

**Visual Culture Today and Tomorrow
(15 February 2022, Zoom webinar)**

Speaking Points for D(BL)

Dear Malgorzata, dear Agnieszka, distinguished panelists, Ladies and Gentlemen,

(General introduction)

- Good morning and good evening to those joining from Hong Kong. I am delighted to welcome you to today's webinar "Visual Culture Today and Tomorrow".
- Present-day experiences shape our art and our future. We live in a world where the field of art is constructed and redefined as our culture progresses.
- In recent years, visual culture has become a growing and important interdisciplinary field of study. When we speak of virtual culture, we often refer to the tangible expression and communication through visual means, highlighting the relationship between vision and knowledge. Visual culture is a living art form that morphs before our eyes. Our everyday experiences are now more visual than ever before.

(Arts market Hong Kong)

- So where does Hong Kong stand with regard to art in general and in virtual culture in particular? Arts and culture are a vital part of any world-class city's economic and social fabric. In Asia, the art market has demonstrated its resilience amid the pandemic, with Hong Kong emerging as the region's art hub.

- Hong Kong has traditionally been a centre for the trading of Chinese fine art and antiques. Besides, during the pandemic, the application of technology has also enabled us to enjoy a wide array of visual and performing arts at home. The application of technology has extended the horizon of creativity in arts and brought new opportunities for the arts and creative industries.
- There are multiple factors contributing to the resilience of Hong Kong's art market and artistic environment. The city's many excellent and well-funded museums and public art institutions, the dozens of blue-international galleries, its thriving ecosystem of specialised art-related professional services, and the sheer size of its arts market helped the art business in Hong Kong weathered the socio-economic impact of COVID remarkably well.

(Arts market in figures)

- In 2020, Hong Kong's global art market share **rose from 17.5% in 2019 to 23.2% in 2020, overtaking London for the first time.** I think these figures speak for themselves.
- As our way of living evolves especially during the pandemic, an important way of keeping pace is to go digital. Christie's held a hybrid in-person and online New York-Hong Kong auction in December 2020 that was watched remotely by 500 000 people. Digital tools such as Augmented Reality, audio tours and virtual viewing rooms were employed to enhance the online auction experience.
- Swiss art fair giant, Art Basel, also held its only physical event of 2020 in Hong Kong. Held over four days in November, "Hong Kong Spotlight by Art Basel" featured 22 galleries, with many participants reporting that they met or exceeded sales targets.

(Role of the HKSAR Government)

- Hong Kong has all along been an East-meets-West hub for international arts and cultural exchanges. Our Government is committed to supporting the arts and cultural sector, and the promotion of the arts is no doubt one of our top priorities. For instance, the development of the city's arts and culture formed a key part of the Government's budget in 2020-21, with a total of US\$709.5 million allocated to the arts and culture, excluding capital works expenditure. The Government has also been proactive in encouraging the related sectors to apply for funding and the CreateSmart Initiative to implement projects that integrate technology and arts. To this end, we have set aside a total of HK\$100 million under the various funds and will provide venues and complementary facilities for experimental use.
- When we talk about arts in Hong Kong, one will always think about the West Kowloon Cultural District, a flagship project designed to boost Hong Kong's art and cultural landscape.
- The centerpiece of the District is the M+, Hong Kong's new visual cultural museum which opened its doors to the public in November last year, dramatically changing the Asian art landscape. With most Asian museums operating as silos, telling the story of art in their own countries but seldom how artists influenced one another across borders, M+ is set to become one-of-a-kind in Asia.
- Since visual culture has the potential to be literally about everything, how does one go about creating a museum of everything? The creators of M+ defined its mission as collecting and curating visual culture, encompassing twentieth and twenty-first-century art, design and architecture, and moving image from Hong Kong, China, Asia and beyond.
- Apart from M+, we also have other upcoming exciting developments in the pipeline. They include the much-anticipated Hong Kong Palace Museum and the East Kowloon Cultural Centre, which are expected to open in 2022 and 2023 respectively.

- We wish to welcome you all with our new museums and a wide variety of exhibitions in Hong Kong in the near future. Meanwhile, I hope you all would enjoy today's webinar and I look forward to the fruitful discussion among our panellists!
- Thank you!

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