

## The role of the different stakeholders in art development in Hong Kong in promoting arts to the public

\*Dr. Fanny M. Y. Chung and Anson L. M. Ma

The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Room 201C Leung Kau Kui Building CUHK Shatin NT Hong Kong

\*Corresponding Author's Email: [fannychung@arts.cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:fannychung@arts.cuhk.edu.hk)



Corresponding Author

Fanny M. Y. Chung

The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Room 201C Leung Kau Kui Building CUHK Shatin NT Hong Kong

Email: [fannychung@arts.cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:fannychung@arts.cuhk.edu.hk)

### Abstract

The contemporary art development in Hong Kong has speeded up in the past decade; however, the contribution of different stakeholders is yet to be highlighted in research and literature. Therefore, this study aims to bridge the gap by examining the different roles of stakeholders and their impact in promoting contemporary art in Hong Kong, through the stages of art adoption process suggested by the Hierarchy of Effects Model (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961): disinterest, interest, trial, positive evaluation, adoption, and confirmation. To this end, a structured interview with art gallery managers and a questionnaire survey with university students were employed. The findings indicate that all stakeholders, including art galleries, art associations, and the public, played a crucial part in raising the public's awareness at different stages of the process. The art gallery was found to play the role of intermediary; the art organisation as educator; and the public as participants.

**Keywords:** Art development, Hong Kong art scene, arts promotion, public

### Introduction

The art scene and development of contemporary art in Hong Kong have been growing since the past decade; the effort of art development for the public is also remarkable. Consequently, Hong Kong is becoming the pioneer of contemporary art in the Asia Pacific region (InvestHK, 2013). Thuc (2013) suggested that Hong Kong today can be compared to New York during the 1940s, and the construction of the M+ corresponds to the development of the MoMA [Museum of Modern Art] at a time when the American art scene was still focused on Europe but was about to set out on its own direction. With all the rapid contemporary art developments in Hong Kong, the following research questions are explored.

1. What are the stakeholders' roles in promoting

contemporary art to the public in Hong Kong?

2. What are the impacts made by different stakeholders in promoting contemporary art in Hong Kong in the past decade?

### Contemporary Art

Contemporary art is produced by artists who are still living or recently died (Halle & Tiso, 2014). The issue of timeframe is controversial because different scholars and educational institutions provide different definitions on it. For instance, the New York University defined contemporary art as one produced by artists who are living in the 21st century (NYU Steinhardt, 2016) and as means to explore and create new ideas (New York University, 2007). This definition hints implicitly that any sort of artwork created after the modernism movement shall be included within the category of contemporary art (Dickerson, 2013). The timeframe of contemporary art in

this study is narrowed down to the period after the postmodernism movement (New York University, 2007).

Contemporary art provides viewers an opportunity to reflect upon themselves, as well as society and the world around them (NYU Steinhardt, 2016). Contemporary artists work in a globally influenced, culturally diverse, and technologically advancing world; their art is a dynamic combination of materials, methods, concepts, and subjects that challenge traditional boundaries and defy easy definition (NYU Steinhardt, 2016).

According to Lewis and Lewis (2012), contemporary art is not based on technical skills but is subjective to the location and time where and when it was created and the individuals who created it. Very often, the question 'why this (a painting) is art?' and why it is interpreted as modern art is about the world we are living now, things that could be used every day, the environment around us, and the people living with us. It is not focusing on the technique of the paintings, the colour used, or the lighting, but it is also about the idea beneath the painting (Khan Academy, 2012). The meaning of 'contemporary art' is more defined as interpretation of the reflection on personal life and world issues, and is thus subjective.

### **Aesthetics**

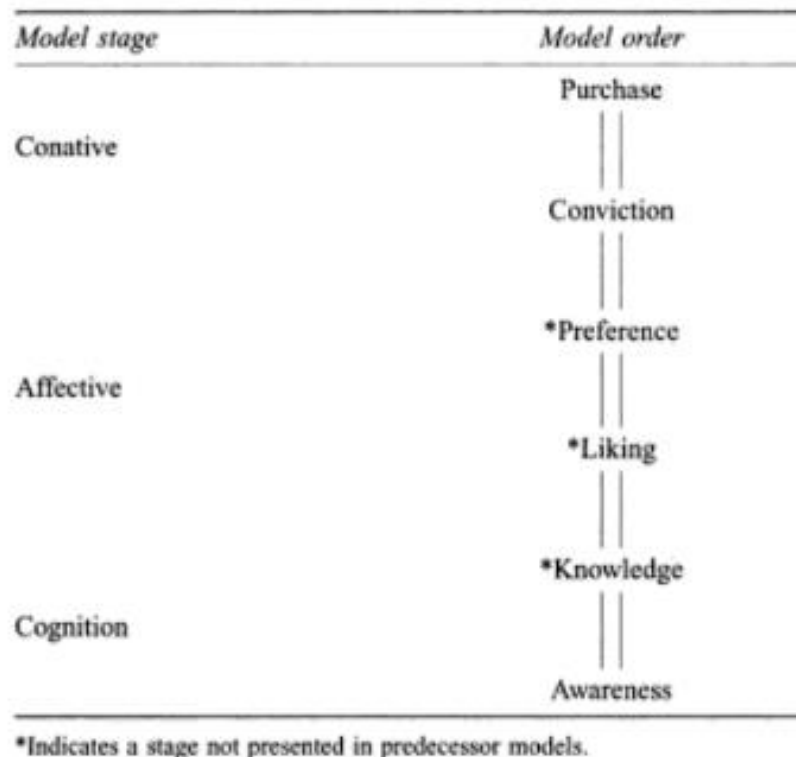
Bruyn (2002) suggested that aesthetics is a branch of philosophy that 'examines the nature of art and our experience of it' (p. 1), including poetry, sculpture, music, and dance; one can classify them as 'fine arts'. Aesthetic development in one art is seen and expressed differently

by person. As aesthetic evaluation varies by person or stakeholder, it can be assumed that the method of research and thus results of the analysis demonstrate a great variation between them. Aesthetic is an experience 'through intuition and... human feeling and emotion', which includes a mixture of feelings, such as pleasure, suffering, and joy (Bruyn, 2002, p. 1). Consequently, there is diversity in the outcome when one interprets and expresses his/her impression of another's art.

Shelly (2009) described aesthetic as the judgment of beauty with reasons, such as principle and theory, whereas the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten referred to as how things are to be cognised by means of the senses (Iseminger, 2004). Using these two descriptions of aesthetic, a fundamental definition can be derived: although it can be subjective based on one's experience and perception, reasoning shall be supported in regard to judgment on the aesthetic value of a piece. The explanation of 'aesthetic' narrowed down the scope for this study that one's life experience influences his/her aesthetic values.

### **Hierarchy of Effects Model**

Lavidge and Steiner (1961) proposed the Hierarchy of Effects Model, which states that there are different stages that lead to one's purchasing behaviour: (i) the cognitive level includes 'awareness' and 'knowledge'; (ii) the affective level contains 'liking' and 'preference'; and (iii) the conative level comprises 'conviction' and 'purchase' (refer to Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** The Hierarchy of Effects (Fitzgerald & Arnott, 2000, p. 99)

To apply this marketing theory into art management, Walter (2015) explained the process through which consumers pass to fully adopt a product or service; the level of involvement plays a major role to decide which stage of a consumer or the public would go. According to Walter (2015), the stages of art adoption process are as follows: disinterest, interest, trial, positive evaluation, adoption, and confirmation. The disinterest stage refers to a consumer's lack of interest in attending an art event; the interest stage concerns a consumer who has not attended any art event but is interested in going; in the trial stage, a

consumer has attended one art event but does not wish to attend more frequently; the positive evaluation is the stage when a consumer has attended one art event and wishes to attend more frequently. After that, a consumer moves on to the adoption stage in which he/she has attended two or more art events but does not want to attend more often. Finally, the confirmation stage happens when a consumer has attended two or more art events and wants to attend more often; this stage indicates that a consumer's passion, interest, and knowledge of art has reached a certain level.

**Hierarchy of Effects Models**

	KNOWLEDGE	FEELING	MOTIVATION → ACTION
<b>AIDA</b> Strong 1925	<i>Attention</i>	<i>Interest</i>	<i>Desire</i>
DAGMAR Colley 1961	<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Conviction</i>	<i>Purchase</i>
Lavidge and Steiner 1961	<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Liking</i>	<i>Conviction</i>
Wells <i>et al.</i> 1965	<i>Awareness</i> <i>Perception</i>	<i>Understanding</i>	<i>Persuasion</i>
	COGNITIVE	AFFECTIVE	CONATIVE

**Figure 2:** The AIDA Models (Egan, 2007, p. 43)

The Hierarchy of Effects Model evaluates the effectiveness and results of marketing and promotion work in influencing the targeted audience. Furthermore, Solis (2011) stated that the Action, Interest, Desire, and Action (AIDA) Model explains how public perceives new interest through time (refer to Figure 2). In this study, the Hierarchy of Effects Model is used to rate the public's reaction to the contemporary art development in Hong Kong, such as the stage that has been achieved.

**Research Methods**

Both qualitative (i.e. interview) and quantitative (i.e. questionnaire survey) methods were adopted in this study.

**Qualitative Method: Interviews**

A structured interview was employed. The same set of questions was used for the interviews with the gallery managers in Hong Kong. The interview was divided into the following four areas: (i) general information/introduction; (ii) job-related questions on business operations of the organisation; (iii) future aspiration; and (iv) their viewpoints towards other stakeholders. These areas aimed to explore the roles of different stakeholders in the industry; to investigate the secondary information that has no official information disclosed to the public; and to investigate the personal and professional viewpoints of the interviewees as regards certain issues on art development in Hong Kong. These viewpoints were subjective but based on their concrete

personal working experience.

### **Quantitative Method: Questionnaire**

A questionnaire survey was employed to collect data on the public's views on contemporary art development in Hong Kong. It was sent out to 60 university students, including local, international, mainland, and exchange students, aged 18 years and above, through the Internet. 50 responses were retrieved and used for analysis. The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions. Seven questions explored their participation in arts and their understanding of contemporary art development in Hong Kong. Four questions requested for their personal information, to verify their eligibility and relevance as target participant. As university students have been among the major target audiences for independent art association for art education, according to the views of all the interviewees of this study, they were thus selected as the sample of the questionnaire.

### **Analysis of Results**

To interpret the qualitative data collected from the interviews, the NVivo Data Analysis method was employed for coding and identifying patterns from various concepts and insights revealed in the interviews. SPSS was used in analysing the quantitative data derived from the questionnaires.

## **Results**

### **Results of the interviews**

The qualitative data was analysed using coding. Under the code 'Contemporary Art', the interviewees defined their understanding of contemporary art in Hong Kong along the lines of its internationalisation and being a springboard to enter the Asia and Pacific Asia market.

Under the code 'Importance to the (Art) Industry', the interviewees believed that art gallery 'act[s] as a channel between artists and public', '[acts] as a resource to promote art to [the] public through education', and shows an artist's concern to society and how one takes art as an expression. According to the interviewees, art associations bring art to the public for free, gather all members of society together, and strengthen up their bargaining power. The word 'public' was repeated constantly (over 34 times) throughout the interviews.

Under the code 'Roles in the Industry', the interviewees referred to art gallery as the channel between the artists and the public, whereas an art association serves as glue that gathers all galleries around Hong Kong. In other words, art gallery provides a touch point for art education through the assistance of art association, which, in turn, provides a strong bargaining power to facilitate operation.

Under the code 'Contribution', the interviewees believed that art associations improve the code of practice to enhance galleries compatibility through talks and panel

discussion. Both art association and galleries connect the public and the user through technology and communication, for instance, social media platforms, such as Facebook.

Under the code 'Results', the interviewees specified actual numbers of art fairs and visitors to events which were not officially disclosed to the public, whereas the majority of interviewee provided more qualitative responses; they commented that as a result of art gallery's effort in promoting art events was significantly promising..

### **Results of the questionnaire survey**

Through a questionnaire survey, data were collected from 50 university students. Forty-six of the 50 respondents (92%) were aged 18 to 24 years, and four (8%) were 24 to 30 years old. Twenty-eight of the respondents (56%) were undergraduate students; 12 (24%) were postgraduate students (6 of them were fresh graduates); and 1 (2%) was employed. Twenty-seven respondents (54%) were from local universities in Hong Kong; 22 (44%) were exchange students coming from overseas universities; and 1 (2%) experienced education from both local and overseas universities.

Most of the respondents (62%) said they have been to an art event at least once recently, whereas 38% said they have not. For the second question, there were 43 valid responses from 19 of the respondents. The most selected options were Art Basel (60%), Claude Monet: The Spirit of Place (40%), and Art Central (30%). For the third question, the most selected options were Art Gallery (24%), art-related organisations (e.g. Art Central) (20%), government organisations (e.g. M+, West Kowloon Cultural District) (20%), and international curating organisations (e.g. Art Basel) (20%). For the fourth question, 80% of the respondents agreed that Hong Kong has hosted more large-scale art fairs in recent years, whereas 18% did not. For the fifth question, the mean of the data was 2.38 events, with a median of 2 events. The highest frequency was 1 event. The minimum was 0 event and the maximum was 5 events. The range was 5. Of the 50 respondents, 13 (26%) said they had been to 1 event and 2 events in recent years, respectively; 10 (20%) had been to 5 or more events. For the sixth question, the six given statements were categorised into positive and negative responses. The positive response included respondents (70%) who stated they had been to art events and wish to attend more in the future. The negative response included respondents (30%) who stated that they had been or had not been to art events and do not wish to attend more in the future. This finding may indicate that attending art events could enhance one's interest in contemporary art and influence their practice of aesthetic and art appreciation. For the seventh question, 23 respondents (46%) said agreed that art events enhanced their understanding of contemporary art at a small extent, whereas 15 (30%) believed that attending art events enhanced their understanding of contemporary art. For the eighth question, half of the respondents were from Hong



Kong and the rest, from various countries, such as France, Canada, and the United States.

## Discussion

The interviews and questionnaire survey addressed this study's research questions.

### ***Roles of stakeholders in promoting contemporary art to the public***

#### Art Galleries as Intermediaries

The results of this study suggested that the primary role of art galleries in Hong Kong is to not only exhibit artworks of artists but also attract potential customers and thereby generate sales and profit for both the galleries and artists. The findings suggested that art galleries take up a significant role in promoting all forms of contemporary art and art development. One of the interviewees explained the 'Ecosystem of Art Business', in which every artist starts a career by exhibiting his/her work at an art gallery. Such exhibitions of artworks effectively create a profile for artists, and thereafter generate business opportunities for art galleries. This finding is consistent with Annamma's (1996) explanation that 'galleries serve as vehicles that help maintain an elaborate system that includes the creation, the circulation, and the consumption of art' (p. 259). The circulation could refer to art dealers, critics, brokers, museum curators or any intermediary channels that communicate between the artists and the public.

Nevertheless, art galleries' most fundamental role is to facilitate proper logistic flow in the delivery of appreciation experience for the audience. For instance, gallery managers bear the responsibilities of identifying professional and trustworthy art delivery services, art handlers, and shipment of painting.

#### Art Associations as Educator

For Hong Kong Art Gallery Association (HKAGA), a non-profit independent organisation, the primary role of art associations is educator. According to HKGA (2016), through public events, art associations reach out to local and international communities, act upon on their primary objective to support the development of the local art community and the promotion of Hong Kong as the major international art centre in Asia through joint initiatives with the public and private sectors, as well as to find specific opportunities for exchange and cooperation between the HKAGA and museums, artists, academic institutions, auction houses, charities, other members of the Hong Kong art community, as well as other international art organisations.

As regards the scope of contemporary art education, the interviewees stressed the need to focus on aesthetic value. The scope of contemporary art could be broad and thus includes anything, including architecture, food, painting, and streets. The interviewees suggested that the

most effective means of education are panel talk, gallery tour, and art salon.

#### The Public as Participants

The public is undoubtedly among the most important stakeholders in the development of contemporary art in Hong Kong. Their participation and responses are significant evidence in evaluating the art development. The increasing rate of participation suggested that promotional work is well done in acknowledging the public the concept of 'contemporary art' and 'aesthetic'. Development refers to the process in which an entity grows and becomes more advanced. Public participation and reaction, as seen in their attendance to art fairs and art-related social media events, is the driving wheel of art development.

The results of this study showed that 45 of the respondents (90%) were positive regarding their interest in contemporary art and art events; more than half of them participated in Art Basel, Claude Monet: The Spirit of Place, and Art Central.

### ***Impacts of the stakeholders***

#### Public Participation

The three-day international fair Art Basel in 2016 attracted around 70 000 visitors, which included directors, curators, and trustees from more than 100 international museums and institutions all over the world. More than 239 art galleries from 35 different countries participated; half of them were from the Asia and Pacific Asia region (Art Basel, 2016). Compared with the data in 2015, the number of visitors increased by 10 000, or 3 300 more per day on average. For Art Central, which is Hong Kong's first locally organised art fair, the number of visitors also increased from 30 000 in 2015 to 32 000 in 2016 (Tsui, 2016).

The findings of this study together with the literature review have suggested that the public has attended art events more in recent years, citing the steady increase in the number of visitors of gallery talk since 2013, from about 40 in 2014 to about 100 in 2015. The drastic increase in public participation confirms Solis's (2011) claim that the public has been more aware of the occurrence of art events through promotions, thereby becoming more interested in involving in the events.

#### Increasing Number of International Art Events

The success of Art Basel and Art Central in the past few years, including the massive attendance to these events and the increasing participation of galleries, has shown the world that Hong Kong also has a great potential in hosting international art events. More international art events, such as Art Basel, have chosen Hong Kong as a destination for their exhibitions. Art Basel has extended from its initial location in Basel of Switzerland to Florida,

and selected Hong Kong as their third home to organise their annual art fair. It benchmarked Hong Kong as an important springboard from the world into the Asia Pacific Region and the rest of the Asia. The Asia Contemporary Art Show, which was founded by collector and gallery owners Mark Saunderson, Douwe Cramer, and Sarah Benecke 20 years ago, aimed to 'deliver interesting, diverse and fun shows for collectors and art buyers; and great service and support for our exhibitors from all around the world' (Asia Contemporary Art Show, 2016). It explained that the world has marked Hong Kong as an outlet for them to enter the rest of the market in Asia Pacific Region and all over the world.

#### Art Awareness of the Public

To evaluate the public's awareness of art, the Hierarchy of Effects Model was applied in the questionnaire. The respondents were asked whether any of the six statements is the best and most accurate to describe their understanding of and interest in contemporary art. All six statements were correlated and showed an ascending trend in between about how their past participation in art event influences their decision in whether going to more art events in the future again. The positive response category explained the public's art adoption process, particularly the stages of positive evaluation, confirmation, and adoption; this category included 60% of the respondents. This finding suggested that good education promotes contemporary art and aesthetic values.

#### Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that different stakeholders of art development play important roles and, to a certain extent, made positive impacts on art development in Hong Kong. However, there are a few recommendations for the further development of art in Hong Kong.

First, a compulsory aesthetic class for young children must be implemented to shape their habits and attitude in appreciating art. Acer and Omerođlu (2007) revealed that providing aesthetic education at a young age can increase children's aesthetic awareness, helps them adopt a new viewpoint on life, and, ultimately, assists them in adopting art. In the latter, children are shaped to not only like or prefer but also have a conviction for and purchase art.

Second, the government must provide more funding to independent art organisations to support their operation and sustainability, and most importantly, to ease their financial burden (National Assembly of State Art Agencies, 2010). For example, the government can provide galleries with the 'seal of approval' in recognising their professions in the industry and thus increasing their competitive power in obtaining external funds from investors.

Third, independent art organisations can reach out to other similar organisations around the world. This approach not only brings in more customers and unique artwork from all over the world but also improves the code

of business practice. For example, the IFACCA in Australia has activated art profession through networking and governance meetings. The stronger the connection to the world, the more opportunities is available for contemporary art development in Hong Kong.

Fourth, the contributors of this art scene in Hong Kong are taking an inevitably important role, including intermediaries, or educators, and participants, and must be harnessed. The government plays a significant role in educating the public about art and inculcating that art appreciation is a lifetime skill that inspires one to create new thoughts and visions.

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