

## Research Assessment Exercise 2020

### Impact Overview Statement

**University:** The University of Hong Kong (HKU)

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

**Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA:** 4

#### **(1) Context**

The Fine Arts Department (UoA) is located in the School of Humanities. Our goal is to establish ourselves as a hub for intercultural art history research in Asia. We are distinguished by the breadth and depth of our research areas and our development of practice-based projects that produce international impact. We support a strong public-facing ethos and have built extensive ties with institutions in Hong Kong and abroad, which are central to our impact activities. Members participate in projects that advance scholarship and nurture the appreciation and understanding of art history. Our research impact portfolio covers three areas: 1) curatorial practices and advisory and outreach roles for museums and non-profit institutions; 2) continuing professional development programmes; and 3) media and public engagement. Members have secured internal and external funding for their impact activities. Projects are designed to reach a broad audience, but the core target group of non-academic beneficiaries comprises members of the art community in the region and beyond, including art professionals, non-profit institutions and artists.

#### **(2) Approach to impact**

The Department seeks to capitalise on its deep collaborative relationships with art institutions in Hong Kong and abroad in all three areas of its impact.

***Curatorial practices and cultural projects:*** Members hold advisory positions with museums, government committees and art societies. Their role is to contribute to the welfare of the arts for the benefit of generations to come. This can include acquisition advice, art historical research support for the training of museum staff, and advising on funding proposals for artists and institutions. Through curatorial projects, we use our research expertise to enhance exhibitions for a worldwide public. Koon has been invited to curate two major exhibitions during the assessment period. *It Begins with Metamorphosis: Xu Bing* was this renowned artist's first major solo exhibition in Hong Kong. It was held in collaboration with the Asia Society Hong Kong Center in 2014 and attracted 10,000 visitors. Koon co-curated *Faultlines: Stories from the Borders of Imagined Belonging* for the 12<sup>th</sup> Gwangju Biennale in Korea in 2018, which featured 24 established and emerging artists from around the world. Mansour collaborated with the University Museum and Art Gallery, the Galleria Sabauda in Turin, and the Consulate General of Italy to bring Botticelli's *Venus* to Hong Kong. The painting was shown from October to December 2013, the first time an original Renaissance painting had been on public display in the city.

***Continuing Professional Development (CPD):*** The Department's CPD programme builds on existing relationships and opens opportunities for new partnerships. In 2016, we launched the annual programme, "Contemporary Asian Art: An Insider's View," in collaboration with Christie's Education. This five-day intensive programme draws on the Department's art historical research. It equips largely non-academic professionals with in-depth knowledge of art history and art institutions. Local and international participants have included collectors, bankers, writers and journalists, with some pursuing new careers in the arts since attending the course. Members have lectured for other courses offered by Christie's (Hammers, Koon, Chan, Wyma, and Thomas).

***Media and Public Engagement:*** The Department has always encouraged its members to engage with the media and public to share their research findings and impact the community by promoting greater cultural awareness and diversity. During the assessment period, we organised over 40 programmes connected to members' research. Our flagship lecture series, "Behind the Scenes," was established in 2016 and brings speakers from the international art world to Hong Kong to highlight the work of professionals who help to keep art accessible for audiences. Speakers

have included directors of world-famous art institutions, such as the Tate, Guggenheim and Victoria and Albert Museum, and more recently the Guerrilla Girls, who gave a public talk to a full house in the 900-seat HKU Grand Hall. The topics of the talks are closely related to our research on curatorial practices and issues of gender in the art world. We have organised public events with high-profile artists, including Yoshitomo Nara, Cai Guoqiang, Jeff Koons, Annie Wan, Patty Chang, and Sir Michael Craig-Martin, drawing audiences totalling over 5,000 during the review period. Many of these were held in collaboration with other institutions, including Asia Art Archive, Asia Society, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, Art Basel, M+, Le French May, and the Royal Academy. Hammers has given talks for the Oriental Ceramic Society. Koon took part in a conversation on the Dunhuang Buddhist Caves for RTHK Radio 3 and was an advisor on Qing ghost paintings for the BBC documentary *The Story of China* with historian Michael Wood (2016).

**Funding:** Members have secured several HKU Knowledge Exchange (KE) grants to support their impact, most recently Koon for her *Afterwords* audience project at the 2018 Gwangju Biennale. We have benefitted from the Faculty's University Artists Scheme to fund outreach activities with award-winning visual artist Gu Wenda, multi-disciplinary art and technology partnership Artstation, and performance artist Patty Chang. Members have received support from art organisations and corporations, including United Overseas Bank, Qatar Airlines, and AXA Art.

### **(3) Strategy and plans**

The Department's long-term impact strategy involves the following four approaches:

**Identify key areas of future impact:** One area involves the Department's development of digital resources to expand the reach of art research, including online platforms and archives. Established by Clarke, the Hong Kong Art Archive (HKAA) is a unique resource on Hong Kong artists and their works. Koon is working to enhance the HKAA and develop a new Chinese painting inscription database. These facilities are direct outcomes of our research and are made available to the public. Sheng is collaborating with the HKU Department of Social Work and Social Administration and the Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine on a newly funded interdisciplinary KE project, "Enhancing Community Empathy for and Wellbeing of Sexual Minority Youth Through Arts."

**Strengthen existing and building new collaborations with art institutions:** The Department will extend its collaborations with institutions within the region, including a new public lecture series with the Hong Kong Museum of Art and the Asian art magazine *Orientalism*, a new three-year educational programme with the Art Promotion Office (APO) of the Hong Kong Leisure and Cultural Services Department in connection with the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial in Japan, and a new initiative with Christie's Education Shanghai. Koon is working on a 2020 exhibition with the Helsinki International Artist Programme, also with the support of APO.

**Disseminate research through social media:** We are exploring further means of using social media and other digital platforms to share our research highlights and showcase our outreach activities to maximise their impact.

**Embed impact in staff development and recruitment:** Impact is now integrated into HKU's staff appraisal and tenure and promotion mechanisms, and we support Faculty initiatives to ensure that it is embedded in staff development and recruitment. We mentor staff on funding applications (HKU KE fund and the RGC's Research Impact Fund) and all members have access to Faculty resources for the measurement of impact and evidence gathering.

### **(4) Relationship to case studies**

The impact case study demonstrates the Department's commitment to impact through the curating of a large-scale international event at the 2018 Gwangju Biennale, which attracted 320,000 visitors. Targeted beneficiaries included contributing artists, the local community in Gwangju and the general public. Koon worked with artists to: i) develop projects that provided them with a different type of exposure, challenged opinions about their practices, and expanded their career paths; ii) engage with the local community on projects that changed their knowledge of art and histories; and iii) develop digital platforms that continue to share information after the closing of the exhibition.