

RGC Ref. No.:

**UGC/FDS16(14)/H11/15**

(please insert ref. above)

**RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL  
COMPETITIVE RESEARCH FUNDING SCHEMES FOR  
THE LOCAL SELF-FINANCING DEGREE SECTOR**

**FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (FDS)**

**Completion Report**

*(for completed projects only)*

**Submission Deadlines:** 1. Auditor's report with unspent balance, if any: within **six** months of the approved project completion date.  
2. Completion report: within **12** months of the approved project completion date.

**Part A: The Project and Investigator(s)**

**1. Project Title**

Revisioning Ibsen: The Aesthetics and Politics of Staging the Self in China and Hong Kong

**2. Investigator(s) and Academic Department(s) / Unit(s) Involved**

Research Team	Name / Post	Unit / Department / Institution
Principal Investigator	Prof Tam, Kwok-kan / Chair Professor & Dean	Department of English, School of Humanities and Social Science, The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

**3. Project Duration**

	Original	Revised	Date of RGC / Institution Approval <i>(must be quoted)</i>
Project Start Date	1 January 2016	N/A	September 2015
Project Completion Date	31 December 2018	31 December 2019	8 November 2018
Duration <i>(in month)</i>	36 months	48 months	8 November 2018
Deadline for Submission of Completion Report	31 December 2019	31 December 2020	8 November 2018

## **Part B: The Final Report**

### **5. Project Objectives**

#### 5.1 Objectives as per original application

1. To examine postsocialist/postmodern reconceptualizations of the self and derive a critical view of Chinese Ibsenism as contested ideologies.
2. To theorize the staging of ideology and analyze aesthetic patterns of social reimagination in the contemporary Chinese-language theatre in China and Hong Kong.
3. To review the postmodern adaptations of Ibsen in post-1997 Hong Kong and compare Chinese experimentations with those in Hong Kong, both having recent examples of international collaboration, to discern the trend of global-local interplay in theatre productions.

#### 5.2 Revised objectives: NIL

Date of approval from the RGC: N/A

Reasons for the change: N/A

#### 5.3 Realisation of the objectives

*(Maximum 1 page; please state how and to what extent the project objectives have been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)*

All objectives have been achieved, with the following findings:

1. The project made possible a deep and thorough understanding of the modern and contemporary socio-cultural constructions of the self through dissemination of Ibsen's ideas of individualism and performance of his plays during different historical periods of modern China. New notions of women, class and nation are derived from Ibsen for the construction of modern Chinese identity. The ideological functions of Ibsen are notably part of the discourse changes in China.
2. Ibsen's plays, especially *Peer Gynt*, *An Enemy of the People*, *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* have been performed and adapted on the China mainland and in Hong Kong for different purposes over the last century. While Ibsenism has served political purposes on the China mainland, Ibsen has been rendered in Hong Kong sometimes in relation to political issues on the mainland and other times mainly for the cultural and aesthetic considerations, such as gender and women. Ideology is part of the theatre aesthetics in Chinese-language theatre, though less so in Hong Kong.

3. Stage productions of Ibsen in Hong Kong have been deeply influenced by both international and Chinese trends in theatre style and ideological renderings, especially on women issues in *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts* and *The Lady from the Sea*. Hong Kong theatre directors have their own interpretations that focus more on universal and transcultural themes, while in styles they are indebted to Japanese, Korean and Taiwan influences other than the Chinese. However, in terms of scenic design and theatre technology, China is taking the lead in innovations.

#### 5.4 Summary of objectives addressed to date

<b>Objectives</b> <i>(as per 5.1/5.2 above)</i>	<b>Addressed</b> <i>(please tick)</i>	<b>Percentage Achieved</b> <i>(please estimate)</i>
1. To examine postsocialist/postmodern reconceptualizations of the self and derive a critical view of Chinese Ibsenism as contested ideologies.	√	100%
2. To theorize the staging of ideology and analyze aesthetic patterns of social reimagination in the contemporary Chinese-language theatre in China and Hong Kong.	√	100%
3. To review the postmodern adaptations of Ibsen in post-1997 Hong Kong and compare Chinese experimentations with those in Hong Kong, both having recent examples of international collaboration, to discern the trend of global-local interplay in theatre productions.	√	100%

## 6. Research Outcome

### 6.1 Major findings and research outcome

*(Maximum 1 page; please make reference to Part C where necessary)*

Through the study of 20 stage productions and a film made in China and Hong Kong, both historical and contemporary, the research obtains an in-depth view of how theatre and film artists in China explore new visions of Ibsen that go beyond the socialist paradigm of treating Ibsen's characters, particularly Nora, Dr. Stockmann and Peer Gynt, as personifications of political discourse and class theory, with the self being reduced to ideological abstractions.

Since China's opening up in 1978, new theatre styles and new concepts of femininity have entered China and have given theatre artists new frameworks for revisioning the self in psychoanalytic dimensions and in relation to power and subjection. Ibsen has become a site of experimentation with traditional Chinese theatre aesthetics and stage design, as well as a testing ground for political and cultural representations of the female body in dance and opera. Ibsen signifies the experimental and the non-traditional in China today.

As demonstrated in the experimentations, Ibsen is still an influential figure in China and is being staged and adapted for cultural and artistic purposes. Such stagings and adaptations demonstrate the artistic achievements of Chinese theatre works and film, as they have made significant breakthroughs in mixing different art forms and media

representations. A new generation of Chinese stage directors and scenic designers has emerged and brought the experimentations to new international standards.

Overall, the experimentations with Ibsen in China and Hong Kong over the past 4 decades are reflections of Chinese artists' and cultural critics' dialogue with the global orientations in representations of the self in relation to gender, class, and nation. The project has resulted in the publication of two books, 2 book chapters and 2 journal articles, all on the artistic, cultural and political implications of Ibsen productions in China and Hong Kong.

## 6.2 Potential for further development of the research and the proposed course of action (*Maximum half a page*)

As Ibsen is still a source of artistic and cultural inspiration in China, it can be anticipated that it will continue to create impacts in the Chinese re-conception of the self, family, society and state. More and more female characters in Ibsen's plays have caught the attention of Chinese stage artists, as they are understood in new contexts of gender complexities.

While Ibsen remains a source of inspiration for the Chinese and Hong Kong theatre artists, it also poses challenging questions of how the Chinese and Hong Kong artists can contribute to new standards of performance and come up with China's own Ibsen. Recent experimentations, particularly those made in the last 10 years, are such attempts in China's claiming the ownership of Ibsen.

Further study can be conducted on how Ibsen has been reinvented by the Chinese and become part of contemporary Chinese culture.

## 7. Layman's Summary

(*Describe in layman's language the nature, significance and value of the research project, in no more than 200 words*)

The project is a pioneering study of postsocialist Chinese stage experimentations with Ibsen since the 1980s. It studies how Ibsen continues to be a source of artistic, as well as revolutionary, inspirations in China. It situates Ibsen in the context of the disintegration of the family system with both men and women imitating Nora to leave home to seek new lives, thus leading to the consequence of the family being replaced by political parties in social life. To a large extent, revolutions in China are a consequence of Ibsen's impact on destabilizing the family system and social structure.

Ibsen's other impact includes creating a Dr Stockmann whose voice against corruption has found resonance in many countries even up to today. Ibsen's Peer Gynt has been an all-time favorite of the stage, not only in Europe, but also in Asia. Peer is a mockery of the lack of a sense of individualist selfhood in many societies. These two figures, other than Nora, have inspired the Chinese on new concepts of selfhood and citizenship, and created new images for experimentation on the stage, which serves as a forum for social and political messages.

## **Part C: Research Output**

### **8. Peer-Reviewed Journal Publication(s) Arising Directly From This Research Project**

(Please attach a copy of the publication and/or the letter of acceptance if not yet submitted in the previous progress report(s). All listed publications must acknowledge RGC's funding support by quoting the specific grant reference.)

The Latest Status of Publications				Author(s) (denote the corresponding author with an asterisk*)	Title and Journal / Book (with the volume, pages and other necessary publishing details specified)	Submitted to RGC (indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)	Attached to this Report (Yes or No)	Acknowledged the Support of RGC (Yes or No)	Accessible from the Institutional Repository (Yes or No)
Year of Publication	Year of Acceptance (For paper accepted but not yet published)	Under Review	Under Preparation (optional)						
2019				Tam, Kwok-kan	Book: <i>Chinese Ibsenism: Reinvention of Women, Class and Nation.</i> Springer: 2019. 302 pp.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
2019				Tam, Kwok-kan	Book: <i>Ibsen, Power and the Self: Postsocialist Chinese Experimentations in Stage Performance and Film.</i> Oslo: Novus Forlag. 202 pp.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
2018				Tam, Kwok-kan	Journal Article: "Art and Ideology in China's Postsocialist Stage Productions of A Doll's House." <i>Canadian Review of Comparative Literature</i> 45.2 (June 2018): 222-242.	2018	Yes	Yes	Yes
2018				Tam, Kwok-kan	Journal Article: "Law, Ethics and Gender: China's Quest for a Modern Selfhood as Reflected in	2018	Yes	No	Yes

					its Adaptations of Ibsen's <i>A Doll's House</i> ." <i>Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences</i> 11 (May 2018): 145–159.				
2016				Tam, Kwok-kan	Book Chapter: "A Doll's House and the Politics of Staging Women in China." In Frode Helland and Julie Holledge, eds. <i>Ibsen Between Cultures</i> . Oslo: Novus Forlag, pp. 39–68.	2017	Yes	Yes	Yes
2015 (2016)				Tam, Kwok-kan	Book Chapter: "Chinese Ibsenism: A Theoretical Reflection on Contestation and Reception." In Liina Lukas and Katre Talviste, eds., <i>Taming World Literature</i> , pp. 193–210. Tartu: University of Tartu Press.	2017	Yes	Yes	Yes

**9. Recognized International Conference(s) In Which Paper(s) Related To This Research Project Was / Were Delivered**  
*(Please attach a copy of each conference abstract)*

<b>Month / Year / Place</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Conference Name</b>	<b>Submitted to RGC</b> <i>(indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)</i>	<b>Attached to this Report</b> <i>(Yes or No)</i>	<b>Acknowledged the Support of RGC</b> <i>(Yes or No)</i>	<b>Accessible from the Institutional Repository</b> <i>(Yes or No)</i>
March / 2019 / Washington DC, America	“Visualizing Desire: <i>The Lady from the Sea</i> on the Chinese Stage.”	Annual Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
October / 2018 / Bushan, South Korea	“Postsocialist Chinese Nora: Stage Representations of Gender and Body in Changing Womanhood.”	The 5th World Humanities Forum: The Human Image in a Changing World	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
November / 2017 / Shanghai, China	“Law, Ethics and Gender: China’s Quest for a Modern Selfhood as Reflected in Its Adaptations of A Doll’s House	Cross-cultural, Cross-group and Comparative Modernity Conference	2018	Yes	Yes	Yes
May / 2017 / Toronto, Canada	“Art and Ideology in China’s Postsocialist Stage Productions of Ibsen’s Plays”	Annual Meeting of the Canadian Comparative Literature Association	2018	Yes	Yes	Yes
March / 2017 / Khulna, Bangladesh	“Freedom in Articulation of the Self: A Doll’s House and Modern Chinese Drama.”	International Conference on “Ibsen and Freedom of Speech,” Khulna University, Bangladesh	2017	Yes	Yes	Yes
November / 2016 / Zhuhai, China	“Zhongguo Jinnian de Yibusheng yanchu yu ‘houshehuizhuyi’” (Recent Ibsen Productions in China and the Postsocialist New Culture	Conference on Chinese Studies, organized by Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International College	2017	Yes	Yes	Yes
July / 2016 / HKSAR	“From Realism to Virtual Realism: Recent Chinese Productions of Ibsen.”	Conferences on Digital Culture and Humanities, organized by OUHK’s Research Institute for Digital Culture and Humanities	2017	Yes	Yes	Yes

**10. Whether Research Experience And New Knowledge Has Been Transferred / Has Contributed To Teaching And Learning**  
*(Please elaborate)*

Developed an MA in Drama and Performance Studies, which is being accredited at HSUHK. Having given talks and delivered conference presentations in Sweden, Norway, Germany, Denmark, South Korea, Bangladesh, China, and Hong Kong.

**11. Student(s) Trained***(Please attach a copy of the title page of the thesis)*

Name	Degree Registered for	Date of Registration	Date of Thesis Submission / Graduation
NIL			

**12. Other Impact***(e.g. award of patents or prizes, collaboration with other research institutions, technology transfer, teaching enhancement, etc.)*(1) Collaborations with the Centre for Ibsen Studies, University of Oslo, Norway, and(2) Department of English, Fudan University, Shanghai, China.(3) Trained some academic staff at HSUHK on Ibsen research and digital humanities.**13. Statistics on Research Outputs**

	Peer-reviewed Journal Publications	Conference Papers	Scholarly Books, Monographs and Chapters	Patents Awarded	Other Research Outputs (please specify)	
<b>No. of outputs arising directly from this research project</b>	2	7	4	0	Type	No.
					N/A	

**14. Public Access Of Completion Report***(Please specify the information, if any, that cannot be provided for public access and give the reasons.)*

Information that Cannot Be Provided for Public Access	Reasons
NIL	