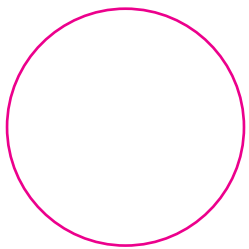
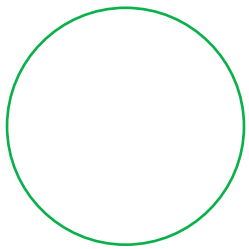


DIALOGUE

對談

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Dialogue!
Publicly
Engaged Art
Practices

對談!
公眾 · 實踐 · 藝術



DIALOGUE!

Publicly Engaged Art Practices

06.12.2013

vA!

07.12.2013

Oi!

Presenter



Organisers



Academic Partners



Public • Art

The Relationship between
Art and People / Publicness

Individual • Engagement

Social Movement: Self-initiated
Projects by Artists / Curators

Community • Interaction

Formation, Interaction and Sustainability
of Participatory Art Practices

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WHAT COMMUNITY MUSEUM PROJECT DOES? WHAT HAVE BEEN LEARNT?

Speaker

Siu King-chung |

Co-founder & Vice-chairperson,
Community Museum Project

Community inventory means taking stock of the community resources through social interactions with a particular community group, such that some of the existing resources within that community could be identified, leveraged or consolidated. Yet, what does 'community resources' mean? When we get hold of these resources, what can we do about them?

I am a member of the Community Museum Project. We do not own a museum that collects artefacts, but we organise events using methods that are similar to what a museum does and use art and exhibition practices to achieve certain social objective. We only have four members, including Howard Chan, Phoebe Wong, Tse Pak-chai and myself. Sadly, as Howard passed away in March last year (2012), the on-going project may now be slightly slowed down.

Community Museum Project aims at examining indigenous creativity in the community through museum methods. It also attempts to combine artistic creativity to facilitate the dissemination of folk knowledge or even to achieve interdisciplinary collaboration. I am concerned with

three questions: Where are the 'community resources', as we call it? Do they really exist? If so, how can we get hold of them, recognise them and even develop them? These three questions prompted us to consider art in relation to community and contemplate the various questions related to social participation. How can we develop the concept of 'social curating'?

Our approach is derived from one idea: The street itself is a museum. Spectators do not need to visit a museum to find cultural significant artefacts. For example, during the July First procession, many people created objects to express their political stances. We could see quite a number of creative props, many of which were created by the public and some by artists. The question is, after the end of the protest, these works will be dumped like garbage. This explains that, very often, we do not make good use of the creative resources of our city. That is how we come up with the concept of 'cultural scavenging', which is to collect and reappraise things abandoned by other people.

Later on, we held an exhibition known as *Objects of Demonstration*



1 | The exhibition *Objects of Demonstration*,
opened on 30 June 2002



3 | Mr. Chui, a resident of Lee Tung Street,
became one of the docents



2 | Exhibition panels revealed the classifications
of the objects and their context in use

in the Cattle Depot Artist Village in 2002 [plate 1] and at the Chinese Arts Centre, in Manchester, UK in 2004. We collected objects from the demonstrations and categorised them using classification method of the museum. There were ready-made pieces, DIY objects, pictorials, texts and poems, as well as body performances [plate 2]. In recent years, there are also mass produced items, internet appropriation, government monuments, monuments made by the people, and even street installations. Our exhibition,

basically, was about collecting these protest objects and showing their functions, revealing their political views and the creativity demonstrated in Hong Kong protests. In 2012, *Lonely Planet* rated demonstrations in Hong Kong as one of the top 10 tourism highlights, indicating that our street creativity is indeed fascinating and attractive. We hope to raise public awareness on certain indigenous creations and cultures employing our museum methods.

Besides, we also designed the Street as Museum project in which we used different themes to connect the interesting elements and spectacles that we observed on the streets. *The Shop-wise Tour*, for example, is a route that highlights the creative ways of merchandise display in the street-level shops in Wan Chai. We planned with students and explored the attractions and the visual culture that we encounter every day on the streets. Later on, we also invited neighbouring residents to be docents. Through this kind of

interaction, we not only gained a better understanding of the people and things in this community, but also found that the information displayed in the exhibition could be turned into an index guide for the streets. For example, after visitors watched at our display boards about Lee Tung Street in 2005 and learnt the stories given by the community members about the ecology of the site [plate 3], they would re-visit the actual place. During the curatorial process, we made detailed records of the streetscape and the ecology of the

4 | A visual documentation of the 5 stages of the demolition of Lee Tung Street photo by Tse Pak-chai



community. For example, we noticed that over the past four decades, even though some of the shops had to move, they lingered into a nearby shop on Lee Tung Street, not until the community was completely taken apart. During the five years between 2004 and 2009, Lee Tung Street had been transformed from a bustling street to a site surrounded by hoard boards which was painted with 'artist impression'. We recorded each and every stage of the demolition [plate 4]. Through exhibition design, we visualised the stories and ecology,

turning information into what we call knowledge visualisation. The exhibition might become an index guide of the community.

In another project, we did research on local craftsmen to reveal the characters of a community. We found eight craftsmen and used our 'photo-stocktaking' method to chronicle their production methods and processes in details, exploring and unfolding the stories within. One of the subjects we explored was the wooden cart. We recorded

the steps of making a wooden cart [plate 5] and studied how the craftsman reassembled it, by using abandoned materials from the community, such as old bed board, used tyres, bearings and others. These wooden carts not only help the craftsman to support his family, but also provide means for various grassroots trades within the community, including hawkers, cleaners, construction workers, and others. Gradually, we discovered the design logic of the craftsman behind his production process. Not only

did he recycle unwanted items from street cleaners, but he also upcycled the materials through the process of modular production so as to fulfill the requirements and needs of his customers. In less than two hours, he created this easy-to-use cart with different styles and sizes for his grassroots customers [plate 6]. We used exhibition as a way to introduce to the public the wisdom of these craftsmen; and we invited them to explain and demonstrate their skills at the exhibition. A relevant book was also published. Later on, with

4 | A visual documentation of the 5 stages of the demolition of Lee Tung Street photo by Tse Pak-chai



高樓街
Lee Tung Street
Should Have
Should Have

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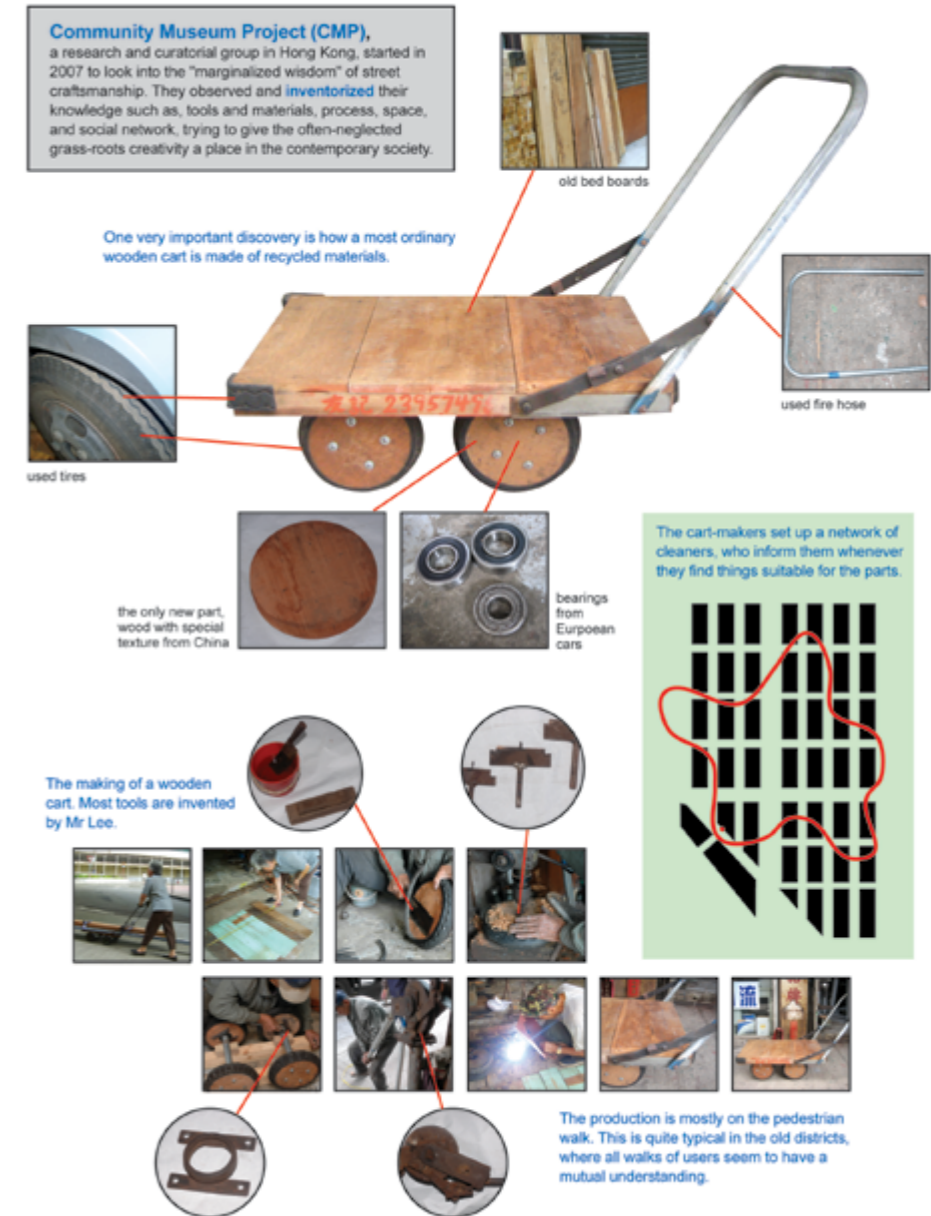


an aim of providing more business opportunities for the craftsmen, we invited some designers to work with them and develop new products that incarnated their skills and production processes.

As for the promotion, these new products were used as furniture pieces in an international conference and overseas participants were all very impressed with them. We also referred the craftsmen to other practitioners in the creative industry,

such as artists and architects, to facilitate their cooperation and create novel designs that the craftsmen might have never imagined. Our promotion plan seemed to be successful: A five-star hotel in Mong Kok commissioned the wooden cart craftsman to create a tailor-made buffet table for promoting their buffet theme centred around Hong Kong streetside snacks [plate 7]. The process gave rise to interdisciplinary collaborations and exchanges. As for the metal works, we also facilitated

5 | A visual explication of the making process of the Yau Kee wooden cart



6 | Used materials for such modular production come from the neighbourhood



7 | Mrs. Lee witnesses the usage of Mr. Lee's masterpiece at the hotel



8 | Metalwork master, Mr. Liu conducted his first design workshop for the teenagers

the cooperation between a metal craftsman and a young designer. They joined hands to create a unique pinhole camera and a series of display shelves. We also made arrangements for various craftsmen and the designers to lead groups of young people to design and produce items such as mini flower plates, metal decorative items and other

different things [plate 8].

In the recent semester, we introduced these 'methodologies' and collaborated with a craftsman to create credit-bearing module. Students could study the work of this metal craftsman and co-create their works.

wen yau

Thank you, Siu King-chung. Our next and last speaker is Tsang Tak-ping. Early this year, Siu and I were at Fotanian and we spoke about the changes of art and society. Tsang Tak-ping's topic is 'Art(ists) Need Community or vice versa?' In fact, ever since Frog King (Kwok Mang-ho)'s *54th Venice Biennale and the Hong Kong Response Exhibition*, I have rarely met him in the art circle. He has been focusing on farming at his Sangwoodgoon over the past few years. This time, we meet him again in an art space. Let us invite him on stage.

Dialogue! Publicly Engaged Art Practices was held in 2013. Heartfelt gratitude is dedicated to the academic partners, thanks to Dr. Vivian Ting, Professor Kurt Chan and Mr. Alvin Yip for providing advice and all art veterans for being the moderators and the speakers in the conference.

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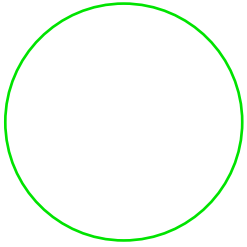
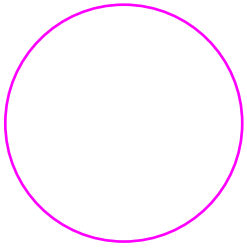
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