

LCQ18: Developing Hong Kong into an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange

Following is a question by the Hon Yim Kong and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (July 5):

Question:

There are views that developing Hong Kong into an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange can help promote the spread of traditional Chinese culture worldwide and provide impetus for building a strong country in culture, and the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) has played an important role in the relevant work. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of East-meets-West cultural exchange activities organized at the arts and cultural facilities of WKCD since their commissioning, and the scale of such activities;

(2) whether it knows if the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCD) will in future consider regularly organizing exhibitions on important civilizations and cultures of mankind, such as the ancient Egyptian culture, the Persian culture and the Maya culture; if WKCD will, of the details;

(3) whether it knows if, apart from the Hong Kong Palace Museum, other venues in WKCD have plans to organize activities to promote traditional Chinese culture on a regular basis; whether WKCD will allow some Chinese folk art groups to establish residencies at the performance venues in WKCD, so as to step up the promotion of traditional Chinese culture to the general public; and

(4) whether it knows if WKCD has plans to assist Hong Kong's arts groups and artists in going global and participating in cultural exchange activities held overseas, so as to tell the stories of China and Hong Kong well?

Reply:

President,

The current-term Government is committed to fostering the cultural development of Hong Kong. To realise the strategic positioning of Hong Kong as an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange, the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department actively collaborate with Hong Kong Arts Development Council, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, the West Kowloon Cultural District

Authority (WKDA) and other different stakeholders to utilise Hong Kong's distinctive advantages as a cultural melting pot of East and West and make good use of our rich cultural resources. Amongst all, West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) is one of the most important cultural infrastructure projects of the Government. The vision and mission of the WKCD project is to create a vibrant arts and cultural hub, presenting the best quality arts and cultural programmes from Hong Kong, the Mainland and around the world, as well as telling the world the good stories of Hong Kong and our motherland. The reply to the question raised by Hon Yim is as follows:

(1) and (2) The two world-class museums in WKCD, namely M+, Asia's first global museum of contemporary visual culture, and Hong Kong Palace Museum (HKPM), have been promoting cultural exchange between the East and West by actively collaborating with cultural institutions worldwide.

For example, "Grand Gallop: Art and Culture of the Horse", one of the opening special exhibitions of the HKPM, was held in collaboration with the Louvre of France, exemplifying the dialogue between the finest art objects of the Palace Museum and the Louvre of France.

The HKPM presented the special exhibition "Odysseys of Art: Masterpieces Collected by the Princes of Liechtenstein" from November 2022 to February 2023. From the Chinese ceramics preserved in European royal collections to the commissioned gardens, one can explore the impact of Chinese art and culture on European decorative arts and architecture. In addition, the HKPM has launched another exhibition, "Cartier and Women" in collaboration with Cartier in April 2023. The exhibition displays global culture, including the profound influence of Chinese arts and culture to Cartier. Through a global perspective and an innovative curatorial approach, the said two exhibitions showcase the story of the interactions between the Eastern and Western arts and culture.

In the latter half of this year, the HKPM will join hands with the Sichuan arts and cultural institutions to co-organise a special exhibition titled "Gazing at Sanxingdui: New Archaeological Discoveries in Sichuan" in late September. The exhibition will showcase 120 precious pieces of artefacts dating back 2 600 to 3 300 years, highlighting the richness and beauty of traditional Chinese culture. The HKPM is launching a special exhibition in collaboration with the National Gallery, London, in November this year, featuring European oil painting masterpieces.

As we celebrate the 45th anniversary of China's reform and opening up, M+ is set to launch a special exhibition, "Madame Song: Pioneering Art and Fashion in China", on July 29, 2023. The exhibition presents the story of Madame Song Huai-Kuei, a legendary figure in contemporary China's art, film, music, and fashion domains, and displaying the transformation of China's contemporary visual culture in recent decades.

The two museums of WKCD will continue to actively explore collaboration opportunities with cultural organisations worldwide and promote cultural exchanges between the East and West and to strengthen mutual learning amongst

different civilisations through different exhibitions.

(3) Apart from various exhibitions of the HKPM, the Xiqu Centre has also been promoting traditional Chinese culture, particularly the preservation of Cantonese opera and Chinese traditional theatre. The Xiqu Centre organised the "Black Box Chinese Opera Festival" in October 2022, showcasing a wide range of regional genres and the vibrancy of Chinese Opera through bold experimentation.

Since the resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland, the Xiqu Centre has in turn welcomed the performances of Shijiazhuang Hebei Bangzi Opera Troupe led by Pei Yanling, a National Class One Performer and Xiqu artist, and Shen Tiemei and Wang Chao, Sichuan opera artists, showcasing the local audience and tourists visiting Hong Kong the unique charm of Chinese traditional theatre.

To further promote the preservation of Chinese traditional culture, the Tea House Rising Stars Troupe, comprising young local Xiqu artists and musicians, was established by WKCD under the artistic curatorship of Mr Law Ka-ying, the renowned Cantonese opera artist. As the resident troupe at the Xiqu Centre, the Troupe presents "Magic Tea House", a programme in Tea House Theatre, to attract audiences who are new to Cantonese opera through innovative presentations.

The upcoming major performance venue in WKCD is the Lyric Theatre Complex, which is scheduled to be completed in 2025 and will showcase the best of Hong Kong and international dance and theatre. The complex will provide residency for dance companies and artists in Hong Kong to develop dance art and explore inter-discipline collaboration.

(4) WKCD has been actively participating in international cultural exchange. Since January 2023, WKCD has organised over a hundred official visits and tours for senior Mainland and overseas officials, leaders of arts and cultural organisations and media representatives visiting Hong Kong. The visits and tours have allowed visitors from all over the world to learn about the development of WKCD and Hong Kong's unique advantage of the staunch support from the Mainland and our global outlook, and to explore collaboration opportunities as well as to promote cultural exchanges between Hong Kong, the Mainland and overseas. Meanwhile, WKCD has sent representatives to engage in different cultural exchange activities around the globe. In March 2023, WKCD organised the "West Kowloon Cultural District Art Week", and invited thousands of leaders from the cultural and museum sectors worldwide. Through museum visits, thematic seminars, public talks and other activities, the event promoted the interaction and exchange of the global cultural community.

Furthermore, WKCD proactively promotes the local art groups and artists to "go global". For example, M+ has collaborated with the Hong Kong Arts Development Council for co-presenting in the Venice Biennale for five times, displaying the outstanding works of Hong Kong visual artists and curators to the world on international arts platforms. "Farewell My Concubine (New

Adaptation)", the Xiqu Centre's first ever commissioned Experimental Cantonese Opera, has received a number of accolades and will tour in Seoul, Korea, and cities in the Mainland including Xiamen, Beijing, and Qingdao later this year to promote the excellence of Chinese Opera.

The Government will continue to seize upon WKCD's unique strengths of presenting Chinese and international cultures and of blending traditional and contemporary elements to showcase Hong Kong's unique charm as the East-meets-West Centre for international cultural exchange, and to tell the good stories of China and Hong Kong.