

Research Assessment Exercise 2020
Impact Overview Statement

University: City University of Hong Kong

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 38-visual arts, design, creative media, other creative arts and creative writing

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 27

(1) Context

The School of Creative Media (SCM) is a multidisciplinary research unit comprised of media artists, film-makers, curators, computer scientists, social scientists, and humanities scholars, whose activities center around the creation, innovation, and dissemination of digital media artforms and technologies. The School houses one major research center, The Center of Applied Computing and Interactive Media (ACIM), which traditionally focused upon **Shaw's** impactful research on digital museology. ACIM has recently been enlarged to accommodate multiple interdisciplinary research clusters in creative technologies to enhance the School's potential for knowledge transfer.

(2) Approach to impact

The School's approach to impact, calibrated to the diversity of research areas in our faculty, seeks to combine technological innovation, artistic creativity, and social engagement. It is organized around four main activities: socially engaged art which seeks to foster public participation in the creation of art with a view to transforming their understanding of social issues; curatorial practice which seeks to transform the way in which art institutions and museums approach the staging of art through the tools of digital media; research into human computer interaction which seeks to change the ways in which users engage computing devices in their current and future forms; and direct involvement in shaping art-institutional policy and public policy in digital media.

The philosophy of SCM is to foster creative practitioners who are socially conscious and socially engaged (**Man, Howe, Ip, Lai, Wei, Zheng, Lorenzo**). Socially engaged art not only reflects upon society but enters into society to change what people think and do. **Howe's** "obfuscation" apps have received approximately 1.5m downloads. **Man** engaged 6,000 individuals in the participatory creation of a single artwork, *Erosion of Home* (2015), and 500 people participated in her role-playing workshops on comfort women based on *If I Were* (2014 -16). **Zheng's** karaoke installation *Sing to Her* (2016) attracted over 520,000 participants from minority groups in Hong Kong. **Lai's** Floating Projects Collective provides an environment to support the practice of 20 socially engaged creative artists in Hong Kong, funded in part by the Hong Kong Jockey Club.

Many of our faculty undertake curatorial practice as an extension of their arts-based research (**Ip, Lai, Zheng, Hessels, Shaw, Man, Wei, Benayoun, Kraemer**). This practice involves changing the approach of public institutions to what they show and how they show it. For example, **Ip** introduced digital media to Hong Kong Arts Center in annual shows and **Kraemer** began the curation of digital media art at the Goethe Institute. **Benayoun** curated the first show of digital media art at Guan Shan Yue gallery in Shenzhen with the participation of curators and artists from all over China. **Shaw's** entire practice is based on developing new digital museum strategies. **Shaw's** practices of curation and content are showcased at City University's own gallery, which receives 50,000 visitors a year as well as in a multiplicity of venues in Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, and internationally.

SCM/ACIM's Interactive Technologies for Accessibility Research Group seeks to develop innovative software and hardware that help people with various accessibility problems. **Lam's** TEDY Project (Technologies for the Elderly and Disabled) works with students and the elderly to develop award-winning technologies for people with disabilities and older people. **Zhu** has researched new strategies for teaching coding for kids and to promote computational thinking for the visually impaired. **Fu's** research has focused on making artistic content creation more accessible to novice users, instead of a small group of artists with specialist hardware and/or software skills. Eight patents have recently resulted from this group.

The School has grown organically and in tandem with institutions in Hong Kong that support the creation of media art, and SCM faculty have worked closely with them in shaping their policies and practices in digital media and socially engaged art. These organizations include Videotage (**Rodriguez**); Hong Kong Arts Center (**Ip**); Incubator for Film and Visual Media (**Lai, Ip**); Para/Site (**Leung**); Osage Gallery (**Benayoun, Shaw, Klein**); the Goethe Institute (**Kraemer**); the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, where faculty have served as advisors and examiners (**Man, Lai, Lam**); and the Leisure and Cultural Services Division (**Lai, Ip**). In 2014 SCM was given the Award for Arts Promotion by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council.

In addition, faculty have been actively engaged in public policy formation and policy-based research in digital media. **Leino** and **Kow** drafted a policy document for Cyberport, Hong Kong, on the future of eSports in Hong Kong leading to the creation of an eSports center. **Charrieras** wrote a policy document on new media expertise in the creative economy for the Policy Innovation and Coordination Office. **Zhu** is currently conducting research into promoting understanding of extreme weather through immersive media for the Environment and Conservation Fund.

(3) Strategy and plans

Over the last three years the School has undergone a major restructuring of its research environment in order to cultivate the creation of impactful research. While SCM continues to burnish its reputation as a digital media arts school, our overall strategy has been to expand and consolidate the creative technologies side of the school in order to cultivate and enhance knowledge transfer. This is coupled with an enhancement of our BSc recruitment and curriculum (co-taught with Computer Science).

To achieve this pivot to Creative Technologies we have pursued two strategies. The first is faculty recruitment. While outside the time frame of this RAE evaluation, in 2018-19 we have recruited 5 faculty in the area of human-computer interaction and creative technology including 3 at the Associate Professor level with several patents and awards to their name.

The second strategy has been to build a research environment to create more impactful research. Several new research clusters have been created in ACIM around core SCM faculty including a research lab on blockchain for the creative industries (**Charrieras, Benayoun, Howe**), which has yielded the first blockchain funded film by recent PhD Patrice Pujol (<https://variety.com/2019/digital/asia/cannes-papicha-blockchain-tokenized-investment-from-hong-kong-financiers-1203328542/>), a lab for augmented reality cognition (**Suh, Wagner**), a brain computer-interface lab (**Benayoun, Klein**), which has received HK\$4m in EU and HK funding, and a new AR/VR lab. SCM is also supporting a HK\$28m AR project for the Hong Kong Tourist Board led by **Shaw**.

(4) Relationship to case studies

The case studies of **Howe** and **Shaw**, grow directly from the approach to impact cultivated by the school in which artistic creativity and technological innovation combine to foster social engagement. **Howe**, is the paradigm of a socially engaged artist who is seeking to change the way that users understand and interface with the internet. He has successfully developed widely-used tools that actively interfere with and undermine the capacity of internet advertisers to gather personal data on their users as well as developing easy-to-use software in digital coding. **Shaw** on the other hand, has been a game changer in curatorial practice through his research upon Interactive, Immersive Technologies for Cultural Heritage Preservation and Display. The digital strategies and technologies he has pioneered, together with intangible and tangible cultural heritage projects with which he has been engaged, have transformed the way in which cultural institutions in Hong Kong, Mainland China, Australia and elsewhere approach the preservation and staging of cultural heritage.