



Tiffany Ngai



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(Left and right) Art work done by students around the campus of HKSC.

Artistic students who want to pursue study in the arts at a higher level still have to clear the obstacle of public examinations as the Hong Kong education system only rewards those with good grades. Eno Yim Wai-ying, the assistant principal of HKSC, says she has seen many talented students who have failed to advance because of the exam-oriented system.

To help such students, HKSC launched a "Little Cattle Depot" trial scheme in 2008. With their parents' consent, students who join the scheme do not take any public examinations. Instead, they devote their time to developing their artistic skills, interests and talents.

Schools that specialise in a given field or profession are still rare in Hong Kong, compared with Japan and Taiwan. Yim says the Hong Kong education system has never encouraged students to choose a path related to their interests. Students only follow the norm and rarely get to think about what they really want to pursue.

So, it is not surprising that in 2010, less than six per cent of students took the Visual Arts HKCEE and less than one per cent took it at Advanced Level.

Terrence Quong, the principal of Jockey Club Ti-I College (Ti-I), a government aided visual arts and sports secondary school, says the reason for this is that Hong Kong students and, more importantly their parents, do not "dare to art".

What Quong means by "dare to art" is that families dare not let their children study the subject. "I want to tell families that it is okay to let your children study art in the new senior secondary schools and to go on to study art in university. It's okay. In fact, it's more than okay. It's good!"

Quong thinks parents do not want their children to become artists or do art related work because they think it will be hard for them to make a living compared with other professions. These views have affected schools' willingness to offer art classes.

"Our role is not to produce alumni who have careers in art but to help generate an educated population, that is Hong Kong citizens who love art, who appreciate art and know what art is," says Quong.

According to a survey of 453 local secondary schools carried out by the Education Bureau in 2009, 345 schools said they would offer visual arts as one of their subjects under the new curriculum.

But Quong points out that although the schools are willing to offer visual arts, it does not necessarily mean they will end up teaching it. It all depends on the number of students who choose the subject; if there is not enough uptake, the school might decide not to teach it.

Even when parents do send their children to specialist arts schools, it is not a sure indication that they have "dared to art". Chan Huan, a graduate from HKSC is luckier than many of his peers. His parents were prepared

"... to understand art is not easy."

to pay the relatively high tuition fees to send him to the school, and now he is studying on a film course at the Federation of Hong Kong Filmmakers.

He says the students at his former school could choose to waste their time away due to the laissez-faire policy of the school. According to Chan, many students entered the school because they were unable to get promoted to form four in their own schools. Some of them may admire the spontaneity of the School of Creativity but very few of them actually entered it for the love of art.

For those students who do have a genuine interest and are able to pursue it further, Hong Kong has a growing number of post-secondary art and design institutes, including two newcomers to the scene.

Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) and Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI) began teaching their first students this September. SCAD is a respected art and design university in the United States. Its Hong Kong branch, which offers undergraduate and master's degrees, is the only university in Hong Kong exclusively focused on art and design.

HKDI is a design education institute under the government's Vocational Training Council that offers diploma and top-up degree programmes.

These two new institutions join the existing Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and the Hong Kong Art School as tertiary education institutes providing education and training in fine arts, design and performance arts. Most of the programmes offered by these last three institutions are officially recognised by the Hong Kong

Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications.

But as Ti-I principal Terence Quong points out, the purpose of art education is not just to produce artists and professionals but also, "Hong Kong citizens who love art, appreciate art and know what art is."

This is not just the work of the schools and colleges. The government also plays an important role in art education. In 2000, it established the Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre. The centre provides well-equipped studios for sculptors, printmakers and ceramics artists and helps them to hold exhibitions, workshops, demonstrations and other activities.

However, even those who run the activities there acknowledge that their existence does not necessarily mean there are more educated audiences out there. As Lesley Lau Fung-ha, the centre's chief curator, says, "It is not difficult to hold art exhibitions, but to understand art is not easy."

Lau says members of the public frequently ask whether taxpayers' money should be used to solve society's problems rather than used to promote art through ventures like the HKVAC.

"It's sending out a negative message, which is to say we should only satisfy the most basic requirements in society, that



Crystal Chui

Terence Quong, principal of Ti-I encourages students and parents to "Dare to Art".

is to say art is of lesser importance," says Lau. For him, and others who are striving to create a local audience for an Asian arts hub, it is a demoralising message.



Hong Kong Museum of Art (HKMA)

10 Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong

Opening hours:

Daily 10:00 am to 6:00 pm

Saturdays 10:00 am to 8:00 pm

Closed on Thursdays (except public holidays)

Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre (HKVAC)

7A Kennedy Road, Central, Hong Kong

Opening Hours:

Daily 10:00 am to 9:00 pm

Closed on Tuesdays

Artist Studios: 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm, 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

SCAD Gallery

2/F, 30-32 Wyndham St., Central, Hong Kong

Opening Hours:

Monday to Saturday 10:30 am to 7:30 pm



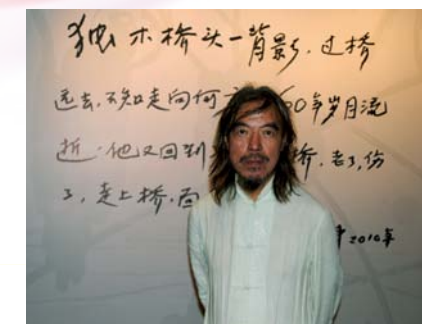
Phoebie Man

Student exhibitions in Ti-I College.



Phoebie Man

The campus of HKICC Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity (HKSC) is designed by the world-renowned architect, Rocco Yim. Please see P. 4 for an exclusive interview with Yim.



Phoebie Man

Tang Hoi-chiu, the Chief Curator of the HKMA.