

Wellington and HK to have closer art and culture ties (with photos)

Hong Kong and Wellington, New Zealand, may soon have closer art and culture ties after a visit to Hong Kong by Wellington Mayor Ms Kerry Prendergast.

Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Mrs Carrie Yau, said today (August 14) that Ms Prendergast's visit could be the start of closer artistic links between the two cities. "Both cities see themselves as strong arts and cultural hubs and we are keen to see if there are more ways in which we can collaborate together."

Both noted that collaboration had already taken place on several arts projects. New Zealand artists, such as the percussion group Strike and the Pacific group Te Vaka, have performed in Hong Kong with the assistance of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department.

The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts currently has a New Zealand contemporary dance choreographer in residence. This year, the academy has held several workshops and performances involving visiting artists from New Zealand in the areas of contemporary dance, classical music and Pacific music. A Hong Kong artist also spent time at the end of last year in Wellington as an artist in residence, with a New Zealand artist subsequently spending time in Hong Kong working as part of a community art project.

"We are keen to build on this base", Ms Prendergast said. "Wellington and Hong Kong share many geographical traits, with our impressive hills and harbours, and we're also both home to a number of important arts institutions. In Wellington, for example, we have our national museum, Te Papa, our National School of Dance, Te Whaea, and our biennial International Festival of the Arts.

"We believe there is scope to develop more ties between these sorts of institutions."

Mrs Yau said there were exciting potential opportunities. "Both cities can gain greatly from seeing the different cultural expression of the other."

Mrs Yau and Ms Prendergast agreed to keep in touch on ideas for possible art and cultural exchanges between the two cities.

Today Mrs Yau and Ms Prendergast were on a tour of the exhibition "Heavenly Horse – the Horse in Chinese Art and Culture" at the Hong Kong Museum of History. Mrs Yau said, "Art appreciation is actually closely linked with our everyday life. As shown in one of the exhibits, polo is a long-played sport in ancient China. We can find in art pieces many common connections between the Eastern and Western cultures."

The tour was part of a series of meetings and events that the mayor will participate in during her two-day visit to Hong Kong. Before her visit, Ms Prendergast attended the opening of the Olympic Games in Beijing, which has a sister city relationship with Wellington.

Ends/Thursday, August 14, 2008

