



Miss 13 Dots creator Theresa Lee pioneered local girls comics in the 1960s and has a loyal fan base.

Dashing dots

Jourdan Ma

Comics artist Theresa Lee Wai-chun and multimedia artist Samson Young Kar-fai were recently awarded inaugural honorary fellowships by Hong Kong Arts Centre.

A pioneer of local girls' comics, Lee began drawing from a young age and specialized in Chinese painting at college. She made her debut in 1966 with the comics series *Miss Flower* but was not content with the image of her main character – “the sexy detective with fluffy hair.”

Lee then started drawing a younger heroine the same year and named her Miss 13 Dots, saying of the name: “My mom, who used to live in Shanghai, always called me a 13-dot – Shanghainese slang for fun-loving and frivolous girls.”

She decided to put a positive spin on it. Miss 13 Dots, the only daughter of a local tycoon, is bubbly, thoughtful and righteous. “She is rich but not spoiled. She has helped rebuild collapsed buildings in natural disasters with her father’s support, for instance,” Lee said.

With heart-warming storylines, Lee quickly carved out a niche for the biweekly series in the world of male-led comics.

Miss 13 Dots became the darling of the teens because of her savoir-faire and svelte figure. “Actress Josephine Siao Fong-Fong could be the right fit if the story hit the screen,” Lee said.

The character donned more than 20 outfits in each comic book. Her polka-dot and striped outfits were all the rage and gripped style-conscious teens then, including fashion designer William Tang Tat-chi.

Lee said her inspiration came from fashion magazines and high-end department stores. “I caught fleeting glimpses of the stylish girls walking down the street. The array of styles was just burned into my memory, so I could draw the outfits with the stroke of a pen. I got more leisure time if I painted fast. That was a huge driving force,” Lee recalled.

Looking back, she thought, she should have designed characters with physical and personality flaws. “People are imperfect in reality.”

Lee still draws on paper and prefers it to digital drawing.

She can’t spill the beans about her next book launch but feels glad to see a new crop of female cartoonists. Examples are Little Thunder, Little Horse and Lee Xiang-lan, also known as Rainbow Leung Hiu-man.

The executive director of Hong Kong Arts Centre, Connie Lam, said: “Lee has been a big name in comics from the 1960s and has built a



close rapport with us. In commemoration of our 40th anniversary, we want to honor her contribution to the Hong Kong and Asian art scenes.

“We are also glad to present our fellowship to multimedia artist Samson Young, who headed the experimental music and sound art performance series *Sonic Anchor* with us.”

Young, who represented Hong Kong at the Venice Biennale last year, is a gifted artist. Born in 1979, he moved to Australia as a teen and read music, philosophy and gender studies at the University of Sydney.

He received a master’s degree from the University of Hong Kong, followed by a PhD in music composition from Princeton University.

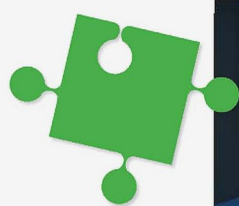
He has relocated to Hong Kong and is the former assistant professor of City University’s School of Creative Media.

Conflict and war are recurring themes in his compelling and emotional audio recordings and drawings. The trained musician also composes for the Hong Kong Sinfonietta. “I don’t wait for inspiration,” he said. “I research a wide range of areas, and the ideas emerge. I will revisit and reshape them in different forms. I am really into cars these days. I have been reading car manuals from the 1930s and 40s.”

He has notched up accolades like the best artist in media arts from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council in 2012 and the BMW Art Journey Award at Art Basel in 2015 – which he terms “a breakthrough.”

His works have been exhibited at the Asia Triennial Manchester, Today Art Museum in Beijing, Museum of Contemporary Art in Taipei and the like, winning critical acclaim. He is currently preparing for the Edinburgh Art Festival 2019 and an exhibition in Shanghai.

“Every artist has a different way of doing things. I have a fixed routine. I do 8am to 5pm in my studio because I work best in the daytime,” he said.



Samson Young, who hosted experimental music and sound art concert *Sonic Anchor* this year, received the inaugural Hong Kong Arts Centre honorary fellowship, presented by board chairwoman Dominica Yang, far left, and executive director Connie Lam.