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West Kowloon Cultural District Office  
Home Affairs Bureau  
25/F, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road  
Wanchai, Hong Kong

Re: Positioning the "West Kowloon Cultural District"

Dear Sirs:

Build, and they would come. Would "they", really!? For what, and for how long? How often? Take a close look at those already built here right in Hong Kong. "Cultural" establishments funded by the public's purse here are dirt cheap, by any standard, to visit. Yet, even when the admissions are totally free, visitations paid are few and far in between. But when really in demand, "the" venue is often too small for most, a one, to find accommodation.

Let me cut right to the chase: Hong Kong's enter-edu-info-culture-tainment establishments are too mickey-mouse (even the mickey mouse kingdom here is too mickey-mouse by the mickey-mouse kingdom's own standard), in sizes, contents, and varieties; too user un-friendly, user un-wanted for staying too long; too pocketized to form a living ecology. And yet, the pipsqueak (by world's standard) display buildings could hardly be much more than being half filled, with the right stuff, most of the time. Now you are going to build behemoths, what are you going to fill up the hectares with?

We already have far too many under-utilized, under-visited public "Cultural" venues appreciable by the plebes (not those "high couture" like events sought out by those who are willing and able to pay, through one a plebe's nose, for a single ticket). A case in point, that short Avenue of Stars (星光大道), the only decent strollable short walk along (尖東) Tsim Sha Tsui East's coast line in the city, welcomes only occasional tourists come in bus loads. It has little seating and shading along the way when Hong Kong is mostly hot and humid. Other than a few hand prints and metal castings, the area is basically sterile, void of any living mechanisms to generate interests. After a few photos

taken, what is there for one to linger, on and on, time and again? Dive into the well built and maintained cultural establishments, a foraying first timer could probably kill half a day at each, the mere curious, probably only an hour or two. The displays are static, time consuming and costly to stage and hence cannot be re-constituted in a matter of months, time and again, thence to lose vitality and visitors.

Don't repeat the mistakes all over again at the West Kowloon Cultural District.

It should all begin with the naming of the place. People love to pay and hang around for good entertainments; especially those that are dynamic (as opposed to static, say, the dolphins' show vs. a fixed display) and that one can take part in and are interactive. Hong Kong's Ocean Park is a vivid success showcase. West Kowloon Cultural District's nomenclature should guide its purpose, & operation, and brand its future. Call it loftily one a whatnot Cultural something, green it into an oasis in the concrete jungle, embed it with mere doors closed venues, you just squanderingly steal from the plebes to garden the front, back and side yards for the few filthy rich who could afford to reside at the vicinity.

Nor would it be totally appropriate to sink billions to compete with the private sector to provide mere entertainments. To strike a balance, I propose the following theme for West Kowloon Cultural District to position:

師 子 文 娛	See Sons' Edutainment
獅 子 山 下	Beneath the Lion Rock
See 子 文 娛	See how sons rock
(眾 民 皆 子)	(All plebes are sons)

Right next to (荃灣) Tsuen Wan's West Rail station there is that park large enough to have an area for a band to rock and a patio for fans to flock. Filipinos hosted their frequent free concerts there with a sizable following crowd danced to the tunes impromptu. So were there the Indonesian . . . hosted their own occasions. Cost nothing and the crowd had a good long entertained evening, albeit the sweltering Summer heat and humidity made the unconditioned outdoor stay unbearable many a time; yet, they showed up, time and again. Herein witnesses the secret to vitalize a place: use indigenous initiatives to give good causes for the populace to come, and back, often, to linger, on and on.

West Kowloon Cultural District, a concerted and concentrated effort to create a life for the living, should have a dual pronged strategy to entice, nourish, and sustain a mass' interest. The first prong is to have a wow factor on its permanent offerings, so as to sustain educations as well as entertainments to a never ending crowd. The second essential is to have open (in or out door), climate-conditioned, venues built for "costless" public debuts for the talented.

An awesome and inspiring overall architecture can only be the starting point. After the sizzles, you better have steaks to serve. What do you beef up your place and space with? Just the traditional concert halls, play houses, display galleries (not "museums": museums cater old and expensive stuff which Hong Kong has little and has little to spend on; whereas, "galleries" display the distinctive, the moving, the quality creations, of any and all)? What about:

- A "virtual" big screen cinema: wherein even the floor underneath is a screen; your seat can rock like that inside a helicopter and your view can roll as if inside a craft when it turns and banks. (Well, I just have heard of such a "thing"; have yet to witness it first hand. Even if one such a cinema is built, how is the supply of suitable movies in the long run? And, of course, one still has to crunch the numbers to see if it makes any sense and cents.)
- Simulators of some sorts: flight simulator, ship simulator, race car simulator, war games. . . The gist is to deploy the as real as possible. Not that kind of flunky maneuver-not-per-control mickey-mouse stuff. Find the kinds that require brain power and tactical, if not strategical, thinking to play. Hong Kong is a shipping (air as well as sea) center; yet what is there here to let ones to try their hands on what is it like to lead a life in "shipping"? Hong Kong's schooling is only academics-centric; while such is good to forge a solid foundation, it restricts visions and stymies interests. Edutain them.
- Wind tunnels: wherein the blowing is upward. One dresses up in a flight suit of some sort that adds floatable areas onto one's body when one stretches out his arms and legs. As the wind blows stronger one gets lift up inside the tunnel. Up to now, it takes Hong Kongers plane tickets and overseas hotel bookings to try to fly inside one such a tunnel.
- Instrumented music halls: where there are musical instruments of all sorts available to let people to try them, really hands on. Basic instructions can be given individually over a video display. Instructors are to be around to smooth things out. Yet in another hall for the advanced, impromptu orchestration could be conducted for the hitherto never-ever-would-be ones to experience.
- Meeting rooms for business and psychological games: there are business decision making simulation games played at university classrooms; but such do not really require much prior background. Throw a bunch of strangers together, pitch them against some other similar bunches over results-immediately-fed-back decisions making processes. Likewise, there are psychology oriented action-reaction-and-

feedback-blunt-up training courses made up of individualized sessions some of which could be adapted for edutainment. Let the participants at least experience the true dynamic results of part-taking processes. The, many a time, blunt and self-image damaging feed-backs should at least make one a participant to take a good look at oneself, so as to look at others differently.

- A sailing center: where one could rent dingies to sail the Victoria harbour, for those who have been trained and qualified for such. For starters, there could be introductory sessions to wet would be sailors' appetites.
- An "Outward Bound" establishment: wherein facilities such as rock climbing, high rope bridge crossing, obstacles-negotiations, etc. are laid for ones to build self-confidence, team work, and mutual trust.
- Industry grade Workshops/Studios: wherein one can experience music recording and album producing; movies shooting and editing; cartoon character creation and animation production; TV and Radio hosting and broadcasting, etc. through pre-packaged introductory sessions.
- An aquarium for the Hong Kong indigenous: there are, at least, tens of kinds of corals and hundreds of kinds of fishes and aquatics found right in the Hong Kong water. Build a kilometers long tank to show them off, in their natural habitat. If you can build a ten-meter long tank, you certainly can sectionize a thousand meters into tens, can't you. Have narrow passages built in between so that fishes can swim from tank to tank, so as to make it more interesting for the watched as well as for the watching. Surround this man made wonder with a man made jungle built under an correspondingly sized aviary; let hundreds of flowers bloom and equal numbered birds and parrots thrive and fly therein. Back on one side and forth on the other, one would have walked at least a couple of kilometers; it could only do your citizens some good. This would be the most persuasive means to entice people to exercise.
- A water fountain dancing distinctively as per the tune being played, augmented with laser shows: employ local talents and deploy local capabilities to make this into a show case. To make a fountain dance to a tune, (hence each piece of music should engender dynamically a different dance) essentially, one only needs to program nozzles' spraying to musical notes' variations. First of all, associate different sizes of nozzles to different musical instruments. Then make a nozzle to spray a height in accordance with the Do-Re-Me. . . being played; make the

duration of a spray to last a musical note's beat length. Now add twists and turns in tandem with the now playing piece's crescendos. You get the idea. What is more challenging is to drum up characters, come up with a speechless story, then animate an act or two that can be choreographed in tune with the music and the fountain's dance. Hong Kong is good enough to host a Design and Innovation Expo every December. Now walk the talk.

As on the second prong to utilize local talents to generate dynamics so as to sustain interests, there need to be venues, especially the outdoor types, shaded, with seatings and patios, cooled with mists and fans, well lightened up in the evenings for:

- Solo Mime, Magician, Actor, or the likes, to stage one's show and collect donations
- Struggling individual musicians to play ones' songs and sell ones' albums
- Amateur groups to play their operas and garner supports, financial and otherwise
- Painters and caricaturists to showcase and monetarize their skills
- Doll makers to demonstrate the extincting art of creatures making with mere coloured doughs and sell them without any fear for hawking without a permit
- Weavers of Crickets, Toads, or the likes plaited up with just weeds to, at least continue, if not revitalize this marginzlied art in a respectable, income-enabled setting
- Photographers to mount their pictures, talk to people about their journeys and works and to sell their treasured
- Fledgling authors to read their books to the public, to have an audience to talk to and prospects for direct book sales
- Bands to stage their concerts, whence the enthused could dance to the tune
- School choirs to sing their carols to a wider audience to gain exposure and experience
- Inventors to show off their newbies and to make themselves more widely known
- Connoisseur food masters to not only feast the mass with the formers' specialties but also to demonstrate the secrets and processes of making such

Years ago, I happened to have the chance to buy a wall mount artifact made simply out of pieces of coconut shells at what I regarded as a reasonable price to me, a pretty good income to him, just off the street here in Hong Kong. Months ago, I chanced an old man hawking his coloured-dough kneaded dolls on a foot bridge in Hong Kong's Central near mid-night for a price that could not even buy him a meal. At court, hawker after hawker were being ushered to in front of a judge who could/would only fine them, for breaking the law, in trying to make a living.

To sustain West Kowloon Cultural District's brand, quality could only be maintained through careful screening to pick the chosen. Active talent scouting should be carried out. Efforts should be made to complement skills so as to make a show more interesting and informative. For example, an artisan might not be blessed with the right verbal skill; voluble students/free-lancers can be hired to rehearse a show so as to perfect one a presentation.

All in all, the above also ties in well with the economy's wish to drive culture and intangible forward to become a pillary industry and makes a concrete effort to materialize the vision.

Build, but they wouldn't come; or , build, they have to line up to come, what do you prefer?

Upon closing, I must emphasize that there ought to be a long term plan to link up the pocketized life-breathing places and spaces to form an ecology. West Kowloon Cultural District should have a physical passage linked up to the Avenue of Stars (星光大道) in Tsim Sha Tsui East (尖東) for the pedestrian; that broad walk should in turn be linked to the KowLoon Park (九龍公園) on the one hand, while being made to link to Kai Tak (啟德), thence to Lei Yue Mum (鯉魚門) in the future. A bridge there should be built to connect KowLoon with Hong Kong Island. The bridge should perform as a gala-ed waterfall at times. The same goes for the isolated parks at the Hong Kong Island side. Make sure the corridors are user friendly: have trees, shades, cooling stations, drinking fountains, washrooms, seatings, along the ways.

As when fireworks are to be staged over the Victoria harbour again in the not too distant future, hopefully there should be enough room for all. Gone are the self created scarcity along with the unnecessary rules and restrictions that pygmytize minds and visions.

Yours truly,

K.C. Wong