

LCQ8: Exhibitions and programmes of Hong Kong Museum of Art

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Sophie Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (January 6):

Question:

Given that the exhibition entitled "Louis Vuitton: A Passion for Creation" which was jointly organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Louis Vuitton and the Fondation Louis Vuitton pour la Création (the Fondation) and held at the Hong Kong Museum of Art (the Museum) between May and August 2009 had aroused the concerns of the local arts scene and the public, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) given that the Museum's vision includes raising the level of artistic appreciation of members of the public and broadening cultural horizons, how the Museum's procedure for exhibition planning ensures that such a vision can be realised;

(b) of the total expenditure for the aforesaid exhibition, as well as the respective amounts of the expenditure borne by the Government and the Fondation; whether it has formulated any guidelines on public expenditure (such as the maximum percentage of subsidies in the total expenditure) regarding the exhibition projects jointly organised by the Museum and commercial organisations; and

(c) given that the current members of the Museum's preparatory committee for exhibitions and programmes (including the Chief Curator, Curators from the various professional departments, Senior Managers and Senior Technical Officers) are all staff of the Museum, whether the authorities have considered adopting the views of the professionals in the relevant sectors during the process of selecting the exhibitions and programmes to be organised?

Reply:

President,

(a) The Hong Kong Museum of Art (the Museum) is required to follow a set of established procedures in presenting and organising exhibitions. Firstly, proposals of

exhibitions from internal studies on specific art themes/collections and also other different channels, including recommendations from other museums or cultural institutions, will be presented to the Museum curatorial staff and submitted to the Programme Committee of the Museum for consideration taking into account factors such as artistic, historical and educational value, authenticity of the exhibits and relevance to the Museum's programming strategy. The exhibition "Louis Vuitton: A Passion for Creation" was proposed jointly by the Consulate General of France in Hong Kong & Macau and the Fondation Louis Vuitton Pour La Création (the Fondation) for the consideration of the Museum. In the past, the Museum had organised similar international art exhibitions with different institutions such as "Too French" (1991) with the Cartier Foundation, "Miro – Spirit of the Orient" (1995) with the Public Municipal Foundation of Pilar and Joan Miro in Mallorca, Spain and "Otium Ludens – Leisure and Play: Ancient Relics of the Roman Empire" (2008) with the group comprising Champion Technology, A Better Tomorrow, the Chinese World Cultural Heritage Foundation and the World Cultural Relics Protection Foundation.

To build up audienceship and raise the artistic appreciation level of the general public, the Museum provided a variety of educational and associated programmes including guided tours, audio guide services, education corner, workshops, student creative programmes and fringe shows to facilitate the audience to appreciate this exhibition and experience artistic creations from different angles and perspectives so that their understanding of contemporary art could be enhanced. The exhibition successfully attracted new audience and an increased number of young patrons. The total number of visitors reached 120,000 which is record-breaking for local contemporary art exhibitions.

In terms of contents, the exhibition featured the Fondation's collection of important works of world-acclaimed contemporary artists, including those by Richard Prince, Jeff Koons, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Christian Marclay from the United States; Takashi Murakami from Japan; Gilbert and George from the United Kingdom; Andreas Gursky from Germany; Pierre Huyghe from France; and Yang Fudong and Cao Fei from China. The model of the new museum designed by the renowned architect Frank Gehry for the Fondation was also featured. The exhibition not only revealed the latest trends of visual art, but also showcased a collection of rare contemporary art masterpieces, thus providing the Hong Kong audience with a valuable opportunity to appreciate the works of these world-class masters in contemporary art. The presentation of the exhibition fully ties in with the Museum's mission "to enhance public knowledge and appreciation of art" and "to bring to Hong

Kong a multi-cultural vision of the arts and culture of the world". In addition, the exhibition was thought-provoking and inspired lively discussion on contemporary art among the general public and the art community. Their different responses were positive to the development of contemporary art in Hong Kong.

(b) There is no standard division of financial responsibilities in jointly-presented exhibitions between the Museum and other institutions. The share of financial responsibilities for each exhibition differs, depending on the result of negotiations among relevant parties. Nevertheless, the Museum will make reference to international practices and compare the expenditures incurred for previous exhibitions of similar scales for budgeting purpose. Both the Museum and the Fondation shared the responsibilities (e.g. logistic arrangements) and financial expenses of this exhibition. The total estimated cost for this exhibition was over HK\$20 million. The Museum was responsible for provision of venue facilities and customer services, education and promotion services and programmes, local publicity programmes etc., the expenditure of which amounted to HK\$5.9 million. The Fondation, on the other hand, shouldered all other costs including free loan of exhibits (at an estimated value of HK\$400 million), exhibition design, expenses of couriers, fabrication of exhibits and related provisions, international air shipment and insurance, regional publicity and commissioning and production of art works for the section "Hong Kong Seven" etc.

(c) The Programme Committee of the Museum is established according to professional requirements and in consultation with relevant Government departments. To assure that the selection process are to be conducted in a fair and professional manner and does not involve any conflict of interest, members of the Committee comprising the officers in charge of different units of the Museum are responsible for vetting proposals of exhibitions and programmes in respect of the proposals' quality, merits and viability. The Museum will also consult its Expert Advisors, who are independent professionals including art connoisseurs, eminent artists and academics, on individual exhibitions. As they are all recognised experts of respective disciplines, their comments are of high reference value.

Ends/Wednesday, January 6, 2010