Update on the Progress of the West Kowloon Cultural District Development

PURPOSE

This paper serves to update Members on the progress of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) development.

BACKGROUND

2. At the last three Consultation Panel meetings held on 19 December 2014, 27 February 2015 and 28 April 2015 respectively, the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA) updated Members on the progress of the hardware development of the WKCD project, including Xiqu Centre, the Park, M+, Lyric Theatre and Artist Square Development Area (ASDA). Members noted the visual arts and performing arts events held in the past years and were consulted on the various audience-building and stakeholder engagement initiatives, as well as major activities under planning for the coming year. Members were also consulted on the draft WKCD (Public Open Space) Bylaw and associated guidelines.

HARDWARE DEVELOPMENT

3. In the past few months, good progress had been made in the design and construction of all the Batch 1 and most of the Batch 2 facilities. The key achievements and milestones to date include the following:

**Xiqu Centre**

4. Construction works for Xiqu Centre is on-track for completion by 2017. Construction of the foundation is completed, substructure construction is well underway and the main superstructure works commenced in December 2014.

**Nursery Park**

5. In order to maintain some Park areas for public enjoyment throughout the development period, a Nursery Park has been built. This temporary facility comprises the tree nursery established on site to nurture mature trees for future planting in the Park, as well as a section of the existing
West Kowloon Waterfront Promenade with performance space and a cycle path. There are a number of versatile lawn areas surrounded by trees and plants. These spaces are suitable for both leisure pursuits and open-air events. The Nursery Park was opened to the public in July 2015 and the first in a series of public events, Freespace Happening, successfully took place on 9 August 2015.

6. The Nursery Park provides a good opportunity to test various aspects of the proposed park management philosophy, bylaw and guidelines aiming at the Park and public open spaces in the future District to be operated in a flexible and user-friendly manner. Upcoming programmes include further rounds of the Freespace Happening, which are intended to reach out to the youth community, encourage public participation, groom new partners and provide a platform for artistic development. From August 2015 to March 2016, the Nursery Park will feature a diverse range of events including light music performances, street dance, outdoor film screenings, street performances, freestyle soccer, art jams, handicraft stalls, tree nursery tours and other leisure activities for young audiences and families to enjoy. These regular events will help test the operation of the systems to be adopted in the future park and help build community support for and audience loyalty to the WKCD.

**The Park**

7. Procurement of the Park Main Works Contract including the Freespace and Public Infrastructure Works commenced in July 2015, with target closing date in August/September 2015. Construction of the Park will commence in the fourth quarter of this year. Completion of the Arts Pavilion is targeted for 2016 and the major portion of the Park with Freespace (made up of a black box and an outdoor stage) is targeted for 2017.

**M+**

8. The foundation works is in progress. Detailed design is completed and the main superstructure works contract is planned to be awarded by October 2015. Completion of the venue is targeted for the second half of 2018, with opening of the museum in 2019.

**Integrated Basement**

9. The Government is committed to fully fund the core and shell of the integrated basement. The Government plans to develop the integrated basement in phases to dovetail with the phased implementation of the WKCD. The Legislative Council (LegCo) Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project (Joint
Subcommittee) was consulted on a funding application for the first and second stages of design, site investigation and construction works of part of the integrated basement on 19 May 2015. The application was subsequently supported by the LegCo Public Works Subcommittee on 16 June 2015 and approved by the Finance Committee on 10 July 2015. The Government will entrust the relevant works to WKCDA to be carried out concurrently with the implementation of M+ and the Lyric Theatre Complex.

**Lyric Theatre Complex**

10. To meet the pressing demand for performing arts venues, the Board agreed to modify the design of the Lyric Theatre to turn this facility into a theatre complex. The Lyric Theatre Complex will incorporate the Medium Theatre II (MT II) and one of the black box theatres originally intended to form part of the Centre for Contemporary Performance (CCP). As a result, there will be a larger capacity Dance-focused Theatre, one Medium Theatre and one black box Studio Theatre in the Complex. This helps bring forward the delivery of some Batch 2 facilities (i.e. MT II and one black box in CCP) by several years. Detailed design for the Lyric Theatre Complex is now underway with target completion of the construction works in 2020. Completion Timeframes for the WKCDA (Batches 1 and 2) Facilities and some photos of existing project works on site are shown in Annex A and Annex B respectively.

**Artist Square Development Area**

11. Pursuant to the pragmatic approach to implement the WKCD project, the ASDA, comprising M+, Lyric Theatre Complex, other arts and cultural facilities (OACF), RDE facilities as well as office and residential developments, will be developed into a “mini-WKCD” with target completion around 2020. ASDA will form a precinct supported by a balanced mix of various land uses to facilitate “destination building” in the early phase development of the WKCD and enhance vibrancy in the vicinity of M+. ASDA will be connected to Elements via a new footbridge to enhance connectivity with this neighbouring development and the transport links in the area.

12. Development of the remaining Batch 2 facilities (including two black box theatres in CCP) will be deferred till the site now occupied for the construction of the West Kowloon Terminus of the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link is handed over to WKCDA. As for the Batch 3 facilities (including venues such as the Music Centre, Great Theatre and Musical Theatre), WKCDA is taking a holistic and strategic assessment to identify alternative funding approaches, with a view to completing the planned WKCDA facilities under the Development Plan,
fund the operation of the core arts and cultural facilities, and support the
wider development of the arts and culture in Hong Kong.

AUDIENCE BUILDING

13. In order to nurture new audiences, cultivate public interest and
appreciation of the arts, and raise public awareness of the WKCD project,
 WKCDA has initiated and co-presented a wide array of performances, events,
exhibitions, forums and workshops online, at the WKCD site and other
locations in Hong Kong throughout the year. Highlights of recent and
upcoming events include –

(a) **Rising Stars of Cantonese Opera** *(21 February to 2 March 2015)*
- To offer young artists in the field of Cantonese opera ongoing
training and performance opportunities and to nurture a new
generation of Cantonese opera artists in the run-up to the
opening of Xiqu Centre, the “Rising Stars of Cantonese Opera”
was held at the Ko Shan Theatre. Under the guidance and
curatorship of Mr LAW Ka-ying, 12 young rising stars
participated in a total of eight Cantonese opera performances
(four different casts for two full-length plays) and two nights of
Cantonese Opera excerpt performances, staged over ten nights.

(b) **Mobile M+: Moving Images** *(27 February to 26 April 2015)* –
M+’s inaugural moving image project consisting of a series of
thematic screenings at the Broadway Cinematheque and a two-
part exhibition, which included a selection of works from the
museum’s growing moving image collection, while exploring the
highly relevant ideas of contemporary migration, mobility and
home. The exhibition took place in two different locations:
Midtown POP and Cattle Depot Artist Village. Other activities
including public talks, post-screening talks, workshops, gallery
walks and guided tours were also held alongside the screening
programmes and exhibition, providing different access points and
viewpoints for the public and targeted communities such as
students to better understand the project content as well as M+’s
specific approach in developing its moving image strand.

(c) **Venice Biennale 2015** *(9 May to 22 November 2015)* –
*The Infinite Nothing*: the solo exhibition of the Hong Kong artist
Mr TSANG Kin-wah at the 56th International Art Exhibition of the
Venice Biennale, is the second collaboration between M+ and the
Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC). As part of the
exhibition, the Venice Biennale Talk Series, which included three public talks, took place from May to July 2015. These talks took the development of the artist’s artistic practice and his diverse influences as a starting point to expand public understanding about key concepts in contemporary arts, as well as provide greater context for Tsang’s newly-commissioned work for Venice.

(d) **Freespace Happening** *(August 2015 to March 2016)* - Building on the success of the annual Freespace Fest, a series of free outdoor events will take place in the Nursery Park on the second Sunday of each month. Each Freespace Happening features music, handicraft market, street performances and a selection of special attractions. Partnering with Youth Outreach, the first event was held on 9 August 2015.

(e) **Mobile M+: Live Art** *(tentatively December 2015)* – This project will exhibit live performance-based art and provide historic backgrounds and contexts to this artistic practice in different and engaging settings. Apart from the specific audience groups, such as performance and art professionals and art enthusiasts, this project also aims to introduce such artistic practices to a wider audience. To complement the overall project and reach more diverse audiences, additional talks, workshops, and other public events will also be organized.

(f) **M+ Digital** *(Scheduled to be launched in early 2016)* - M+ is developing a virtual curatorial platform which will present diverse contents intended for many different audiences, including an electronic academic journal for visual culture; a moderated discussion forum for timely and relevant artistic and cultural topics; online exhibitions of archival materials and printed matters, commissions by artists and creators; an e-academy mainly consisting of professionally produced videos for general audience’s self-learning as well as school teaching; a news aggregator bringing together interesting and informative news items from the world of visual culture; and a blog to highlight new contents on the site.

**CAPACITY BUILDING**

14. Well before the opening of its facilities, WKCD has been working to enhance Hong Kong’s artistic capacity through initiatives including seminars, workshops, training programmes, internship schemes and collaborative projects. These programmes seek to advance the artistic and
professional development of arts practitioners; extend their professional network; facilitate knowledge and cultural exchange; and raise the awareness of different art forms in the community. Recent programmes and initiatives are highlighted as follows -

(a) **Xiqu Cultural Exchange Programme** - WKCD is cultivating young artists by providing opportunities for them to learn from key Xiqu institutions and experts in the region. In collaboration with the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong, WKCD commenced this exchange programme by sending a delegation of ten emerging talents to Hangzhou to visit the Zhejiang Xiaobaihua Yue Opera Troupe (浙江小百花越劇團), an acclaimed all-female troupe, in April 2015. Participants took part in a series of artistic training and learning sessions on singing technique, acting skills and body movement, etc. WKCD will continue to organize similar exchange activities in the coming months.

(b) **Xiqu Centre Seminar Series** - In collaboration with the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Xiqu experts and artists from the Mainland and Taiwan were invited to conduct dialogues with local experts and share their experience and insights on future development of Xiqu. Demonstrations and master classes were also arranged. Following the success of four sessions in 2013 and 2014, the fifth session titled “New Thinking on the Development of Chuanju” was held on 22 August 2015 at Yau Ma Tei Theatre. Ms SHEN Tiemei from Chongqing (Chuanju performing artist, Vice Chairman of the Chinese Theatre Association) and Dr Fredric MAO from Hong Kong (Chair of the School of Chinese Opera at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts) were invited to share their experience in developing and promoting Chuanju, and on the innovation and revitalization of traditional Chinese theatre.

(c) **M+ Matters Series** – This series of public talks aims to explore critical issues with key players in the fields of visual art, design, architecture and moving images. Seven episodes were held in previous years and one episode has been held in 2015 so far. The eighth episode of the M+ Matters series is titled “Expanding the 1980s: The Landscape of Art in China and East Asia” with a symposium held on 13 January 2015, which highlighted the development of contemporary Chinese art in relation to its surrounding countries during the crucial transitional period of the 1980s, and examined the cultural and political landscapes of
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Japan and Korea in the final years of the Cold War and at the beginning of globalization.

(d) **Producers’ Network Meeting and Forum** - Being the first of its kind in the region, this event aimed at bringing together producers, curators and arts administrators to create action plans that can improve competitiveness, widen audience base and expand artistic content of new cultural and arts infrastructure. More than 30 participants from Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Mainland China, as well as speakers from Korea, Thailand, Finland, Taiwan and Canada joined the networking meeting held from 20 to 22 May 2015, while more than 200 participants and speakers joined the public forum held on 22 May 2015.

(e) **M+ Summer Camp “Unframed” (21 to 24 July 2015)** – This was the first youth-targeted initiative presented by M+. The four-day-three-night camp took place at the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups Jockey Club Sai Kung Outdoor Training Camp. A total of 100 secondary school students aged 15 to 18 joined the camp and M+, together with 10 practitioners from different disciplines acting as instructors and speakers offered young people an experience to discover creative and unusual approaches to look at the familiar, and to explore different ways of thinking and experiencing. Activities included workshops, talks, sharing, performances and outdoor activities conducted in small groups or collectively, all facilitated by the instructors. M+ aspires to build a long-term relationship with the young people of Hong Kong, whose feedback and voices will serve as important references for M+ as it goes forward. Participants of the summer camp will be invited to work and collaborate with M+ to develop future programmes.

(f) **New Works Forum** – With a view to enhancing local theatre development, a series of New Works Forum are organized to provide a platform for Hong Kong artists working across different fields to expand their practice into new areas through exploring innovative ways of creating and performing, as well as thinking and discussing topics around contemporary performances. Co-presented by WKCD and City Contemporary Dance Company, “New Works Forum: Screendance” was held from late July to early August 2015 to provide the opportunity for artistic exchange, with the aim of nurturing new creations in the art of screendance. The speakers and participants shared international trends in screendance, engaged in a discussion of the existing model of
making screendance, upon the form, and its content, practice and presentation.

(g) **International Workshop Festival of Theatre** - The Festival features workshops, public lectures, dialogues with Hong Kong artists and an online archive giving theatre practitioners the opportunity to augment their knowledge and skills in the company of leading theatre and contemporary performance makers from around the world. The Festival takes place from 6 August to 14 November 2015 and 8 international theatre and contemporary performance makers have been invited to share their experience and approaches to performance-making. The first session “On Documentary Theatre” was held from 6 to 8 August 2015 in collaboration with Goethe-Institut Hongkong and On & On Theatre Workshop.

(h) **M+ Docent Volunteer Programme** – M+ now has a team of 47 docents and ongoing training and workshops were offered to these docents to prepare them for the coming exhibitions of M+. It is planned that the programme will be re-launched as the M+ Mediator Programme in early 2016, where the roles of mediation and interpretation will be explored in depth with the volunteers.

(i) **M+ Internship Programme** – This is a recurring programme, run in the spring and autumn of each year (three interns are recruited for each intake). Targets are individuals who want to pursue a career in the visual culture field. During the three-month programme, each intern is placed directly with an M+ staff mentor and takes part in M+’s ongoing projects to gain hands-on experience in museum operation, education and exhibitions. Four intakes were completed so far.

(j) **Venice Biennale Internship Programme and Training Positions** - As part of its commitment to nurture local talents interested in working in the visual art field, M+ has also launched the extensive Venice Biennale Internship Programme for the 56th Venice Biennale which runs from April to November 2015. Two technical interns and ten exhibition interns were offered the chance to work closely with the M+ team in the Hong Kong exhibition for six weeks to gain a unique insight into the workings of the world’s oldest and most renowned international art exhibition. Two junior positions of Assistant Curator (on a one-year term) and Curatorial Intern (on an 18-month term) were created specifically for the Venice Biennale project, providing an invaluable on-the-job training opportunity for local young art
curators. The interns were also invited to share their insights and experience gained from working on the exhibition in the Interns’ Blog of the exhibition.

(k) **M+ Artist Visiting Programme** - Launched in November 2014, this programme brings artists and creators to interact and engage with the M+ curatorial team. It brings to Hong Kong five to six practitioners each year and provides them with opportunities to learn about M+; research on Hong Kong’s visual culture; share ideas, thoughts and perspectives of their art practices; and help the M+ team in intellectual and curatorial development, while looking into possibilities of developing concrete projects in the form of public programmes, commissions, or acquisitions. So far seven practitioners, including film makers and visual artists, have participated in this programme.

(l) **M+ Rover (early 2016)** – This is a major school outreach programme to bring a museum experience directly to schools, utilize the museum and its resources to motivate deeper learning, get connected with teachers and students, and inspire creative and innovative learning in the teachers’ daily practice. A custom-made trailer will visit schools in Hong Kong and offer a unique learning experience for teachers and students. Activities, learning packs and online resources will be developed by M+ in collaboration with artists and educators to suggest ways of exploring contemporary visual culture and artists’ practice.

(m) **M+/Design Trust Research Fellowship Programme** – M+ was invited by Design Trust, a new initiative launched by the Hong Kong Ambassadors of Design, to be a partnering institution for an annual research fellowship grant. This programme aims to support an original research project investigating issues relating to design and architecture in the Greater Pearl River Delta region, and between the region and other parts of the world. Apart from expanding the current body of knowledge in these areas, it is hoped that the findings from the fellowship will also inform future acquisitions and other programmes at M+. Design Trust will provide financial support for the Fellowship for up to six months whereas M+ is responsible for supervising the Fellowship and funding and organizing a public talk. This programme was launched in 2014 and applications for the second round of the programme closed on 30 June 2015, with 46 applications received.
Performing Arts Internship Programme - This programme was launched in 2014 aimed at people who are interested in developing a career in the arts. This six-month full-time internship runs on a recurring basis, with three openings in 2015-16. Summer interns were also newly launched this year. The interns work closely with the professional staff to gain theoretical as well as practical training in arts programming, research, facility design, operations and arts administration through active involvement in the on-going performing arts projects as well as a structured programme of workshops. A total of 12 interns participated in the internship programme in 2015.

Overseas training / research programme for leaders from local arts groups on future arts development in Hong Kong - WKCDA, together with HKADC, undertook this programme to nurture artists and arts administrators of local arts groups by expanding their vision and extending their networks globally in the form of overseas attachments in their respective artistic areas. The insights gained from the experience could provide them with useful strategies and ideas which would contribute to the local cultural development as well as the long-term development of the WKCD. Five talented artists from drama and dance disciplines were selected for attachment programmes in the United States, Europe and Asia in 2013-2015. All five participants completed their visits successfully and two sharing sessions have been held. In the second sharing session held on 28 April 2015, three artists shared their insights and successful cases of overseas arts organizations, centres and festivals in North America and Europe.

Cultural Leadership Summit - Since 2011, WKCDA has supported the annual conference organized by the Hong Kong Arts Administrators Association, which brings together experienced international and local cultural leaders to share and discuss important issues of cultural leadership and management relevant to the Hong Kong arts and cultural sector. For 2015, WKCDA supported the summit with the theme on “Raising for Our Future: Arts Funding and Philanthropy in Hong Kong” held in June. Several senior executives of WKCDA spoke in different sessions of the conference to share their views and experience.
STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

15. To ensure that future arts and cultural facilities in the WKCD site will meet the expectations of the public and users, WKCDA has been constantly communicating with the public and stakeholders to gather their views and update them on the latest development of the WKCD project.

16. M+ Public Forum is an event held regularly to inform the general public about the latest development of M+. The fourth forum was held on 10 March 2015 to update the public on the progress of the museum building and the Arts Pavilion project, M+’s expanding collection and collection strategies as well as M+’s forthcoming exhibition projects.

17. Apart from official programmes and events, communication and engagement with stakeholders also take place in the forms of attending local art and cultural events (for example, attending exhibitions and openings of Hong Kong galleries, museums and exhibition spaces, dinners or receptions); giving lectures in different institutions and universities; participating in public panels as well as small group discussions; one-on-one and small group meetings with members of the arts community; overseas meetings with artists, museum colleagues, architects and alike; and interviews with local as well as international media, etc.

18. On the other hand, the Performing Arts team has also held eight official engagement meetings since January 2015 to collect views from stakeholders in drama, dance, music, and xiqu disciplines. More than 100 discussions have been held with over 100 arts and cultural groups/institutions since 2010. Communication and engagement with stakeholders also take the form of attending local art and cultural events, giving lectures in different institutions and universities, participating in public panels and small group/one-on-one discussions with members of the arts community, and interviews with local as well as international media.

RECOMMENDATION

19. Members are invited to note the progress and share their views on the WKCD development.
Completion Timeframe of WKCD (Batches 1 and 2) Facilities

- 大型表演場地及展覽中心* (Mega Performance Venue & Exhibition Centre)
  - 黑盒劇場 (Black Box Theatre) (2016)
- 大劇院 (Great Theatre)
- 演藝綜合劇場 (Lyric Theatre Complex)
- 音樂會 (Music Centre)
- 中型劇場 (Medium Theatre)
- 戲曲中心 (Xiqu Centre) (2017)
- 再作研究 (To be reviewed)

**Annex A**

西九文化區 (West Kowloon Cultural District)
Annex B

Photos of design of facilities and project works on site

Xiqu Centre Design

Works on site (August 2015)

M+ Design

Works on site (August 2015)

Arts Pavilion Design

Works on site (August 2015)