

LCQ2: Promotion of local art

Following is a question by the Hon Bernard Chan and a reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (February 20):

Question:

Since the launch of the West Kowloon Cultural District Development project consultation exercise, there has been a growing interest in the relevant issues among members of the community, and quite a number of organisations even bring in famous foreign artistic works for exhibition in large shopping arcades and other venues in Hong Kong. Some members of the public have reflected to me that such activities help encourage art development and enhance the quality of life of members of the public. However, there seemed to be very few local artistic works among such exhibits. In fact, the quality of many local artistic works is also very high, and they should be given opportunities for exhibition. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) whether there is currently a policy specifying that the authorities should earmark space in public places, premises of government departments or properties and venues under their management for displaying artistic works (especially the local ones); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (b) in the past three years, of the average annual amount of funds expended by the Government in acquiring or hiring local artistic works for exhibition purposes, as well as the average quantity of artistic works involved per year; and
- (c) apart from those measures mentioned in the paper provided for the meeting of the Panel on Home Affairs of this Council on November 9, 2007, what other measures the authorities currently have to promote local art in the community; and whether they will consider making reference to overseas practice to require the individuals or organisations concerned, when constructing new buildings in urban areas, to earmark capital of not less than a certain percentage of the construction costs of such buildings for developing public art, so as to further promote local art?

Reply:

Madam President,

(a) The Hon. Bernard Chan is raising the issue of displaying and installing artworks in public space, reflecting the views of some people. This concerns the issue of "public art". The development of "public art" would provide artists with more space to develop their talents and enable the public to come across and take part in activities relating to culture and the arts in their living environment.

The Government is actively promoting the development of "public art". Currently, there are displays of more than 40 pieces of artworks created by some 30 local artists in public areas where flows of people are particularly frequent such as Kowloon Park, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, area outside Hong Kong Museum of Art, piazza of Hong Kong Science Museum, Tsim Sha Tsui Centenary Garden, Tsim Sha Tsui East Promenade etc. In addition, art objects are also displayed in major housing complexes, commercial buildings, and university campuses.

The Art Promotion Office (APO) of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) is a dedicated Government office for the promotion of public art. Its mission is to bring art out of the museum to everyone's life. From time to time, the APO jointly organises public art projects with different partners to display local art objects in public area. For instance, the APO jointly organised the project, "Installation of Public Artworks at Yat Tung Estate, Tung Chung" with the Housing Authority from 2000 to 2006. 26 public artworks were commissioned by this project. The APO also collaborated with the Yuen Long District Council and the Highways Department between 2004 and 2007 to decorate a pedestrian subway in Yuen Long with tiles that featured pictures taken by local photographers. Furthermore, the "Public Art Scheme" which was launched by LCSD in 1999 has since then involved 17 local artists who created a total of 18 art objects (including sculptures and murals) which are currently displayed in the following different venues to embellish our living environment - Tai Po Central Plaza, Tsing Yi Complex, Kwai Tsing Theatre, Tseung Kwan O Public Library, Tuen Mun Public Library, Fanling Public Library, Hong Kong Central Library, Yuen Long Theatre, Man On Shan Public Library and Hong Kong City Hall. Furthermore, the Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre in Tsim Sha Tsui, Ko Shan Road Park and Po Hong Park will soon be installed with public artworks. In addition, under two LCSD's programmes "Artists in the Neighbourhood Scheme" and "Mobile Art Gallery", 276 local artworks were temporarily displayed in a wide range of public areas which covered almost all the 18 districts. These public areas include hospitals,

MTR stations, buses, bus stops, ferries, piers, shopping malls, bookstores and airport, etc. LCSD will continue to collaborate with different organisations and institutions, e.g. the Hong Kong Arts Centre and the commercial sector, to further promote the installation and display of artworks in public space.

Collecting and exhibiting local artworks are the core acquisition and exhibition strategy of the Hong Kong Museum of Art and the Hong Kong Heritage Museum. Apart from in-gallery display, the museum collections would also be made available to loan to other organisations for display. For example, 43 pieces of local artworks are currently displayed in the Hong Kong International Airport. The artworks at airport will be changed regularly.

The essential issues which we have to consider for displaying museum collections in public areas include - whether the venue concerned is equipped with a constant climatic environment that prevents deterioration of the exhibits and whether security control would be sufficient to prevent theft of the exhibits. We would therefore have to take into account these issues when we assess any loan-out requests.

(b) The Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong Heritage Museum and APO of the LCSD are actively promoting local art and encouraging creation by local artists. Their collection strategy is "Hong Kong" based focusing on preservation and collection of Hong Kong artworks to reflect the development and cultural characteristics of local art as well as the achievements of local artists. The museums also commission different artists to display or install artworks in public areas.

The expenditure used on acquiring and commissioning artworks by the two museums and APO is \$5.64M, \$6.14M and \$5.05M for 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07 respectively. Out of these expenditures in the same financial years, \$5.03M, \$5.04M and \$3.93M were spent on acquiring and commissioning local artworks. This reflects that a substantial proportion of the expenditures were spent on the acquisition and commissioning of local artworks.

Apart from acquiring collections for exhibition or display, the Government makes use of other channels to promote local art. For instance, the Hong Kong Central Library and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) are jointly organising the "Artwork on Loan" scheme to promote local art. Under this scheme, 132 artworks have already been created by 27 local artists and reproduced into 608 replicas for loaning out. Since the launching of the scheme in 2003, the artworks

have been loaned out for 4,900 times and the schools participated (e.g. secondary and primary schools, kindergartens, nurseries and the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education) amounted to 90. In addition, the general public and other organisations and institutions are eligible to borrow these art reproductions. Institutions which took part in the scheme include Hong Kong Juvenile Care Centre, Causeway Bay Baptist Church, the Society of Rehabilitation and Crime Prevention, Hong Kong, and Lok Kwan Social Service.

LCSD works closely with local art groups to promote local art, and the examples of partnership between these two parties are numerous.

(c) We have made reference to overseas policy and measures in the promotion of local art. The division of labour in Hong Kong is similar to that of other places, i.e. collecting and displaying artworks are usually undertaken by institutions like art museums, whereas sponsorship to artists and art groups is entrusted to organisations like arts development council and foundations. Some overseas countries and cities have implemented the "Percent for Art" scheme which requires to set aside a certain percentage of the sum of spent on construction works for acquiring or commissioning artworks, or organising public art activities. The percentage normally is within the range of 0.25% to 2%. The effectiveness of the scheme varies in different places owing to the different levels of maturity of the community in culture and the arts. The effectiveness of various local art promotion strategies would be different given the unique cultural, social and economic development of individual places.

While we do not have any "percent for art" scheme in Hong Kong, the Government is actively promoting local art through different channels and means.

The HKADC is actively widening the window for the community and the public to appreciate art through sponsorship and Proactive Projects on community art activities and related researches. In addition, HKADC supported community art activities, e.g. community dance contest, community drama programme, community Cantonese Opera competition etc. which were all very well-received. The HKADC also jointly worked with different institutions and shopping malls to organise activities, such as "Gallery Ferry", "Mobile Art Expedition", "Art Boutique" and "Artwork on Loan" to raise the public's interest in culture and the arts and pioneered to bring artworks into homes. It is currently formulating the following programmes which are to be launched within this year and details and budget of which are being discussed - "Emerging Community Arts Promotion" and "Community Arts Award".

The 18 district councils encourage local artists and organisations to organise art activities and exhibitions in community through sponsorship. These activities are intended to raise the public's interest in art at community level. The district councils have co-organised or sponsored some 40 such programmes in the past three years.

We attach great importance to the public views on the development of local art and therefore maintain close contact with local art sector. We also collect public views through the opinion survey conducted by LCSD once every two years and other established channels to help update and implement new art promotion strategies.

Ends/Wednesday, February 20, 2008