

Research Assessment Exercise 2020

Impact Case Study

University: Hong Kong Baptist University

Unit of Assessment: 38 visual arts, design, creative media, other creative arts and creative writing

Title of Case Study: Engaging New Audiences for Art beyond the Gallery and Museum Sector in Hong Kong and East Asia

Summary of the impact

New forms of event-based and participatory visual art research, conducted at the Centre for Research and Development in the Visual Arts (CRDVA), have led to changes in organisational behaviour and attitudes towards commissioning public art in alternative venues in 12 government departments, museums and art festivals across East Asia. Publicly cited artistic research of three investigators (**Ng, Leung, Wan**) has increased public engagement and developed new audiences and understanding in contemporary art in four countries (Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan) reaching 350,000 participants.

Underpinning research

Since 2014, a research team led by Professor **Leung** and Assistant Professors **Ng** and **Wan** has conducted research on alternative spaces for public art. Working in collaboration with local and international stakeholders, such as the Hong Kong Museum of Art (HKMA), the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC), the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the Art Promotion Office (APO), Art Basel, the Association of Visual Arts Taiwan, Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial (Japan) and the Gwangju Biennale (Korea), the team has conducted historical research and developed new outputs utilising transport networks, historical sites, government facilities, shops and festivals to increase and diversify the audiences of and enable greater access to the visual arts. The research has been supported by HKD 2.4 million from government departments and Strategic Development Funds over 6 years.

In initial research reported in a book chapter, ‘A New Field: Socially Engaged Art in Hong Kong’, **Leung** (2014) examined the development of public art and community art in Hong Kong and the use of commercial and social spaces for creativity. To accompany this chapter, **Leung** produced the first comprehensive timeline report on Hong Kong’s socially engaged art from 1997 to 2014.

To extend the initial research beyond Hong Kong, the team convened two international conferences. Art as Social Interaction: Hong Kong/Taiwan Exchange (2014) was the first to present an extensive survey of social engagement practices through art over the past two decades in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The Third International Award for Public Art and associated conference (2017), organised by the CRDVA with the Institute for Public Art, focused on international practices of social engagement through visual art, presenting over 140 projects and international case studies.

Building on **Leung**’s analysis and a case study examination, **Ng** and **Wan** developed six practice-based research outputs to reach and engage new audiences (2017–2019). The outputs were commissioned for historical sites, urban sites and festivals. Their work is detailed below.

In 2017, **Ng** worked with Art Basel Hong Kong, MGM Art and Culture, the Hong Kong Design Centre and the LCSD to present *Twenty-five Minutes Older* at Art Basel Hong Kong. This was the first project completed in collaboration with Hong Kong’s public tram network. *Over the Ocean* at Lumieres Hong Kong (2017) engaged the public in an interactive project exploring issues of migration. *After the Deluge* (2018), presented in the Tai Hang Tung underground storm water

storage facility, was the first art project to involve Hong Kong Drainage Services Department. *To the Moon* (2018), presented during the Mid-Autumn Festival in Jordan Valley Park, engaged the audience in exploring aspects of intangible cultural heritage through contemporary art.

To extend the impact of increasing social engagement and participation through new forms of artistic research beyond Hong Kong, **Wan** also produced two research works based on everyday items sold in supermarkets. *Everyday a Rainbow* (2016) was commissioned by the 11th Gwangju Biennale in South Korea and *Zan Baak Fo* (2017) was commissioned for the New Arts Power Festival presented by the HKADC. Furthermore, in 2019, **Wan** was commissioned by the LCSO and HKADC to produce new work for a remote rural community at the Hong Kong House at Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale, Japan.

Please click [here](#) for a video overview of the Impact Case Studies.

References to the research

1. Leung, J. (2014). A new field: Socially engaged art in Hong Kong. In M. Wu (Ed.), *Art as social interaction: Hong Kong/Taiwan exchange*. Taiwan: Association of the Visual Arts in Taiwan.
2. Leung, J., & Ting, V. (2014). Timeline of Hong Kong history and Hong Kong's socially engaged art. Retrieved from <http://kaitak.hkbu.edu.hk/research/timeline/>.
3. Ng, K. (2016–17). *Twenty-five minutes older - mobile camera obscura as a form for expanded cinema* [Artwork.] 5th Large Scale Media Arts Festival Hong Kong and 22nd International Symposium on Electronic Art, Hong Kong SAR (May 18 to June 22, 2016); Art Basel Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR (March 20–28, 2017); and Milan Design Week, Milan, Italy (April 4–9, 2017).
4. Ng, K. (2018). *After the deluge - urban media art as social mediation* [Artwork.] Jockey Club New Arts Power, Hong Kong Arts Development Council, Hong Kong, SAR (January 6–31, 2018).
5. Wan, A. L. K. (2016). *Every day a rainbow* [Artwork.] 11th edition of Gwangju Biennale, South Korea (September 2 to November 6, 2016).
6. Wan, A. L. K. (2017). *Zan baak fo* [Artwork.] Jockey Club New Arts Power, Hong Kong Arts Development Council exhibition, Hong Kong SAR (December 19, 2017 to January 28, 2018).

Details of the impact

Such research has increased public interest and engagement in contemporary art. This has changed practices in local and overseas art institutions and government bodies in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea and Japan. It has stimulated a re-imagining of social engagement strategies and the development of alternative platforms for the presentation of artistic research. Furthermore, it has had a positive impact on the perceptions of collaborating art institutions and government bodies towards siting work outside the gallery and museum context to engage wider audiences. Overall, such research has expanded the audience for contemporary art, enhanced public perceptions of this art form and increased public interest in and motivation to participate in contemporary art.

Funded by the HKADC and commissioned by Art Basel, *Twenty-five Minutes Older* by **Ng** utilised Hong Kong's tram network. It was the first public art project to be unveiled in the tram cars of Hong Kong and later Milan. Within 3 days in 2016, 1,800 people had participated in the artwork in Hong Kong. Two expanded editions for Hong Kong were commissioned in 2016 and 2017. Due to the project's success, **Ng** was invited to present versions of the work at the 2017 Milan Design Week and the 2018 Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale in Japan. A further 5,500 people thus experienced this public art project in Italy and 5,700 people in Japan.

More than 30 specialised and popular media outlets, such as *Art in America*, *ArtAsiaPacific* and *The New York Times*, reviewed the project. Alexandro Seno, writing for *Forbes*, praised the work for ‘[reimagining] the Hong Kong tram as much more than conveyance system, but also a cultural platform, something uniquely and beautifully Hong Kong’ and encouraged the Tram Company to consider ‘seriously sponsoring an extension’ (source 1). Ng’s work transcended the commercial and spatial confines of a traditional art fair. The *Financial Times* stated, ‘Art Basel Hong Kong has found a flexible solution that obviates the need for permanent setting of works – a moving installation’ (source 2).

After the Deluge (Ng, 2018) took place in the Tai Hang Tung storm water storage tank and was the first art project to be held in the facilities of Hong Kong Drainage Services Department. More than 10,000 people participated in the guided tours, which were compulsory for all visitors (source 3). After the tour, 370 visitors completed a survey. Almost 90% indicated that they hoped that more public spaces would be opened as art spaces and felt that the exhibition triggered closer observation of and greater imaginative engagement with about the city (source 4). According to the HKADC (source 5), the work has had a long-reaching and positive influence on the government’s approach to opening up sites for contemporary art. Ng’s work has been cited repeatedly by the HKADC and artists as an exemplary model for exploring alternative exhibition sites. The Drainage Services Department also considers Ng’s work a successful precedent case for establishing more partnerships with artists.

Every Day A Rainbow (Wan, 2016) at the 11th Gwangju Biennale in South Korea was endorsed by *Art-agenda*, which stated that the project embodied ‘art’s capacity to make contact and foster “shared concerns”’ (source 7). Wan brought ceramics into the public arena and, among other themes, challenged notions of what constitute the aesthetic and commercial. Gwangju News Online described Wan as ‘an international award-winning Hong Kong-based ceramicist’ who ‘pushes the boundaries of ceramics’ (source 6). In total, 318,000 people visited the 11th Gwangju Biennale.

Zan Baak Fo (Wan, 2017/18) was an extension of the above project and challenged the audience with the question, ‘What does art do?’ Visitors were guided to reflect on the value of art as a commodity and to reconsider the practice of collecting art when it is priced similarly to cheap everyday items. During the project period, 20,000 people visited the collaborating local grocery store and art gallery. The HKADC vociferously praised the project, stating that it ‘attracted unprecedented numbers of visitors and shared the possibilities of ceramics to people from different social segments’ (source 9). In a survey about the project, 38% of the respondents indicated that they were interested in ceramics, 31% indicated that they were potential art purchasers and 52% indicated that they had no prior experience of collecting art or ceramics (source 8).

Wan was awarded the title of Artist of the Year 2018 by the HKADC and was invited by the APO of the LCSD to serve as artist in residence of the Hong Kong House, *Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale*. Her community-based artistic research on the Tsunan region was presented in the exhibition *Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread* (2019), and guided the Hong Kong House towards a more proactive role in fostering cultural exchange with local communities (source 10).

Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Seno, A. (2016, May 22). *25 minutes older: A tram journey through time and Hong Kong*. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexandraaseno/2016/05/22/25-minutes-older-a-tram-journey-through-time-and-hong-kong/#61e675e99863>
2. Sutherland, J. (2017, March 18). Preview: Art Basel Hong Kong 2017. *Financial Times*.
3. Chow, W. (2018, February 9). [Testimonial letter to Edwin Tong for *After the deluge* from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council].
4. Hong Kong Baptist University Academy of Visual Arts (2019). Evaluation report for *After the deluge* (including survey and interviews).

5. Hong Kong Arts Development Council (2018). Hong Kong Arts Development Council presents JOCKEY CLUB New Arts Power *After the deluge* by media artist Kingsley Ng opens tomorrow 6 to 31 January 2018, using Tai Hang Tung Storage Tank as an exhibition venue for the first time. Retrieved from <http://www.hkadc.org.hk/?p=21119&lang=en>
6. Gwangju News Online (2016, November 11). *Everyday a rainbow: Annie Wan pushes the boundaries of ceramics*. Retrieved from <http://gwangjunewsgic.com/features/profile/everyday-a-rainbow-annie-wan-pushes-the-boundaries-of-ceramics/>
7. Zhang, H. (2016, September 5). “The Eighth Climate (What Does Art Do?)” – 11th Gwangju Biennale. *Art-agenda*. Retrieved from <https://www.art-agenda.com/features/239105/the-eighth-climate-what-does-art-do-11th-gwangju-biennale>
8. Hong Kong Baptist University Academy of Visual Arts (2018). *Zan baak fo* exhibition survey and visitor feedback.
9. Leung, L. (2018, February 26). [Testimonial letter to Alex Tam for *Zan baak fo* from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council].
10. Hong Kong Baptist University Academy of Visual Arts (2019). Evaluation report for *Give us this day our daily bread* (including survey and interviews).