

LCQ16:Development of public art

Following is a question by the Hon Lee Wing-tat and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (January 13):

Question:

Regarding the promotion of the development of culture and art in Hong Kong, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) apart from the public art programmes organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, of the government properties where spaces are currently allocated for displaying works of art by local artists, the names and locations of the properties as well as the categories and quantities of the works of art so displayed in the past three years, and the items and amounts of the resultant expenditure incurred for each property;

(b) whether the Government will consider further extending the aforesaid arrangement to provide additional spaces in more government properties for displaying works of art; if it will, of the names and locations of such government properties, the categories and quantities of works of art planned to be displayed, and the items and amounts of annual resultant expenditure estimated to be incurred for each property, with a breakdown by the phase of implementation of such arrangement; if not, the reasons for that; whether it will draw up new policies or internal guidelines to promote public art among government departments; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(c) given that, at the special meeting of the House Committee of this Council on May 22, 2009, the Chief Secretary for Administration undertook to allocate sites by the end of 2009 in nine District Council districts as trial spots for street performances, but the Government has not announced related arrangements so far, whether the Government can honour such an undertaking; if it cannot, of the reasons for that, and the specific difficulties for not being able to announce the sites of the trial spots; when the Government expects to announce the sites; if it can, of the names of the nine District Council districts where trial spots for street performances will be provided, the sites, their areas, application procedures for staging performances at the trial spots, as well as the estimated capacity of performing units or persons for each trial spot?

Reply:

President,

(a) We consider that pluralistic development of public art will provide local artists with opportunities to showcase their talents while the public can have the chance to participate in culture and the arts. The Government has been actively promoting the development of public art and providing support to local artists, through display of their creative works in public space in collaboration with arts groups or individual artists, non-profit making bodies, as well as public and private organisations, thus bringing art to the community.

Information available on government properties where works of local artists are displayed (including locations of the properties, categories and quantities of the works displayed over the past three years and the expenditure incurred, but excluding the public art programmes organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department) is set out at Annex I.

Together with four local universities, the Home Affairs Bureau has recently launched "Budding Winter", a large-scale community arts programme lasting two months from November 2009 to January 2010. Through the series of activities such as "Art in the Park", music and dance performances in parks, as well as free public and school guided tours, the visual and word art installations and performances of local young artists were showcased to the general public in four local parks (Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, Sha Tin and Tuen Mun). The project aims to demonstrate that arts can go beyond the walls of museums and galleries and can closely interact and connect with the community.

(b) Displaying artworks in government properties can further enhance the promotion of community arts. In this respect, our initial plan is to select at least one government joint-user building (JUB) from Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories respectively as trial spots and to commission local young artists and arts/design departments of tertiary institutions to display their artworks (e.g. paintings, sculptures and installation arts) in the public space of these buildings. We will launch the scheme as soon as practicable upon finalising details of the scheme with concerned government departments and engaging the relevant arts groups and institutions. We may consider extending the scheme to other suitable government JUBs after

reviewing its effectiveness and the resources required. We do not have the exact figure on the total funding required for the scheme which is subject to the size of the public spaces available in the selected government JUBs and the proposals we will receive from the arts groups or institutions.

If the scheme is implemented smoothly and well-received by the public, we will encourage government departments to display artworks in suitable public space of their properties so that more spaces can be opened up for local artists to create and display their works.

(c) We welcome street arts performances to enhance public access to the arts, and enrich the cultural life of the community and the characteristics of the city.

At present, there are no restrictions on street arts performances as long as they are lawfully conducted. Such performances are commonplace in various districts.

In fact, together with different arts groups, we are taking steps to enhance the promotion of outdoor cultural activities and arts performances to widen the audience base and bring arts to the community. For example, the Home Affairs Department, in collaboration with District Councils and community arts groups, organised the Community Arts Festivals in 18 districts during the period from September to December last year. Details are set out at Annex II.

We are also planning to provide a street performance venue at the Chai Wan Youth Square, where young people can showcase their creativity and talents in performances for the enjoyment of the public in the neighbourhood. Besides, "Dances Jam", including solo pipa, dance performances and Chinese calligraphy demonstrated by students of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts in Hong Kong Park, Kowloon Park and Tuen Mun Park in the above-mentioned large-scale arts programme "Budding Winter" also attracted a significant number of passers-by.

As for major outdoor performances, the "Symphony Under The Stars" concert presented by the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra in Happy Valley Racecourse Recreation Ground in mid-November last year attracted over 20 000 locals and visitors. The Hong Kong Arts Centre also presents "Street Music Series" at its main entrance from time to time for musicians and songwriters to play music of different styles, with interaction between the community and the musicians, thus nurturing a

unique street music culture. We will continue to strengthen our efforts in this respect for a more vibrant arts and cultural scene in the community.

Ends/Wednesday, January 13, 2010