8.

sharpen the identity of the museums and position the museums through programming and collections, to establish a closer network between the museums and the community, to broaden the audienceship and to adopt a proactive approach to market the museums.⁵⁵

The interweaving challenges to the museums of LCSD cropped up in the past decade have prompted the museums to re-think the roles of museum collections, amongst others, to meet the challenges.

Meeting the Challenges – New Roles for Museum Collections

Training to Prepare for Ourselves

To prepare for the challenges from West Kowloon Cultural District project, it is necessary, apart from promoting local art and broadening the audience base, to train up independent curators as well as museum curators to be familiarized with artistic dialogues, not just between artists and curators, but also amongst artists, curators and the community in an open platform through the medium of collections. The recent years also saw an increasing desire of the community to participating in the interpretation of museum collections as well as casting the museums into an open platform in order to be responsive to the changing circumstances and the needs of the public. It was against this background that a new series of exhibition entitled “Hong Kong Art: Open Dialogue” was launched from January 2007 to early 2008 at the Hong Kong Museum of Art to uncover new artistic explorations of local artists and to reflect the new horizons of the visual arts in Hong Kong through an open platform where artistic dialogue was encouraged amongst artists, curators and the community.

Independent or guest curators were invited to study the collections of the Hong Kong Museum

of Art, to survey the state of art in Hong Kong and to meet the museum curators and local artists before submitting their proposals which would be assessed by an adjudication panel. The guest curators would then be shortlisted and further invited to join hands with the museum curators, using the collections of the Hong Kong Museum of Art in addition to commissioned or loaned artworks, to curate exhibitions to enhance effective dialogue among the guest curators, museum curators, both current and retired, and the community in order to bring out the unique perspective of the guest curators in defining Hong Kong art.

Four exhibitions, namely “Digit@logue”, “New Ink Art: Innovation and Beyond”, “Looking for Antonio Mak” and “Charming Experiences” were included in the series. “Digit@logue” by Ellen Pau scrutinized local media art to provoke greater discussion on the relationship between technology and visual experiences. “New Ink Art: Innovation and Beyond” by Alice King defined a new horizon of traditional ink painting and calligraphy in terms of medium and aesthetic application. “Looking for Antonio Mak” by Valerie C Doran launched a multi-layered approach in examining Hong Kong art through the works of a significant local artist. Finally, “Charming Experience” by Grace Cheng provided the audience an experience of appreciating art through those senses other than visual.⁵⁶ To complement the exhibitions, workshops with artists, symposium, lectures, touring exhibitions, guided tours by guest curators etc. were organized. The four exhibitions have attracted more than 215,000 visitors, representing a daily average of about 1,000 which is a rather encouraging figure. It is planned that a major international exhibition on Hong Kong art would be staged as the finale of the series in 2011.

This is for the first time that the collections of Hong Kong Museum of Art were opened to non-museum curators for a purpose more than exhibition and education. The new use of the museum collections did give rise to controversies

⁵⁵ For details of the recommendations of the Government on the future development of Hong Kong, please visit <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0205cb2-858-1-e.pdf>.

⁵⁶ Leisure and Cultural Services Department, *Open Dialogue – A Launching Publication for the “Hong Kong Art: Open Dialogue” Exhibition Series, 2008-09*, Hong Kong, 2008, p. 119.

as well as valid concerns from the museum curators and technical staff, e.g. the security in handling the artworks, the ownership as well as the responsibilities of the exhibitions, the budget control, the use of space etc. The guest curators also have their valid concerns too, e.g. the design of the exhibitions, the in-house support, the use of space etc. It was anticipated by both sides that the process of curating would be full of challenges. After the conclusion of the four exhibitions, reviews were conducted to stock take the benefits as well as the drawbacks of such a new use of collections. Although phrases and terms like “a disappointing affair”, “looked amateur”, “lack of curatorial rigour”, “no pleasant surprises”, “cluttered with unnecessary decoration” etc. appeared in some of the art critics on the exhibitions, there was also applause for the new try for some considered that the exhibitions were largely successful.

Notwithstanding the controversies, the new use of the museum collections did prompt the guest curators and museum curators to familiarize with the new format of joint exploration for diversity, cross-fertilization, creativity, partnership and communication, the way to turn the museum into an open platform for engaging the community through dialogue with the curators, the way to reinforce the positioning of the museum in the regional context, the need to stock take the strengths as well as the inadequacies of the collections of the museum, and the way to exert an impact on the local diversified cultural ecology through new curatorial perspectives and to foster collaborations, networking and dialogue. The different curatorial approaches of the guest curators and museum curators brought them into intensive dialogues, joint exploration, discussion and even debates and argument on a wide range of issues like the use of exhibition space, the format of display, the interpretation of collections, the budget, the responsibility sharing, the division of work etc. Sometimes, consensus was not the most important thing to consider in the debates but the argument, i.e. the process, though very tough counted most for it enabled both sides to learn. The process of collaboration, competition, exploration, appreciation and even argument and accommodating have helped bring out new perspectives and new experiences, which in return,

enhanced the diversified local cultural ecology, to breathe life into the museum and to train up competent curators and technical staff to face the new challenges to come. It also nurtured new audiences and widened the audience experiences for the benefit of the museum as well as the future **M+** of West Kowloon Cultural District. Through the new use of the collections, the open attitude of the museum was further reinforced and enhanced. This will facilitate the museum to open to new interpretations and to foster cross-fertilization, communication, partnership and dialogue. The finale of the exhibition series, “The Eternal Tao: New dimensions in Chinese Contemporary Art” which has been scheduled for 2011 will likely to bring out more challenges and new perspectives in the new roles of museum collections.

Branding and Positioning our Museums

The unique history of Hong Kong had provided an unparalleled opportunity for Chinese ink painting and calligraphy, a millennium-long traditional form of Chinese art, to thrive in Hong Kong with innovative developments in a contemporary context. The administration of Hong Kong by the British in the 1840s to the 1990s did not hinder the inheritance and the development of this unique Chinese art form. On the contrary, the political segregation of Hong Kong from the mainland coupled with the political movements in the Mainland between the late 1940s and 1970s, had made Hong Kong a prefect refuge for art treasures and Chinese artists. The political turmoil in the mainland China in the 1960s, in particular, had closed the door of China to the world. The temporary cultural segregation of Hong Kong from the mainland had prompted local artists whose tradition still deeply rooted in traditional painting and calligraphy, to explore new expressions of this unique art form. In addition, Chinese ink artists of modern times also encountered Western arts through Hong Kong. The last century witnessed a vigorous transformation of Chinese ink painting and calligraphy in both the style and techniques through the works of a number of ink masters like Luis Chen (1905-1995), Lu Shoukun (1919-1975), Ding Yanrong (1902-1978), Gao Jianfu (1879-1951), Zhao Shaoang (1905-1998), Lin Fenmian (1900-1991), Wu Guanzhong (1919-

2010), Huang Boye (1901-1968) etc. Such a unique background of Hong Kong has made Hong Kong a special case study for understanding the post-modern development of Chinese art.

Through its collection and exhibition strategy, the Hong Kong Museum of Art has contributed to the continuation as well as the transformation of this millennium-long tradition of Chinese art. The generous and significant donations of Chinese painting and calligraphy to the museum since the 1980s, e.g. the donation of a collection, *Xubaizhai*, of about 500 classical Chinese paintings and calligraphy of Six Dynasties to Qing dynasty by Mr. Low Chuck-tiew (1911-1993) in 1989, the donation of over 800 ink paintings of post-Cultural Revolution era by Mrs. Linda Mak, the donation of over 1,000 pieces of Chinese painting and calligraphy of post-war period by Mr. Lau Siu-liu, the donation of 52 pieces of ink paintings by the late ink master Wu Guanzhong etc. had established and largely enhanced the core collection of Chinese painting and calligraphy of the museum. In parallel, the museum also steps up to strengthen its collections on contemporary ink art of the mainland China and Hong Kong through acquisition of a few pieces of impressive ink installation. As at July 2010, the collection of Chinese painting and calligraphy, including modern ink art collections, of the museum has grown to become 7,637 which is a sharp contrast to “a small collection of works by local artists”⁵⁷ in the early years of the museum.

The museum is not satisfied only with its collection and exhibition strategy to fulfill its mission to promote this charming and ever-changing form of traditional Chinese art. It continues to explore new interpretation and curatorship by adding new values to enliven it. In the past decade, the museum has organized 36 exhibitions on ink painting and calligraphy, which is about 50% of the total exhibitions organized. It is not easy to present Chinese painting and calligraphy which are always considered as high arts in a way that can appeal to the general public. The Chinese saying, too high to be popular, is

⁵⁷ *Report on Museum and Art Gallery Services with Recommendations for their Development in Hong Kong*, p.8.

amply suitable to be implied to this situation as high arts like Chinese painting and calligraphy are hard for the general public to comprehend and enjoy. However, the Curator responsible for Chinese painting and calligraphy of the museum believes that high arts could also be popular too if they are presented in innovative ways and curated with a new perspective. In a recent exhibition “A Landscape Journey”, the curator revitalized an old style of painting appreciation, *woyou*, i.e. “to travel while inclining” which first appeared in the fifth century to lead visitors to admire the landscape depicting in Chinese paintings. Such an old way of painting appreciation is scarcely known even by curators nowadays. The innovative curatorship for exhibitions in Chinese painting and calligraphy has undoubtedly added much favour and values to the unique and significant collections of Chinese painting and calligraphy of traditional and contemporary times of the museum.

With the rich and unique collections of Chinese painting and calligraphy and the representative works of contemporary ink coupled with innovative curatorship, a policy was developed to positioning Hong Kong Museum of Art as a museum of regional / international significance. To showcase the spectacular collections of ink art, more exhibitions and programmes by the museum or launched jointly with guest curators will be planned to echo the policy. The curatorial team of the museum believes that with proper exhibition and museum branding strategy, masterpieces in the collections of Chinese painting and calligraphy collections like the *Two Swallows* by Wu Guanzhong will in one day like *Mona Lisa* to *Musée du Louvre* be so well-known to the world.

Connecting and Reconnecting to our Community

The Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Museum, a small local private museum, has recently also accorded a new mission to its rich collections for reconnecting the institute with the local community and also with the Chinese communities worldwide through the study, exhibition and promotion of its rich heritage collections and archive which was built up in the past 140 years. When Britain took over Hong Kong in 1841, Hong Kong was only a small

village with a population of merely 2, 000. The population grew intensively in the early years of the colony with influx of immigrants who were considered as marginal to the Chinese society or immigrants who took Hong Kong as a stepping stone for further migration. The Chinese population hardly mixed with the European population who were so much difference in culture with them. The discrimination and mistrust existed and were two-way. The only communication between the two populations was through *compadores* and in the business world. With the growth in population, Chinese in the colony organised themselves through various ways like setting up temples or ancestral halls to unify themselves. As for temples, the most notable example was *Man Mo Temple* (Temple for Martial and Literati Gods) which was established in 1847 by influential Chinese within the newly established Victoria City, the city centre, on Hong Kong Island. The temple soon became more than a religious place for Chinese. It was, indeed, a gathering place, a court for justice, a commercial arbitrator and a benefactor. It also marked a significant stage of the social development of Hong Kong which saw the emergence of a fairly high-powered Chinese leader group. Apart from operating the temple, some of the leaders of the temple subsequently secured a piece of land near the temple for building a home for the reception of the soul tablets of the deceased persons named *Kwong Fong I-ts'z* (Common Hall for Wide Benevolence). Although the *I-ts'z* was originally intended for housing soul tablets of the death, it soon became congested with coffins waiting to be shipped home and sick people who were unwanted and awaiting death. The *I-ts'z* which amply showed the Chinese concepts on sick and death also showed the apparent segregation of cultures between the Chinese and the West. To Chinese, the *I-ts'z* was a benevolent organization to provide shelter for the death and the sick. To the West, the *I-ts'z* was regarded as an inhumane and unhygienic place where the sick was mixed with the death. The *I-ts'z* prompted the colonial government to organize the Chinese elites to provide welfare to the Chinese community. As such, the *I-ts'z* was directly relevant to the founding of the Tung Wah Hospital, a bridge the early colonial government established to communicate with the Chinese community. The

Tung Wah Hospital emerged in 1869 and established in 1870 was presided by Chinese elites. Apart from providing medical services, particularly Chinese medical treatment to the Chinese, it also took over the management of the very influential Man Mo Temple and running schools and other social welfare services. The Tung Wah Hospital has been closely related to the Chinese community, both local and overseas, ever since its establishment. Its emergence was a turning point for the social, political and medical history of Hong Kong.

This year, Tung Wah Hospital, now named as Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, will be celebrating its 140 anniversary in serving the Chinese community of Hong Kong. The Tung Group of Hospitals has now developed into the most important medical, social and educational institute in Hong Kong, which manages a group of 5 hospitals and Chinese medicine clinics, 18 secondary schools, 14 primary schools, 15 kindergartens, 2 special schools, one community college, a number of youth, elderly and rehabilitation centres, 13 Chinese temples, one historic coffin home and three funeral homes.⁵⁸ The wide range of services of Tung Wah Group of Hospitals makes it the most impressive non-government organization providing advanced medical services, and good education and social services to the community. It also speaks for its success in repositioning its role in the society of Hong Kong. However, its unique history and contributions to Chinese communities in both Hong Kong and overseas becomes gradually faded and forgotten. Although the Group has been running a small Tung Wah Museum since 1970,

⁵⁸ The website of Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, <http://www.tungwah.org.hk/?content=410> describes that Tung Wah Group of Hospitals currently has a group of five hospitals and Chinese medicine clinics, 18 secondary schools with 16,300 students, 14 primary schools with 7,300 students, 15 kindergartens with 2,900 students, 2 special schools with 280 students as well as one community college established with the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Besides, the Tung Wah Hospital also provides a wide range of community services, from youth to elderly to rehabilitation. Finally, it manages 13 Chinese temples, one coffin home and three funeral homes.

its attendance was low and it was the least known in the community. It is against this background that the Board of Directors has set out a clear directive to reconnect the institute with the local community and also with the Chinese communities worldwide through the study, exhibition and promotion of its rich heritage collections and archive. It also targets to explore the future role of the institute in networking the Chinese communities worldwide and as one of the important centres in the studying of modern Chinese history. Last but not least, it also aims to brand the institute through its very rich collections of heritage. The Tung Wah Group of Hospitals is keen to illustrate that it is much more than a manager of a conglomeration of medical, educational, social and religious institutions, it is also a platform to networking with the Chinese communities worldwide and a centre to promoting the study of modern Chinese history.

The Board of Director approved in this year the setting up of a Records and Heritage Office (“RHO”) with effect from 1 April 2010, to manage its museum, and to safe keep and study the very rich collections of the institute which comprise 7,000 relics including historic plaques and furniture, annual reports, meeting minutes, official correspondences, paper cuttings etc, 20,000 photos, 600 exhibits and a number of historic buildings including a century old coffin home, a few historic temples and the first hospital hall (now converted into the museum) of more than a hundred years old. Shortly after the establishment of the RHO, it started to recruit its team of volunteers which comprise historians, conservators, conservationists, photographers and students to help record, study, conserve and display the collections, to set up a management system for the collections, to promote the use of the collections, to open up the collections to the public, to organize a wide range of educational programmes and to network with local and overseas cultural institutions to promote the study and understanding of the unique history as well as the spirit of the institute. The RHO also follows up on the oral history project of the institute. About 100 informants who are closely related to the institute have been interviewed. The interview records now form an integral part of the very valuable archive of the institute. Besides, some of

the research papers on the archive have been published in a series of five publications not long ago and the historic building which housed the Tung Wah Museum and the century old Man Mo Temple will soon be declared as monuments. The establishment of the RHO sees a much more serious and systematic use and promotion of the very rich collections of the institute with an aim to reconnecting with both the local and overseas Chinese communities, which might be seen as peripheral in the past. This year, the institute will be celebrating its 140th anniversary through a joint exhibition with the Hong Kong Museum of History entitled, “Hong Kong, Benevolent City: Tung Wah and the Growth of Chinese Communities” to be shown in October 2010. The exhibition will definitely recall many forgotten facets of the history of the institute, to reposition the institute as a testimony of the development of Chinese communities in modern times, and to recall the spirit of Tung Wah Hospital which is also the spirit of Hong Kong people.

Like the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, the Hong Kong Institute of Education (“HKIE”) is also keen in reconnecting with its alumni through the establishment of the Hong Kong Museum of Education and its display of relics related to the history and development of education, and particularly the training for teachers. The HKIE was established in 1994 by combining five teacher training institutes, namely, Northcote College of Education (1939), Grantham College of Education (1951), Sir Robert Black College of Education (1960), Hong Kong Technical Teachers’ College (1969) and Institute of Languages in Education (1982). The new campus of the HKIE in Tai Po provides ample spaces for advanced teaching and development of students. The idea to establish a museum to promote the interests and understanding on education was mooted since 2008. A year after, a museum, named “Hong Kong Museum of Education” was opened in the campus in May 2009. The museum has a modest core collection to start with, which were mainly transferred from the former five teacher training schools. It plans to continue to build up its collections through the support from alumni, the community and other sources for donating or loaning instead of through

purchasing in order to establishment a closer relationship with donors and the community. As such, the museum has a special mission, apart from performing the conventional functions of a museum to collect, research, exhibit and educate, i.e. it will, through the collections, to reconnect with the alumni of both the HKIE and the five teacher training institutes subsumed under HKIE. Recently, the museum organized institutional based or alumni focused exhibitions and events to appeal specially to the support and recall the memories of the respective alumni to help consolidate the foundation and to broaden the audience base of the museum. The museum has been very successful in attracting support from the alumni, in terms of donations of collections, for the development of the museum. Since its establishment in a year and a half ago, the museum was able to build up a collection of some 25,000 items in which 60%-70% were donated by alumni. In the years to come, the museum will continue to expand the roles of its collections to go beyond connecting with its alumni. The collections will be used to brand the museum since they are very focused and are the biggest collections related to the education of Hong Kong. To prepare for expanding the roles of the collections, the museum is now identifying and planning for new storage area, revising the collection policy and strategy to collect oral history information, digital collections, and even devising plan to expand and develop the museum as an off-campus community based museum in order to reach out to the community.

Adding Values to Storage – Networking with the Community

The museums of LCSD are mainly situated at the heart of the city. Currently, the museums have a total of 6,412 square meters of on-site storage and 11,000 square meters off-site storage scattered in 18 locations in the territory for holding a wide range of collections of about 213,000 items, from archaeological finds to village ware, Chinese antiques, paintings, art installations, numismatic and philately collections, dinosaurs to areoplanes. The collections are growing in a pace of 3.6% in terms of quantity and 3% in term of size annually. The growth of the collections has largely cramped the museum storage. Worse than this, the

conditions of some of the off-site storage may not be able to meet the conservation requirements. The acute shortage of storage space thus renders hurdles for curators to negotiate with donors of collections as well as accepting donations of considerable size. The need to providing additional storage space that can meet stringent requirements on climatic control, building fabrics, access and spatial design, durability, security control and fire fighting to protect the collections at the best has, therefore, become utmost importance. Although the storage problem is fully aware by parties concerned, it is still not easy to identify a suitable plot of land that is agreeable to all for construction of a central repository.

On the other hand, there are increasing demands from the community as well as different sectors for the museums to make available more collections for public viewing instead of keeping them in storage. Currently, amongst the 213,000 collection items, about 9,400 items which amount 4.4% of the total collections, are either displayed in the museums or loaned out to suitable institutions for display and a total of 27,150 items amounting 12.7% of the total collections were displayed in the past three years. Although the requests of the community are legitimate, a balance between conservation and display has to be maintained as the majority of the collections are not suitable for display continuously from the conservation point of view.

Before addressing the requests of both ends, we first ask ourselves what roles our collections have to play. The answer will determine the visibility, accessibility and frequency of retrieval of our museum collections as well as the relationship between the storage and the museums. After detailed deliberation, we aim at setting up a Central Repository which is more than a storage facility to cater for the new roles for our museum collections, i.e. to connect the museums with the community through collections. We are now identifying a plot of land with a site area of not less than 5,000 square meters for provision of about 185,000 square meters of storage to meet the needs of the museum storage in the coming 10-12 years. Apart from the core function of storage, we plan to include a collection resource centre of about 18,500 square meters in the

Central Repository, which is about 10% of the total usable area to provide a collection exhibition, a small seminar room, a reference library, a collection study room and a number of activity rooms to support the secondary function of the storage to enable visitors to view the behind-the-scene conservation work for museum artefacts, to receive scholars, researchers and school groups coming for collection study or educational programmes and to connect the museums with the community. When considering the secondary function of the Central Repository, concerns on theft, mishandling, vandalism and contamination of the physical environment have been taken into full consideration. In addition, the integration of different spaces was also carefully studied to enable efficient processing of collections and to minimize the potential damage and loss through human error. In other words, although the optimum use for collections sitting in storage is planned, the maximum protection of the collections will never be compromised.

The Central Repository, when materialized, will be the first time for our museum collections to assume a new role to connecting the museums with the community in a new context. When giving such a new role to our collections, it is expected that collections not sitting properly in display cases or exhibition space but viewed in storage or during the process of conservation will arouse curiosity of casual visitors and thus creating a very different impact on them. The more the people can see in this semi-visual storage, the more they will want to know. To meet the anticipated demands and needs from the public, it is inevitable that we have to enhance our researches on collections and update the records of collections for public viewing in future. We may also need to consider whether any criteria should be adopted to screen people who request access to storage and whether a charge should be levied to defray the costs of staff time. Although many of these administrative considerations are valid in deciding the operation of the Central Repository, they should not be obstacles to opening partly the storage or conservation facilities to the public since this is also a museum education process and a means to broaden the audienceship of museums by connecting the museums more closely with the community through collections.

Promoting Intangible Cultural Heritage – Using the Tangible to Promote the Intangible

The LCSD's Hong Kong Museum of History and the Hong Kong Heritage Museum have over the years built up a sizable collection of local ethnographic artefacts which are testimony to the past and even present ways of life of Hong Kong ordinary people. Once accessioned into the museum collection, these artefacts are separated from their original community and context. Unless the original context of the artefacts were well documented and researched before accessioning, the rich intangible cultural meaning they borne would gradually fade out. Due to the rapid pace of collecting in the past, the documentation work of curatorial staff simply cannot keep pace with the growth of the collection. Fortunately, the implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Hong Kong since 2006 has provided new impetus for the museums in using the tangible collections to promote the safeguarding of the local intangible heritage, thus re-connecting the collection with the community.

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted by the UNESCO in 2003 and China was the sixth country to ratify the Convention in 2004. At the invitation of the Central Government, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Government agreed in December 2004 that the Convention would be applied to Hong Kong. The Convention entered into force on 20 April 2006, when thirty countries had formally ratified and became the States Parties of the Convention. The Hong Kong SAR Government thus set up a new Intangible Cultural Heritage Unit under the Hong Kong Heritage Museum of the LCSD in early 2006 to implement the Convention.

The Convention defines “safeguarding” as measures aiming at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such

heritage.⁵⁹ It follows that one of the key obligations of States Parties is to draw up an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage within its territory in order to ensure identification and documentation with a view to safeguarding. To fulfill the obligation of compiling the first inventory of intangible cultural heritage in Hong Kong, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Unit is tasked, among other things, to conduct a territory-wide survey of local intangible cultural heritage. Subsequently, the South China Research Center of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology was commissioned in 2009 to conduct the survey. The survey team is currently conducting extensive field work to document the identified items through photographic and video recordings, and through oral history interviews with the heritage bearers. In order to engage the community in the survey, representatives of the Hong Kong Heritage Museum and the South China Research Center have attended meetings of District Councils and organizations to introduce the territory-wide survey and to invite the community to apply for inscription of local items on the inventory. The process has aroused much interest among local community on their own intangible traditions. It is anticipated that the territory-wide survey will generate a huge pool of data and information which will help to bridge the gap between the museum collections and the living intangible traditions in the community, thus bringing new life to the rich ethnological collection in the museum stores.

To raise the visibility and to arouse public's interest in local intangible cultural heritage, the Government has applied for inscription of six local items namely Cantonese Opera, herbal tea drinks, *jiao*-festival of Cheung Chau, dragon boat parade of Tai O, *yu lan* ghost festival of Chiu Chow community and fire dragon dance of Tai Hang on the national list of intangible cultural heritage in China. While the first two items were successfully inscribed on the first national list in 2006, the other four items are expected to be inscribed on the third national list later this year. Cantonese

Opera was further inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in September 2009, making it the first world intangible cultural heritage of Hong Kong. This successful inscription has helped raise the profile of this century-old performing art form which has long been regarded as outdated by most people. The unique Cantonese Opera collection of the Heritage Museum as well as its Cantonese Opera Gallery has thus attracted much attention of those working in the field and the general public alike. More old masters have agreed to donate their costumes and accessories to the museum to enrich the Cantonese Opera collection. More resources will be channeled to the research and display of the collection so that the Hong Kong Heritage Museum would become one of the most significant repository and research center of this unique folk performing art of Cantonese Opera in the world. It should be noted that Cantonese Opera is not only popular in the Guangdong and Guangxi provinces but also among the thousands of overseas Cantonese who have migrated in large quantity to countries in Southeast Asia, Australia, North America and Europe as well in the past two centuries. To these overseas Chinese, Cantonese Opera is one of the most popular forms of entertainment which gives them a taste of their homeland and reminds them of their cultural identity. It is expected that the Hong Kong Heritage Museum's Cantonese Opera collection would in time cover those many artefacts of overseas Chinese so that the culture and history of the overseas Chinese can be studied through this tangible collection in the museum.

New Uses of Collections in the Museums of Mainland China

The museums in the Mainland China have been growing in a very fast pace, particularly in the past two decades. At the establishment of the new authority in 1949, there were merely 21 museums in China⁶⁰ although there were flourishing developments in the 1920s to 1930s. After six

⁵⁹ UNESCO, *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 17 October 2003. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf>.

⁶⁰ *Zhongguo bowuguan: Cong cangbaoku dao mofabangg* (The Museums of China: From Treasure Store to Magic Stick), *Zhongguo Wenhua Bao* (China Cultural News), 1 February 2010, from http://www.namoc.org/news/yjxw/2010/201002/t20100201_119976.html.

decades of development, the number of museums has grown to become 2,970 at the end of 2008, in which 2,161 were government, 490 institutional and 319 private.⁶¹ The number is about 88 and 141 times than that in 1978 and 1949 respectively. The total number of museum collections now stands at 20 millions. Recently, the national government promulgated a legal notice, “*Guanyu Quanguo Bowuguan, Jinianguan Mianfei Kaifang De Tongzhi*” (Notice on Free Admission Arrangements for the Museums and Memorial Halls in China) in January 2008 lifting the admission charges of 1,447 public museums. The new policy did bring a drastic increase in museum attendance. The total museum attendance recorded since the new policy has been amounted to 820 million, which represents an average increase of 50% of attendance of each museum. The keen competition for visitors amongst museums has prompted museums to explore new ways in using their collections so as to attract more visitors. Hence, the new development in the roles of collections in the museums of the Mainland China is definitely worth studying. In view of the huge number of museums in the Mainland, it is not possible to present a comprehensive picture of all the new uses of collections in a single paper. This paper, thus, will focus on two of the recent outstanding examples.

The use of collections in the past decades in the Mainland museums was rather passive. This was mainly due to the emphasis on collecting rather than using, the “privatization” of collections by individual museums, the mentality of museum workers to maintain the *status quo* of collections so as to avoid unnecessary hiccups, the inadequacy of the related ordinances and regulations, the lack of creativity in display, the lack of funding and the need to “safekeeping” the collections in storage.⁶²

⁶¹ ‘*Shijie Bowuguan Ri: Jujiao zhongguo bowuguan*’ (International Museum Day: Focusing on the Museums of China), *Guang Ming Daily*, 18 May 2010, from <http://big5.huaxia.com/zhwh/whgc/2010/05/1889374.html#>.

⁶² Xu Junping, ‘*Bowuguan cangpin liyong cunzai de wenti ju duice*’ (The Problems and Solutions to the Use of Museum Collections), *Zhongyuan Wenhui* (Cultural Relics of Central China), Issue no. 3, 2001, p. 78.

Notwithstanding this, in view of the enormous number of significant collections and a wide range of museums in the mainland, it is not easy for the collections of any single museum to stand out. As such, some of the museums are very keen to explore new uses of collections to make them, as well as the museums, known to the world.

There are two recent outstanding examples of creative use of collections to give new roles to museum collections in the context of contemporary times. The first example is the use of the Sun and Immortal Bird, a gold ornament of ancient *Shu* culture of some 3,000 years ago. The ornament was unearthed in 2001 at the Jinsha archaeological site in Chengdu, Sichuan province, a place described in ancient Chinese literature as even harder to reach than the blue sky. The excavation in Jinsha revealed that the site was a major settlement of the late Shang and Western Zhou periods, occupying an area of 3 sq km and following in date the famous Sanxingdui site. Excavations have yielded about 10,000 archaeological finds, in which 6,000 are gold ware, bronze objects, jade, stone ware, lacquered and wooden ware etc apart from an abundant quantity of ivory and wild boar bones. Remnants of palaces, ritual sites, dwellings, burial grounds etc. were also unearthed. The very rich and important relics, as well as the extent of the Jinsha site help prove the significance of the site which was reasonably defined as the Capital of ancient *Shu* after the Sanxingdui site in the close proximity. The excavation was awarded one of the “Top Ten Archaeological Discoveries of China in 2001”⁶³.

The Sun and Immortal Bird was unearthed on 25 February 2001 in a ritual site of Jinsha. It is a circular gold ornament hollowing in the centre. The diameter of the outer ring is 12.5 cm and the inner ring 5.29 cm. The ornament is 0.02 cm thick and weighed 20 grams. The percentage of gold is 94.2% which is the purest gold article unearthed in the site. The pattern of the ornament was made of 12 tooth-like arcs equally spaced apart in anti-clockwise direction which are interpreted as the sun. The arcs are then encircled

⁶³ Zhangyi, Zhu; Qing, Zhang; Fang, Wang, “The Jinsha Site: An Introduction”, *Journal of East Asian Archaeology*, Volume 5, Numbers 1-4, 2003, pp. 247-276

by four birds stretching their legs and wings flying also in an anti-clockwise direction to echo with the sun. The numbers “twelve” and “four” were interpreted as the four seasons and twelve months which were brought about by the sun. The design of the ornament is in great harmony and good balance. From a closer observation, traces of tool marks left by blunt tools carving repeatedly on the surfaces could still be seen on the ornament.

It is not uncommon to see the use of the motifs of the sun and bird in many ancient civilizations as the sun was regarded as the source of life, which brought seasons, day and night and energy to the earth, and the bird as immortal as it could fly in the sky, which human of ancient times could never do the same. In ancient China, the popular worship of the sun and bird could be witnessed by the archaeological finds and ancient literature. Moreover, the worship of the sun and the association of the bird with the sun could also be found in many ancient civilizations of the world..

Although the design of the Sun and Immortal Bird from Jinsha is perfect and the ornament embraces with a very rich intangible heritage of ancient civilizations, it is very difficult, indeed, for it to stand out amongst the hundreds of thousands of important relics in the country. In 2004, the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH) invited, for the first time, entries for the logo for the protection of cultural heritage of China to raise the awareness of the public and to promote the newly amended legislation and implementation regulations for cultural heritage. According to the invitation for entries, the logo should be beautifully designed and able to bring out clearly the importance of the cultural heritage of China and to echo the policy to salvage, preserve, use and manage properly the cultural heritage. In October of the same year, SACH selected the winning entries. When public consultation on the selected entries was made, many views considered that the proposed champion design was not relevant to speak for the very rich cultural heritage of the country. Although this champion design was later adopted by the Ministry of Culture as the logo of intangible cultural heritage of China in 2006, the then SACH had great reservation in announcing the winning entries towards the end of 2004. At

this juncture, many new designs, including the Sun and Immortal Bird were sent to SACH through various means including recommendations from heritage experts, the community and designers themselves. The harmony, balance and the rich metaphor of the ornament soon captured the attention and won over the panel of experts of SACH which comprised experts on heritage conservation, archaeology, art and design. In August 2005, SACH conducted another round of public consultation on the shortlisted entry, i.e. the Sun and Immortal Bird. The shortlisting met with strong objection from the museum of Hemodu in Jiejiang province, which submitted an ivory ornament designed in “double birds facing the sun”. The Hemodu museum maintained that the ornament should have edge on the Sun and Immortal Bird since it carried the same rich meaning, was also made of precious material and, more importantly, was 3,000 years earlier than the Sun and Immortal Bird. The debate was heat. The panel of experts of SACH, after reconsidering the arguments presented, maintained the results of the shortlisting as they considered age and materials were not their main concerns. Instead, the overall design of the logo which could bring out the clear messages of the cultural heritage of China should count most. The panel also considered that simple was beautiful and easy to remember. Although the logo of the Sun and Immortal Bird was simple, it was also dynamic and carried the rich meaning of the worship to the sun and bird by ancient civilizations. The debate arising from this logo design competition was more than a debate on design. It has aroused the museums how to use their cultural heritage resources and blend them with creativity to reach their ultimate goals.

In October 2005, the Sun and Immortal Bird was formally announced by SACH as the logo for the protection of cultural heritage of China. The logo design competition had made the Sun and Immortal Bird as well as the Jinsha site well known not just to the archaeologists but also to the public of the mainland. A silk embroidery with the design of the Sun and Immortal Bird was carried by the spaceship Shenzhou 6 to the space in 2005. After the space travel, the silk embroidery was displayed at the meeting venue of

the 15th ICOM China meeting at the conference period.

In fact, before the Sun and Immortal Bird was selected as the national logo for the protection of the cultural heritage of China, the Jinsha museum had started to use the image of the ornament in many creative ways. The motif was used in the design of the Jinsha Site Museum which has a gross floor area and greenery open space of about 24,000 and 138,000 square meters respectively. The motif was featured prominently at the main dome of the museum and the floor of the dome. Any one visiting this new site museum in Chengdu will not miss this important motif. The motif was also used for writing a musical which tells a love story between a man of the contemporary times and a beautiful lady of Jinsha era. The ticket of the musical is sold at RMB 150, 280 and 580 which is not cheap in the current living standard of China. Notwithstanding this, the musical is very well received. Since its first playing in 2005, it has been shown over 1,000 times and has attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors all over the country. Almost in parallel with the showing of the musical, an animation film also themed on Jinsha is being planned and produced. After five years of production, the film is ready for showing soon. It is acclaimed as the best animation film ever produced in China. Of course, the motif of the Sun and Immortal Bird has also been used to design a wide range of souvenirs like umbrella, cap, fan, T-short, necklace, lighter, key ring, ear rings, bracelet, lacquer ware, gold ware, ring, name card holder, screen panels etc. The Sun and Immortal Bird is now much more than an important archaeological find, it is also an important bridge connecting the museum and the site with not just the people of China, but also the people of the world.

Another outstanding example is the well-known scroll, *Qingming Shanghe Tu* ("Along the River during the Qingming Festival") by Zhang Zedun (1085-1145) of the Song dynasty, which has been animated and is currently being shown in the China Pavilion of Shanghai Expo. The scroll, measuring 528.7 cm long and 24.8 cm wide, is regarded as one of the national treasures in the huge collection of the Palace Museum in Beijing. It is a national treasure not just because of its

artistic merits, but also because of its authenticity in capturing the real life of common people and the accurate images of the setting of the then capital Bianjing (today's Kaifeng) in the times of Northern Song dynasty. The panoramic scroll starts from the suburbs of Bianjing where there are a few mat huts, old trees, small streams, sedan chairs carrying people who returned from tomb worshipping, a fleet of donkey driven carts etc, and then moves on to the approaches to the bustling city where people were engaging in all sorts of daily activities like selling things, rolling ships, crossing bridges, shopping, begging, socialization, enjoying tea in tea house etc. Along the main street of the city, shops providing various kinds of services which could satisfy the daily needs of the people were flicking on both sides. The scroll depicts 814 people, 28 boats, 60 animals, 30 buildings, 20 vehicles, nine sedan chairs and 170 trees. It is extremely significant as it depicts the life of all levels of people, from the rich to the poor, and different economic activities in the city during Northern Song period.

In the course of history, a number of artists imitated this painting by Zhang Zedun. It is believed that more than 30 imitations from Yuen dynasty to Qing dynasty had been made, many of them had been collected and studied by major museums in the world. When the design for the China Pavilion of Shanghai Expo 2010 which is themed "Better City – Better Life" were invited, the specifications for the design invitation did not specify to use the painting "Along the River During the Qingming Festival" but requested that the facets of the city from the past, present and future should be told. A total of 40 teams from the Mainland China and overseas countries submitted proposals, in which 17 used the images of "Along the River During the Qingming Festival" in their design. Such a coincide tells the fact that, to many people, this painting is a masterpiece to depict the true facets of an ancient metropolis and is the most historic piece although it is neither as colourful nor impressive in term of size as comparing with other imitations of later times. After the design had been shortlisted and commissioned, the work to animate the painting thus started. To bring the scroll in a contemporary context, a team of experts which consisted of artists, art historians, programmers

and marketing executives was working day and night to try out different options. Finally, it came to a conclusion to turn the painting into a stunning digital tapestry with a size of 832 square meters measuring 128 meters long and 6.5 meters high. This is 700 times larger and 30 times wider than the original scroll. The digital mural shows both the day and night time of Bianjing in 2 minutes each. A total of 691 people appear in day time and 377 at night time. The digital scroll also moves. The digital mural does not fully adopt the images of the original scroll as it includes night time and give motion to the scroll. The creativity together with the arts immediately caught the attention of visitors when it was shown. The success of this digital tapestry prompts the use of multi-media to interpret classical arts. The case of the scroll “Along the River During Qingming Festival” demonstrates that museum collections are more than educational. They can, through creative display and interpretation, delight and entertain people.

Conclusion

Museum nowadays is more than a cultural institution to perform their conventional roles to research, preserve, display and educate. It is also an open platform for people to learn, communicate and dialogue and to delight and entertain people. The twenty-first century witnesses another important stage in the development of museums in both Hong Kong and the Mainland. The **Museum Plus** or **M+** of West Kowloon Cultural District in Hong Kong and the blooming of museums in the Mainland give much impetus to the museum field. The situation prompts museum workers as well as policy makers to re-think the positioning and branding of their museums. Finding new roles for museum collections is definitely one of the feasible ways to explore new ways to face the challenges the museums are facing nowadays.

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In 2001 she was seconded to the Home Affairs Bureau post of Chief Curator (Policy Review) to formulate and review cultural heritage policy. By 2003 she had attained a Master of Architecture, and in 2005 took up the position of Chief Curator (Heritage) in the Home Affairs Bureau and has assisted in the Hong Kong-hosted portion of the 2008 Olympic Games.

In 2006, she assisted in the planning of the West Kowloon Cultural District. She is author of two full-length plays including *The Evacuation Order*, inspired by local farming culture, performed by the Hong Kong Dance Company in 2004. Susanna currently teaches the Antiquities and Monuments of Hong Kong course at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She is a member of the International Advisory Board of the Centre for Cultural Heritage Studies for the Chinese University of Hong Kong's Anthropology department.