

Research Assessment Exercise 2020

Impact Case Study

University: The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 38

Title of case study: Innovative Art Education Connecting Hong Kong with Asia

(1) Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

In 2015, Professor Frank Vigneron published an academic paper entitled ‘Cunning Intelligence: Teachable and Unteachable Notions for Higher Education in World Art,’ in which he advanced arguments to introduce innovative ways in contemporary art education. This article inspired two of his students from CUHK, Ms Law Yuk Mui and Ms Yim Sui Fong, who adopted Professor Vigneron’s new perspective to establish Rooftop Institute later the same year in 2015. With the help and academic support of professor Vigneron, they developed several successful cross-cultural art education programmes dedicated to the Hong Kong public, and particularly designed to broaden the international vision and multicultural exposure of young students. In early 2016, professor Vigneron was accordingly invited to become a director of the organization where he continues to cultivate community arts for sustainable cultural development in Hong Kong. The impact of three of these programmes will be described in this document.

(2) Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

The academic paper ‘Cunning Intelligence: Teachable and Unteachable Notions for Higher Education in World Art’ was published in September 2015 in *World Art* by Routledge. It expanded on concepts first explored by Frances Whitehead (art professor at the School of Art Institute of Chicago): Metis, Praxis, and redirection. The idea of investigating other methods than the ones usually taught in studio art (generally hand-based artistic skills like painting, sculpting, etc.) also stemmed from questions raised in their studio art teaching by professors of the Department of Fine Arts (CUHK) like Kurt Chan Yuk Keung (now retired), as well as professor Ho Siu Kee and professor Tam Wai Ping. Professor Vigneron suggested that the idea of ‘Metis,’ or cunning intelligence, as a rich concept in contemporary art making, could be the most challenging aspect when considering its applicability in art education. Since ‘Metis’ is a form of reasoning based on unpredictability, it cannot be taught in an academic context. Professor Vigneron argued that inculcating ‘Metis’ could be accomplished by creating a framework fostering a hybridized and global art education based on mobility. The tactics suggested in the paper to enact such mobility were not limited to geographical mobility (sending art students to other schools around the world) but also included contextual mobility, i.e. creating conditions for art practitioners of all ages to foster their ‘cunning intelligence’ instead of simply acquiring hand-based skills to make art. Considering how wide the field of art has become, art education institutions simply cannot have all the resources making it possible to teach every form of art making and skills. As a result, the only possibility to inculcate ‘Metis’ is to design ‘incomplete’ curriculums where unpredictable events, some even taking place outside the realm of skill-based art education, may happen. Professor Vigneron’s reflections on ‘Metis’ became the core ideas of the practices pursued by Rooftop Institute and were central to the three programmes described in this impact case. In an article written by one of the founders, titled ‘Metis and Emancipation – “Asia Seed” and “Hok Hok Zaap” at Rooftop Institute’ (see (5) Sources to corroborate the impact); Yim Sui Fong described the importance of these notions in the creation of RI: ‘We first met in Hong Kong to discuss the creation of an association, where we could work on these projects, towards the fall of 2014. We still did not have a name for that association at the time, but once we started talking about these ideas, Frank immediately sent us an article he had finished writing on issues that were directly related. This

article... quickly gave us a solid theoretical ground on which to develop our ideas. Creating the society that was soon called Rooftop Institute and applying for the Art Capacity Development Project Grant of the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) was done at about the same period.’

(3) References to the research (indicative maximum of 6 references)

- [1] Vigneron, Frank. 2015. ‘Cunning intelligence: teachable and unteachable notions for higher education in world art’, in *World Art*, Volume 5, Issue 2,, edited by George Lau, Daniel Rycroft and Veronica Sekules. London and New York: Routledge, September 2015.
- [2] Vigneron, Frank. 2018. ‘Two approaches to socially engaged art with the Hong Kong Filipino community,’ in *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, p. 131-148, Volume 5 Numbers 2 & 3. Bristol UK & Willington US: Intellect Ltd.
- [3] Vigneron, Frank. 2013. “No Outside” for Socially Engaged Art Practices? The Reception of the Aesthetic Regime of Art and Its Frequent Malfunctions in Hong Kong’ in *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, July/August 2013, volume 12, number 4, p. 16-32. Taipei: Art & Collection Group Ltd.
- [4] Vigneron, Frank. 2017. ‘Theory as Practice and Practice as Theory – Praxis and the PhD in art,’ in *Proceedings of Symposium on Development of Arts Education – Arts Education for Tomorrow*, p. 57-64, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Art School.
- [5] Vigneron, Frank. 2018. *Hong Kong Soft Power. Art Practices in the Special Administrative Region 2005 to 2014*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
- [6] Vigneron, Frank. 2010. *I Like Hong Kong... Art and Deterritorialization*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.

(4) Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

- ‘Asia Seed’ (January 2016 to December 2018): created for secondary school students and participating artists.

Designed for secondary school students in Hong Kong and other Asian countries, ‘Asia Seed’ received a HK\$2,000,000 grant from the Arts Capacity Development Funding Scheme of the Home Affairs Bureau (Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) in 2016.

‘Asia Seed’ was a two-year long community outreach programme which prompted exchange and co-learning culture through art education by engaging the local youth to connect with other communities in the rest of Asia. Having well-established artists become their mentors, young students participated in talks, screening, workshops, field trips, exhibitions, and other activities as an immersive form of learning, of the kind that cannot be fulfilled by the formal art education system. The context created by this situation fostered the development of Métis in the young participants.

Over four 6-month periods, several Hong Kong-based art practitioners worked together with artists from other Asian countries to conduct practice-based research on the arts and cultures of their respective places in the wider context of Asia. Each 6-month cycle involved two mentors, a local artist and one from another Asian country (Vietnam, Japan, Thailand and Taiwan). They collaborated and conducted research on the history, society and culture of Asian regions related to Hong Kong. During each cycle, a maximum of 20 mentees were selected among young local participants aged 14 to 18; at the end of the cycle, a selection of 5 mentees were flown to the country of origin of the Asian artist to conduct additional workshops and, accompanied by both artists, visit significant sites and art associations. Each cycle ended with a public exhibition in Hong Kong of the works created by the mentees.

Producing knowledge through art practices was the main feature of ‘Asia Seed’: the outputs but also the whole processes have been archived and documented, including materials related to art creations, research, sharing, public talks, interviews, workshops, art trips, exhibitions and others. All of these

have been compiled into a series of online learning materials as an alternative art education reference that can be accessed by everyone on the website of Rooftop Institute.

Number of participants:

- Number of participants for the four cycles: 74 secondary school students.
- During cycle 2, 6 additional activities were conducted. Japanese artist, Motoyuki Shitamichi took the workshop series he created in Japan, titled *14 years old & the world & borders* (more information on this workshop can be found in the following section), and conducted it in Hong Kong, visiting 3 secondary schools where 120 students and 3 teachers participated in the workshops. Rooftop Institute also lined up with the local weekly *Sunday Mingpao* for publication, in 10 columns over 10 weeks (2017.5.28 – 2017.8.12) following these workshops in details. Readership of Sunday Mingpao is around 187,000
- Briefing sessions: 4 sessions with the organisers, 117 attendants
- Artists' talks: 4 sessions with all the artists participating in the 4 cycles: 212 attendants
- Exhibitions with works of the participants: 3 exhibitions, 1,349 visitors
- 'Our Everyday – Our Border' (September to October 2018): an exhibition derived from one of Asia Seed's workshop, designed for the general public of Hong Kong.

A spin-off of the 'Asia Seed' cycle involving Japanese artist Motoyuki Shitamichi and Hong Kong artist Tang Kwok-Hin, this exhibition was designed for the general public of Hong Kong. It was funded by the exhibition venue 'Tai Kwun contemporary' (in the new and popular Hong Kong heritage site called Tai Kwun) and received a budget of HK\$ 1,500,000.

Continuing his series of workshops with secondary-school students in Japan, the series titled *14 years old & the world & borders*, Hong Kong and other places in Asia, Motoyuki Shitamichi encouraged them to explore their surroundings and rediscover the history and social conditions of their own communities. The results took the shape of stories and images created by the students that were subsequently published in newspapers. Exploring the shifting idea of borders, Motoyuki Shitamichi also exhibited glass bottles made from found glass on the beaches of Asia, thus emphasizing the interconnectedness of the world we live in. All the workshops conducted by Motoyuki Shitamichi were occasions to develop the participants' cunning intelligence and relied on the idea of contextual mobility. It can also be said of the programme created by Hong Kong artist Tang Kwok-Hin who designed, inside the exhibition gallery, a space blurring the lines between the public and the private by inviting many participants to use it as a personal place. Professor Frank Vigneron wrote the catalogue and was one of the curators.

Number of participants:

During the exhibition period, and inside the installation created by the artist, 35 artists talks were held as well as 97 public and private tours given by docents. In addition, Tang Kwok-Hin organised, also inside his own installation, a number of events conceived to blur the line between life and art. Among them were dinner gatherings, an embroidery class, a clothes-folding class, a knitting workshop, two musical rehearsals and several sharing sessions by outside participants, etc. 418 participants took place in these events.

As for the exhibition itself, the number provided by the organisers at Tai Kwun contemporary was a total of 176,045 visitors.

- 'HOK ZAAP - an alternative model in art education based on the ideas of "taking community as school" and "learning as social engagement".' (August 2018 to January 2019):

Designed for the Hong Kong Filipino community, secondary school students, and participating artists, it received a HK\$ 220,300 grant from Hong Kong Arts Development Council Grant in November 2018.

'HOK ZAAP' is the Cantonese verb meaning 'to learn.' It was divided into two events led by Hong Kong-based artists.

1/ Hong Kong – Philippines exchange project by Luke Ching

Filipinos in Hong Kong are, in their large majority, domestic workers. The lack of understanding of the local Chinese population towards these migrant workers motivated the artist to develop new channels of communication starting with children. Working between the Philippines and Hong Kong (and particularly three schools: the Tai Po Old Market Public School and the Y.C.H. Choi Hin To Primary School in Hong Kong, and the Raya School, Olalo Primary School in the Philippines), the artist developed a series of activities designed to create deeper mutual understanding of the cultures and languages of both places. During workshops led by the artist, who relied on postal exchanges between the three schools, Hong Kong children created a large series of flashcards relying on visual puns that would help them build up vocabulary in Tagalog. Both groups of children were thus informed of each other's existence while Hong Kong children became more deeply aware of the culture and language of the domestic workers living in their own homes. These flashcards were later published in the form of a booklet. Students in Hong Kong were also led through visits of the many shops managed by Filipinos in the Taipo area (New Territories).

Number of participants:

In 2 Hong Kong schools and schools in the Philippines: a total of 88 students (and an estimate of at least 70 families in both countries)

2/ 'Practices of Drawing Weeds' Course by Zheng Bo

Zheng Bo, as an artist, has worked on ideas related to ecology for many years. In that context, he developed strategies of 'slowness,' designed to both alleviate the often stressful lives led in developed economies and indicate ways to question the neoliberal logic leading to these stressful lives. 'Practices of Drawing Weeds' consisted in 8 workshops over 6 months in different parts of Hong Kong. Participants were asked to simply draw the vegetation silently. A small booklet of drawings and texts was published after the event.

Number of participants: 44

Testimonies / Participants' review abstract:

Mr. Benni Pong thinks that he learned to observe weeds and their relationship with the place's atmosphere through the guidance of the artist. The experience of silence also enabled him to focus on drawing and connect with the surroundings. Miss Ho Yi Yan pointed out the route in Central district (the business center of Hong Kong and a densely urbanised area) let her realize how weeds situate and incorporate into the city's development. (A DVD with participants interviews is available on demand). Artist talk concluding the whole HOK ZAAP project: on March 30th, 2019, 47 participants.

(5) Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[1] Affidavit from the Founders of the Rooftop Institute

[2] Yim Sui Fong (2019): *Metis and Emancipation – "Asia Seed" and "Hok Hok Zaap" at Rooftop Institute, Hong Kong Art Yearbook 2018*, Tam Wai Ping (editor), Hong Kong: Fine Arts Department.

[3] Rooftop Institute Official Website: <http://www.rooftopinstitute.org>

[4] Asia Seed Official Website: <http://www.rooftopinstitute.org/asiaseed>

[5] Guidebook of the exhibition 'Our Everyday – Our Border', Taikwun Contemporary

[6] HOK ZAAP Official website: https://www.rooftopinstitute.org/?page_id=679

[7] Learning How to Learn!: Rooftop Institute's Practice and Imagination of Engaged Learning in Art: <http://www.e-artnow.org/announcement/article/ACTION/13999/>

[8] Aspiration RTHK, a 21-minute feature of Cycle 3 study trip lead by Hong Kong artist Pak Sheung-chuen in Thailand by RTHK artspiration programme

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PX32XMjEk50>

[9] Aspiration RTHK, a 10-minute feature of Cycle 4 Taiwanese artist Zhang Xuzhan artist residency and workshop by RTHK artspiration programme

http://www.rthk.hk/tv/dtt31/programme/adcweekly_artspiration/episode/502207

[10] Sunday Mingpao, a 10 serial publication and 1 spread page feature Cycle 2 Japanese artist Shitamachi Motoyuki)