Bringing art to life

A group of talented young writers will this week work under the Cultural Journalism Campus Fellowship, focusing their attention on arts and cultural happenings all over Hong Kong, as Vivienne Chow, CJC Co-organiser and Independent Programme Director, explains

The course of culture in Hong Kong is being altered.

The development of the West Kowloon Cultural District and a thriving art market are being set against the backdrop of the debate surrounding the possible establishment of a culture bureau to serve the city. At the same time, fresh opportunities are arising, including an intense demand for artistic as well as administrative talent, as our art and our culture become more visible locally and abroad.

The city’s cultural policies are rarely out of the news as issues such as the laws surrounding intellectual property rights and the distribution of cultural resources are tossed and turned in that most public of forums - the press.

And that’s exactly as it should be. The practice of cultural journalism allows such issues to be properly articulated in the public domain. It’s a stream of journalism that specialises in the reporting and critique of cultural affairs, the arts and related industries, and it helps to bridge the gaps between such stakeholders as policy makers and the general public, allowing them at the same time to fuel constructive and intelligent debate concerning the city’s cultural development.

In due time, published material forms part of the public records which document a society’s cultural evolution. Cultural journalism is a vital and ever-changing component of a healthy cultural ecology but it has been a factor sorely lacking in Hong Kong.

This was the fact that gave birth to the concept of the Cultural Journalism Campus (CJC), a non-profit educational initiative put forward by myself and Arts in Heritage Research, in association with the Goethe-Institut Hongkong.

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The CJC aims to promote cultural journalism and art criticism while guiding a group of young cultural journalists and critics through a series of seminars and a training fellowship.

The CJC was kicked off in January with a series of CJC Master Classes featuring prominent leaders from the cultural sector who gathered to discuss critical issues pertaining to Hong Kong’s cultural development.

This is now being followed by this week’s CJC Fellowship. Thirteen talented young writers have been selected to take part in this intensive training programme which will help in their development as professional journalists and critics.

Under the guidance of veteran journalists - Chief Mentor Mathew Scott, Chinese Mentor Tinny Cheng and Guest Mentor Niklas Maak, Arts Editor at the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, one of the biggest daily newspapers in Germany – the 13 writers will be producing a daily newspaper covering the art happenings and cultural debates which coincide with Art Basel in Hong Kong.

The best fellow will win an opportunity to attend the Berlin International Film Festival 2015 as an accredited journalist, thanks to the generous support of the Goethe-Institut Hongkong.

The region’s rapid cultural development ensures these writers will have a bright future in front of them, their critical writing upholding our city’s freedom of speech, without which arts, culture and creativity will never flourish.
THE PEOPLE...

THE PEOPLE...

鄭天儀 Tinny Cheng
Chinese Mentor & Editor of Culture Express

I’m a third-year student from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, majoring in Journalism and Communication. I love music, films, dramas and many other art forms. As a culture addict, I aspire to become a cultural journalist so I can share the beauty of culture and arts with the rest of the city. I do think that, as an international city, Hong Kong’s arts and cultural development is lagging. I wish more independent artists could gain support and appreciation through nurturing a more culturally aware populace.

Alexis Lai
CJC Fellow

I’m a journalist based in Hong Kong. While I report on a wide range of topics, I have a particular interest in understanding a place through its fine arts. It has been interesting to observe the visual arts scene in Hong Kong as the market has rapidly internationalised over the past several years. Some of the stories I most enjoyed writing include an examination of Andy Warhol’s influence on Chinese contemporary art for CNN and the significance of I.M. Pei’s architecture in Hong Kong for The Wall Street Journal. I’m participating in the CJC to make use of the opportunity to help run real-time coverage of an extended arts event.

Vivienne Chow
CJC Co-organiser & Independent Programme Director

Vivienne has been a cultural journalist and critic for over a decade and was named one of the world’s best young journalists and critics while representing Hong Kong at the 2004 inaugural Berlinale Talent Press at the 2004 Berlin International Film Festival. She has written extensively on culture and entertainment for publications locally and abroad and has covered major international events from film festivals to art fairs. Vivienne also covers Hong Kong and global cultural policy development and publishes a blog, Culture Shock, at www.viviennechow.com. She is currently Senior Reporter, Cultural Affairs, at the South China Morning Post and can be followed on Twitter @VivienneChow.

Coco Ho
CJC multimedia team

I am currently pursuing a Masters degree in Literary and Cultural Studies at Hong Kong University. Back in 2011, I organised a solo exhibition to share my fine-pen drawings with the public. I believe that online media is a very important tool for the promotion of the arts and I hope to explore the possibilities it offers in terms of enhancing the presentation of art and cultural stories. Media, society and technology tightly mingle together and I hope that through writing about art and culture I can help present the original meaning of the subjects.

Jane Li
CJC multimedia team

An arts enthusiast, avid dancer, and keen traveller who has studied and worked in Europe, the United States, and East Asia, I am always looking for ways to combine my passions with new adventures. I believe art is a vital part of society and I hope that in the near future people from all walks of life in Hong Kong will get the chance to become involved in the arts and in the cultural development of this city.

Cleo Tse
CJC Fellow

Studying International Journalism at Hong Kong Baptist University and participating in the CJC has given me the chance to analyse creativity in a rational way. In Hong Kong, it seems that the general atmosphere is not beneficial for artistic and cultural development but I think Hong Kong people are actually very interested in art, and they just need the right channels to get into the scene. In the future, I hope to have more opportunities to get in touch with creativity, to write about it, and to spread the message to everybody that they can believe in creativity, too.

Brian Yeung
CJC Fellow

Growing up in Hong Kong, a cosmopolitan city, I have been exposed to many cultures and forms of art, ranging from Picasso to Madonna and Tetris. And yet, after a sojourn to The Netherlands, Russia and Singapore, I realised a lot of cultural perceptions and presentations are just myths and stereotypes. As an independent contributor to the arts scene, I have a mission to debunk stereotypes and to facilitate cross-cultural understanding. With its capacity for expression, I value art as a way to discover the diversity of culture; embracing such diversity just makes me feel like the luckiest person alive.
Mathew Scott
Chief Mentor & Editor of Culture Express

Mathew has been based in Hong Kong for the past 20 years, initially working at the South China Morning Post until 2006, and finishing up there as Assistant Features Editor and Film Editor. Since then he has been freelancing film, entertainment, sports, lifestyle and news stories and features to international media outlets from Hong Kong and across Asia and beyond. Recent work has appeared in the South China Morning Post, New York Daily News, The Guardian (UK), The Australian, The Age (Melbourne, Australia), The Independent (UK), The Sydney Morning Herald, Discovery, Silkroad, Tatler and Prestige magazines (Hong Kong), Variety and The Hollywood Reporter, and via the Agence France-Presse and Relaxnews news agencies.

Carolyn Lee
CJC Fellow

I have spent half of my life in Korea and the other half in Hong Kong. This small but huge city is a second home and I know how much culture it has to offer. Hong Kong is fine-tuning more and more arts-related festivals and events every year but I believe there is more work to be done to really make art pervasive in the lives of the general public. Therefore, I am truly honoured and excited to be part of this promotion of the arts in Hong Kong.

Imogene Wong
CJC Fellow

I’m an art lover who just happens to currently be a business reporter. My curiosity drives me to work hard to explore everything in life, and to write and to share the stories I care about. I hope art can eventually abandon its business calculations and thrive in Hong Kong by being more welcoming to the public so everyone can learn to appreciate art, and to appreciate life.

Wu Yafei
CJC Fellow

It has always been my dream to study the world with a cultural and artistic view. Now I am studying Master of Arts Cultural Management at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and I want to be a cultural mediator who interprets, communicates, and defends cultures, rather than a cultural manager or technocrat. What attracts me to Hong Kong most is the unique fusion of East-meets-West and ancient-meets-modern. I have never thought that Hong Kong is a cultural desert, rather I think Hong Kong’s unique culture deserves a better reputation.

Niklas Maak
Guest Mentor & Editor of Culture Express

Niklas (born August 17, 1972 in Hamburg), arts editor of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), one of the biggest and highly renowned German daily newspapers, is a German journalist and architecture critic.

After graduating in 1991 at the Friedrich-Ebert-Gymnasium in Hamburg, Niklas studied art history, philosophy and architecture in Hamburg and Paris. He completed his PhD in 1998. From 1999 to 2001 he was the Editor for Architecture and at the same time author at the German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung. Since 2001 he has been the Editor in the arts section of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, where he heads the arts department with Julia Voss. He also writes articles on the architectural portraits of cities in the travel magazine Merian. He has been guest professor in architectural history at the Frankfurt University as well as guest professor at the Städelschule (International Academy with an assessment of traditional and contemporary art and architecture, Frankfurt).

Niklas’ writing, typically discovering and tracing novel historical lineages in an incisive manner, comprises an important contribution to contemporary architectural and cultural issues.

Kim Jae Ah
CJC Fellow

I am in awe of anyone related to the arts, especially filmmakers who have great power in storytelling. I am studying Journalism at the University of Hong Kong. The rich and diverse cultural elements of Hong Kong always fascinate me. It’s a city that never sleeps, it’s never tired and has an enormous potential to be a place where an individual can uphold his or her dignity; it has a unique and irreplaceable soul.

Wu Peiyue
CJC Fellow

I am a visual art student from Hong Kong Baptist University. I practise fine art and study art theory. I always dreamt that one day I might be an artist and now I am one. I hope young, Hong Kong-based artists can learn to rely on each other and can develop our unique style.

Shanis Fung
CJC Fellow

I have a background in sociology. After conducting research about civil society and local art organisations, I decided I would love to add to the betterment of the cultural development of Hong Kong. My wanderlust and a large appetite for music from all over the world have led me to believe that everyone has an ability to create and appreciate art. What’s my aspiration? To practice to be present in every moment of my life.

Sally Chong
CJC Fellow

In this city, people are tough, but they do have a soul, too. I try to understand each person and their life, and to communicate with them. I believe that art can bring people together and make the world a better place.

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The facts of the matter

CJC Master Classes turn young writers’ minds to the lay of our cultural landscape

Understanding a city’s cultural ecology is a must for cultural journalists and art critics. To get its young writers to familiarise themselves with what they will be writing about, the Cultural Journalism Campus (CJC) kicked off with a series of CJC Master Classes, featuring leading figures from the cultural sector who were called upon to discuss and dissect Hong Kong’s cultural development as well as various issues facing the city.

The first CJC Master Class was held on January 25 and featured John Batten (below), president of the International Association of Art Critics Hong Kong, alongside music critic and author Oliver Chou as they shared their perspectives on the status of cultural journalism in Hong Kong and on a changing media landscape which has been threatened by a deterioration of press freedom. Both critics emphasised the importance of honest opinion and independence when it comes to writing about art.

With film being one of the most important areas in the cultural sector, the second CJC Master Class, held on February 15, had Shu Kei (above right), chair of the School of Film at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, and the Hong Kong International Film Festival Society’s executive director Roger Garcia (above left) talking about film criticism and the latest developments in the world of filmmaking.

A thriving art market has put Hong Kong on the world map, with headline-grabbing auctions and the success of ART HK leading to Art Basel landing the city last year. With that in mind, Art Basel’s Asia director Magnus Renfrew and Hong Kong artist Morgan Wong charted the rise of Hong Kong as an arts hub and the impact this is having on the city’s arts development in the third CJC Master Class, which was held on March 1.

The final CJC Master Class outlined the changing landscape of Hong Kong’s media scene as brought about by an increase in public investment in cultural development. Louis Yu, performing arts executive director of the West Kowloon Cultural District, and Professor Anthony Fung, director of the Chinese University’s School of Journalism and Communications, discussed the development of the West Kowloon arts hub and how it was influencing the media scene by turning the spotlight on to cultural stories.

Cultural Journalism Campus (CJC) is a unique non-profit educational programme co-organised by Vivienne Chow, a veteran cultural journalist and critic who serves as CJC’s Independent Programme Director, and Arts In Heritage Research, a non-profit organisation dedicated to arts, culture and heritage that is the funding organisation of CJC.