

CHAPTER 5

MUSEUMS ADVISORY GROUP's RECOMMENDATIONS ON CACF

5.1 M+ (Museum Plus)

5.1.1 Having considered views collected from public consultation, overseas experiences and input from local and overseas professionals, MAG identified an area of shared interest with rich development potential, which could be broadly categorized as “Visual Culture”. Among the proposed themes received from various consultation and sounding out exercises, about 60% of the suggestions received are related to this area.

5.1.2 “Visual culture” is a broad area that embraces many areas of interest identified during public consultations. It refers to areas of culture that are founded on visual expressions and embrace a broad range of creative activity and experience that cross many media. It is a fluid concept which, while making it difficult to define, offers flexibility and scope to explore new aspects and rejuvenate itself in response to changing circumstances. Visual culture includes, therefore, not only visual art (such as installation, painting, photography and sculpture), but also architecture, design (such as fashion, graphic and product design), moving image (such as film, video and television) and popular culture (such as advertising and comics).

5.1.3 In view of the above, MAG considered that the development of visual culture in WKCD could adequately respond to the public views as well as convincingly fit the initial considerations such as compatibility with the vision of WKCD, sustainability and feasibility etc. It is relevant to the objective of developing WKCD into a world-class arts and cultural district, expressing the unique cultural position of Hong Kong, which is more than a place where East meets West and able to reflect not only the diversity of our cultural heritage but also the vibrancy of our contribution to its

on-going development.

5.1.4 MAG came to a view that the most desirable form of cultural institution to collect, preserve, research, educate and present visual culture would be an **M+**, or “Museum Plus”. **M+** is more than a museum or a building space. It would be a new type of cultural institution with its mission to focus on 20th – 21st century visual culture, broadly defined, from a Hong Kong perspective, the perspective of now, and with a global vision. With an open, flexible and forward-looking attitude, **M+** aims to inspire, delight, educate and engage the public, encourage dialogue, interaction and partnership, explore diversity and foster creativity and cross-fertilization.

5.1.5 MAG was well aware that the roles of museums had been changing rapidly. Many forward-looking museums no longer use the term “museum” to describe themselves. Rather they consider themselves “centres” or “platforms” which seek to engage the community in order to keep pace with its developments. These forward-looking museums not only acquire, conserve, research and exhibit evidence of people’s material culture, but also engage, communicate, delight and inspire for the purposes of research, education, appreciation and enjoyment, and to enhance the quality of the people’s life. In view of this trend and the acceptance of visual culture as the area of shared interest with rich development potential, MAG believed that to develop a single cultural institution in WKCD would be much better than keeping the original requirement in the IFP of having four traditional museums.

5.1.6 The key functions of **M+** are: (a) collection building and preservation; (b) education and outreach; (c) exhibition and display; and (d) research and publications. **M+** would comply with the highest professional standards comparable to those of the well-acclaimed museums worldwide.

5.1.7 The facilities proposed to be included in **M+** are exhibition galleries and back-of-house facilities, a dedicated outreach and education centre, a library cum archive, screening facility, a bookstore, artists-in-residence studios,

amenities including catering facilities and shops and outdoor space.

5.1.8 Four “initial broad groupings”, namely (in alphabetical order) design, moving image, popular culture and visual art (including ink art) were proposed. New groupings could be explored in the course of development. Given the nature of **M+** and the changing environment, the collection strategy of **M+** should be broad and general. Since the boundaries of visual culture are broad, fluid, overlapping and elastic, the future institution presenting it in WKCD should be forward-looking, flexible and inclusive. In this connection, the four initial broad groupings of visual culture listed above will be interconnected and may often overlap. The future institution will not only recognize those connections but also celebrate them, by fostering cross-disciplinary communications and dialogue in collection, preservation, research, education and presentation.

5.1.9 There had been views advocating to put ink art as a separate broad grouping (or even as an independent museum) because it represents an important and unique Chinese contribution to the world culture, and Hong Kong artists had been contributing to its evolution, plus the expertise and resources to showcase this tradition in a coherent and comprehensive manner to the world. After much deliberations, MAG considered the proposal not commendable since ink art was an integral part of visual art. Segregating the former from the latter would marginalize the former and defeat the challenging vision of **M+** to achieve cross-fertilization. Nevertheless, MAG agreed that the uniqueness of ink art in the Hong Kong context should be given due consideration and should be highlighted in the collection strategy.

5.1.10 **M+** would be developed in multiple phases. The preliminary development parameters are as follows -

	First phase	Subsequent phase(s)	Eventual size ¹⁶
Site area ¹⁷	37 500 m ²		
Gross floor area (“GFA”) (estimated)	81 000 m ²	44 000 m ²	125 000 m ²
Net operating floor area (“NOFA”)	49 000 m ²	26 000 m ²	75 000 m ²
Net exhibition area ¹⁸	20 000 m ²	10 000 m ²	30 000 m ²

If this proposal is implemented in full, it would increase the total GFA of museums in Hong Kong by 78%, and would be even bigger than many world renowned museums of similar nature (in terms of GFA) such as Centre Pompidou in Paris (112 523 m²), Tate Modern in London (43 000 m²) and MOMA in New York (73 420 m²).

5.1.11 The architecture of **M+** should be iconic, innovative and forward-looking. An architectural competition should be held to select the best design for this building.

5.1.12 The governance mode of **M+** should preferably take the form of a statutory body with an independent Board of Trustees. The ownership of the collections could be held in a public trust and supervised by the Board of Trustees. Appropriate safeguards should be put in place in the institutional structure of the WKCD Authority to ensure

¹⁶ The proposed figures in the table above are recommended to be verified by the future museum experts and planners for the **M+**.

¹⁷ The site area is worked out based on the assumption that net area is 60% of gross area, **M+** has five storeys and 50% open space would be allowed within the **M+**.

¹⁸ According to the benchmarking survey and information obtained from different sources, normally 40% of the NOFA is designated for exhibition area. The net exhibition area of the first phase of **M+** is benchmarked from the average of the current net exhibition areas of Centre Pompidou and New York MOMA.

curatorial independence and management autonomy of the **M+**.

5.2 Positioning of M+ in Hong Kong

5.2.1 With the innovative, open, flexible and forward-looking nature of **M+**, as well as its new curating perspectives, **M+** would likely exert an impact on the cultural ecology of Hong Kong. Nevertheless, **M+** must be part of the overall arts and cultural development in Hong Kong with the ultimate goal of creating a diversified cultural ecology.

5.2.2 Although **M+** and existing public museums managed by LCSD may have some duplications in certain areas of collection, they could co-exist to present two different and complementary curatorial approaches for enriching Hong Kong's cultural ecology. There should also be tremendous opportunities for collaborations and dialogue between the **M+** and the existing public museums, through sharing resources and research findings, building up wider audiences, organizing joint events etc. A healthy degree of competition amongst museums, which is a common feature among museums in many other places, would also be conducive to continuous improvements in programming and services on the part of all the museums for the audiences. In view of MAG's respect for professionalism and independence in **M+**'s curatorship, the way to collaborate should be left to the professional curators of **M+** and other museums, and the WKCD Authority to further examine.

5.2.3 MAG was aware that the Committee on Museums¹⁹ had recently submitted its report to the Government on how to improve the services of public museums managed by LCSD in the near future. MAG believed that the collaboration between **M+** and other public museums should not be affected no matter how the public museum system evolves in the years to come.

¹⁹ See an introduction of Committee on Museums at Note 9.

5.3 Interim Measures for Developing M+

5.3.1 The interim period between the acceptance of the proposal on **M+** and formal opening of **M+** should be fully utilized to build up a solid foundation for this institution. It would take a long time to plan, build up collections and audience, and develop expertise and network for **M+**. The following steps are recommended to develop **M+** during the interim period.

Advisory Committee

5.3.2 After the proposal on **M+** is accepted by Government, an advisory committee comprising museum professionals and experts of the related broad groupings should be set up as soon as practicable. The advisory committee would advise on the planning and implementation aspects of **M+**, the proposed collection and funding strategy, the promotion plan and ways to enhance relevant public education activities.

Interim M+

5.3.3 To gather momentum for **M+** and to gradually build up a solid foundation, a venue is recommended to be identified to start an interim **M+** as soon as practicable. The interim **M+** would possess similar functions as the permanent **M+** in WKCD although much smaller in scale. The interim **M+** would be a platform for training of professional staff, as well as providing arts education to the public to foster awareness, understanding and appreciation of arts and culture to help create and sustain public interest. It would also conduct researches and build up the collection with a view to laying a solid foundation for **M+**.

Professional Training

5.3.4 It is recommended to enhance education and training on the arts, and technical and management skills, particularly at tertiary level, in order to build up a sufficient size of expertise to serve **M+**. The training should start as

soon as practicable since it takes years to build up a team of competent curators and technical staff in relevant fields.

Audience Building and Education

5.3.5 MAG acknowledges the importance to nurture a sizable audience for **M+**. MAG strongly recommends the promotion of arts education at all levels to foster the awareness, understanding and appreciation of arts and culture by the general public. Like professional training, arts education could be conducted by schools, relevant government departments and tertiary institutions.

Local and Global Networking and Interaction with Existing Institutions

5.3.6 The interim **M+** should start forming and maintaining a strong network with both local and global cultural partners with a view to attracting programmes, donations and sponsorship.

5.4 Exhibition Centre

5.4.1 There has been an acute shortage of quality exhibition space for arts and culture related events in Hong Kong. Having considered public views received, MAG recommended an Exhibition Centre (EC) instead of an Art Exhibition Centre as originally proposed in the IFP should be established in WKCD. The EC should aim to run on a self-financing basis with its management to be overseen by an independent body.

5.4.2 The EC should give priority to uses relating to arts, culture, creative industries and events/activities associated with WKCD. Furthermore, certain time slots could be earmarked or concessionary rates could be given to such uses to achieve the objective to promote arts, culture and creative industries. With the establishment of the EC, major art, culture and creative industries related events like art festivals, auctions, design shows, conferences etc. as well as a mixture of different uses (some of which could be beyond

traditional forms) could be held frequently to enhance the attraction of WKCD.

5.4.3 The EC would have a separate identity from the **M+**. The Net Operating Floor Area was recommended to remain at 10 000 m² as originally proposed in the IFP. In addition, 20% open space at the site should be provided. The EC should be self-contained with a maximum of two storeys. Its internal space should be flexible to cater for a wide range of usages/events of different nature.

5.4.4 The full report of MAG to the Consultative Committee is available on the website <http://www.hab.gov.hk/wkcd/eng/cc/doc/20061124report.pdf>.