'Ink Art and New Music’
Creative Exchange Project of Composing for Mixed Ensemble

《水墨藝術與新音樂》
中西混合室內樂創作交流項目

Prof. Chan Hing-yan, Department of Music, Faculty of Arts
Ms. Sharon Lu, Cultural Management Office

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International Collaborative Exchange

The ‘Ink Art and New Music’ Project is a collaborative exchange led by Bard College Conservatory of Music in the U.S., M+ Museum of West Kowloon Cultural District in Hong Kong, and HKU’s Department of Music and Cultural Management Office.
Summary of the Impact

Heart the art, see the music!

• The project provided a one-of-a-kind cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary, cross-generational platform for artistic and educational exchanges. It fostered communication between Asian and Western cultures, promoted creativity and inspiration, and provided opportunities for new discovery and exploration of ideas.

• Through virtual lectures, mentorships, commissions, academic forums, and live performances, it explored the aesthetic commonality and discovered the innovative potential of Ink Art and New Music.

• Responding to ink paintings from M+ Museum, aspiring composers and musicians broke new grounds by composing and premiering works for mixed ensemble of Chinese and Western instruments.
Underpinning Research

• The project celebrated an East Asian aesthetic that continues to inspire: Ink Art and Chinese musical instruments are part of Chinese culture with a long history; both need to find a contemporary voice.

• M+ supported with the involvement of Curatorial (Ink Art), Learning and Interpretation, Visitor Service, and Digital departments. Dr. Lesley Ma and her curatorial team selected ink paintings from its collection, providing an in-depth introduction on modern and contemporary ink art. Dr. Ma also gave an online lecture to the student composers and the general public, entitled ‘Introduction to Ink Art through the Lens of M+, Hong Kong’.

• Art works selected from M+ for the compositions are calligraphy and ink paintings by celebrated artists Irene Chou, Hung Fai, Leung Kui Ting, Li Yuan-chia, Lui Shou-kwan, Nam June Paik, and Tong Yang-Tze. Extensive studies into the artworks were conducted.
Underpinning Research

• Prof. Chan Hing-yen, a renowned composer lauded for subtle mediation between Chinese elements and Western idioms, formulated the research idea with Dr. Yeung-Ping Chen (South China Normal University), Dr. Robert Martin (former director of the Bard Conservatory), Dr. Jindong Cai (director of the US-China Music Institute), Dr. Lesley Ma (former curator at M+ and current associate curator at The Metropolitan Museum of Art), and Sharon Lu (programme director of HKU MUSE).

• Bard College involved its faculty and staff in the preparation for this project. In April 2022, they hosted a 2-day conference titled *Ink and Sound: a Conference on Chinese Music and Visual Arts* where students from the Bard Mixed Ensemble gave preview performances of the new compositions.

• Faculty members from The Tianjin Juilliard School and South China Normal University guided mentees, shared their expertise, and created new works.
Underpinning Research

Presented in 3 phases, the project explored the aesthetic commonality and discovered the innovative potential of Ink Art and New Music, by connecting creative, knowledgeable, and curious minds and encouraging meaningful conversations.

Phase 1 | Fall 2022 | Virtual Lectures

• In a master class style, leading composers and scholars shared their expertise as mentors and moderators in 4 virtual lectures, on composing for mixed ensembles inspired by Chinese ink art.

• These lectures were edited and released on HKU MUSE YouTube Channel, with transcriptions and carefully prepared translations.

• Playlist of Lectures on YouTube (with English and Chinese subtitles)
Underpinning Research

New Music Inspired by Ink Paintings

- 4 composition students were selected from Bard College and HKU (2 each) as mentees.
- 3 Faculty Composers and their student mentees worked on new compositions inspired by individually chosen works from the M+ collection of 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} century ink paintings.

An Ink Artist’s Two Seasons

呂氏秋冬 An Ink Artist’s Two Seasons


An Ink Artist’s Two Seasons, 2022, original score ©Chan Hing-yan
Underpinning Research

Phase 2 | April 2022 | United States

Ink and Sound: A Conference on Chinese Music and Visual Arts

• This 2-day conference at Bard, including a series of scholarly, interactive, and musical events, explored the interplay between Chinese music, calligraphy, art, and poetry.

• 7 new compositions received their World Premiere by Bard music students in 2 concerts, which were livestreamed and viewable from Hong Kong and around the world.
Underpinning Research

Phase 3 | Sept 2022 | Hong Kong

- Phase III and the finale featured the grand Asian Premiere of the new works at the HKU Grand Hall, performed by local professional musicians from Ensemble Traversée.
- Images of artworks were digitally projected to enhance the audience's understanding and to create a multi-dimensional experience with ink and sound.
Knowledge to be Exchanged

Composers and Scholars – Sharing through Virtual Lectures

- In her virtual lecture, Dr. Lesley Ma from M+ and her curatorial team selected ink art paintings from its collection. She led the first lecture on the relationship between ink art and new music and provides interpretive information on the selected artworks.

- Dr. Yeung-Ping Chen (SCNU), Prof. Chan Hing-yan (HKU), and Dr. Yiwen Shen (Juilliard), gave lectures on ‘the history and development of mixed ensembles’, ‘composition skills for writing for the mixed ensembles’, and ‘ensembleship and collaboration’, respectively. Each of them also created a new composition for the project.
Knowledge to be Exchanged

Composition and Mentorship

• With a strong mentorship element built into the project, young composers and performers can learn directly from the established composers and scholars, and from fellow students in Hong Kong, China, and the United States.

• The project's integrated mentorship provided a key to 2-way learning between mentors and mentees. Likewise, in creating and shaping new works, connections between composers and performers were also established, providing a rare platform for direct communication and opportunities to understand diverse artistic and practical demands.
Knowledge to be Exchanged

An invitation to create and to inspire

• Hear the art, see the music – the multi-layer exchanges fostered creativity and innovation. Participants were able to engage with artworks, create new music, exchange ideas, present world premieres, and make music together.

• Curator of M+’s Hong Kong Visual Culture Ms. Tina Pang and HKU Music’s Prof. Chan Hing-yan gave introductory remarks on the background of the selected ink paintings, how the composers used the paintings as a point of departure for inspiration, and how the music reflected critical elements of the paintings.

• Asian Premiere of New Works: Grand Hall, HKU (30 SEP 2022)

>> House Programme & Programme Notes
>> Recordings of 7 New Works
Engagement

With young talents: breaking new ground

A new work by HKU PhD composition student Jing Wang, responding to Li Yuan-chia’s ink painting at M+, *Untitled, 1960*

- A supervised process to create new compositions through mentorship
- Direct access to the M+ Ink Art collection
- Opportunities to learn from renowned faculty composers and scholars through masterclass-style lectures and discussions
- Interaction with professional musicians in reading sessions and rehearsals
- World Premiere and Asian Premiere in a professional concert settings
Engagement

With the public: a novel ink art and new music experience

- A multidimensional finale performance by professional musicians at HKU Grand Hall
- 4 lectures livestreamed on zoom and uploaded to MUSE YouTube channel with bilingual subtitles
- A conference and supporting events took place at Bard and were livestreamed on YouTube
- Dedicated webpages and HKU Event System
- Sharing on multiple social media platforms
- Newsletters reaching a 20,000+ database
- Engagement with audience worldwide through livestreams and videos.
- Audio and video recordings of the activities are available for further research and educational purposes

With external partners
Impacts Achieved

International Exposure with KE Partners

- Our collaborators from US, China, and Hong Kong brought the project under the international spotlight.

- The collaboration raised the profile of the research and build HKU’s reputation as a cultural hub for knowledge exchange.

Fostered Communication between Asian and Western Cultures

- A platform was created for faculty composers and student composers to exchange ideas and have a meaningful dialogue for composing for mixed ensemble.

- Composers gained valuable opportunities to have direct access to the professional Chinese and Western instrumentalists during rehearsals.
Impacts Achieved

Breaking New Grounds with Strong Output

• The project promoted creativity and inspiration and provided opportunities for discovering and exploring ideas.

• Musical scores, interpretive notes, recorded workshops, audio and visual documentation of the premieres were developed into effective teaching and learning tools.

Reaching New Audiences and Sharing with the Public

• The project succeeded in attracting a larger group of people outside of HKU to experience knowledge exchange spearheaded by leading scholars and educators.

• New audience engaged and introduced to HKU MUSE concert series through cross-media and cross-cultural collaborations
Impacts Achieved

**Beneficiaries**

HKU students, staff, alumni, participants from our KE partners, the general public, visual art and music lovers in China, HK, and USA and other parts of the world were able to explore the aesthetic commonality and innovative potential of *Ink Art* and *New Music*, with first-rate composers and scholars through live and streaming events of the project.

- Recordings of the 4 Virtual Lectures are made available online, cumulating *1000+* viewership.
- *300+* attended the livestreaming of the Virtual Lectures (SEP 2021)
- *200+* attended the 'Ink and Sound: A Conference on Chinese Music and Visual Arts' at Bard Conservatory, USA (APR 2022)
- *400+* attended the Finale Concert, including new groups reached via M+ Museum and the participating visual artists
Impacts Achieved

Sample Feedback

- **Austin Leung (Student Composer, Final Year PhD at HKU)**
  "The lectures are immensely supportive to the development of my work. It is such a luxury to gain access to highly respected artists and composers. Their professional information and generous sharing allowed me to gain a lot more knowledge to the ink art itself and the composition of the mixed genre. I am extremely glad to be able to participate in this project."

- **Mr. Chung (Audience Member)**
  "I was able to benefit from this educational programme online, where I witnessed cross-continental mentorships across different time zones despite the physical distance under the pandemic. As a visual art lover, I was so inspired to see the sparks between the 2 art forms, i.e. visual art and music, through this meaningful collaboration."

- **Kathryn Wright (Managing Director, US-China Music Institute)**
  "Thank you for all your hard work over the past years to make this project a reality. We certainly faced some challenges, but I am proud of the work we did. And the music created was truly inspirational, and well as an amazing opportunity for the student composers."
Feast your senses with a novel ink art and new music experience (15 SEP 2022)

"Ink art and Chinese musical instruments are part of Chinese culture with a long history; both need to find a contemporary voice. So we came up with the idea to create new music with a mixed ensemble featuring a very unique combination of instruments that responds explicitly to specific ink paintings. It has never been done before." —Prof. Chan Hing-yan

"I would like the audience to find something that inspires them in this piece. I used my own sound textures, and I hope they will find their own. Everyone will have a different view, with someone finding the trace point of the artistic process in the piece’s middle, end or beginning." —Jing Wang
Impacts Achieved

Reaching a wider community via social media and newsletters