Curatorial Statement

Hong Kong is known for its fabulous private collections of Chinese antiquities, and public museums have been immeasurably enriched by the generosity of collectors who have decided to share their treasures. However, contemporary art has so far not attracted the attention it deserves, when in fact astute members of the collecting circle have been quietly assembling outstanding examples of art that capture the spirit of our time.

As the Hong Kong Arts Centre is presenting this exhibition in the month of a major art fair, it would be inappropriate if a brief account of this highly publicised event was not mentioned. The immediate predecessor to the 1st Art Basel Hong Kong is the Hong Kong International Art Fair (ART HK), which since 2008 has become one of the most successful fairs in Asia. There are numerous reasons for the sudden allure of Hong Kong as a destination for galleries and collectors, the two main ones being the rise of the Mainland Chinese market, and growing international interest in Hong Kong as an exchange platform of cultural ideas. While artists and creative works are foregrounded in the art season, the creativity and curatorship involved in the practice of collecting have not been properly appreciated. To fill this niche the Hong Kong Arts Centre has launched the “1st Annual Collectors’ Contemporary Collaboration – May Dialogues”.

“May Dialogues” intends to stress the special dialogue between collector and his collection. How artworks engage the exhibition space has been a subject of wide discussion, but how they live with their collectors, and what sort of significances rise from artworks that mingle with mundane objects in the living space have not been studied as seriously. The nearest forms of concern are probably given to object d’art and the ‘decorative’ arts, which are often neatly articulated in discussions of ‘taste’. In the Ming dynasty, 15th - 16th century, manuals of taste would often list the entire material world that surrounded the cultivated collector. These manuals provided a service comparable to a ‘fine art’ version of today’s ‘life style’ gurus. What one does with the annoying art-video, the rude sculpture and puzzling pictures that jar with the decorator’s colour scheme remains to be determined.

Contemporary art often upsets ‘life style’, disrupts the domesticity of its owner and offends his guests. However, the artworks also reflect erudition and special sensitivity not manifested in other objects around the house. There are collectors who have a collecting theme, and there are those who cannot verbalise his instincts but knows the scent that attracts him. We cannot easily generalise about collections, but we do know that those who like to live with their art always give a personality to their collections. For the “1st Annual Collectors’ Contemporary Collaboration – May Dialogues”, the Hong Kong Arts Centre is fortunate to have the support of five collections. We have asked each of them to make a small selection around a theme of their choice; this opens up the scope of the show and also makes the curator’s work very easy. The collecting sensibilities are found to be as diverse as the artworks in the exhibition. The interpretative angle taken by each collection is further evidence of the conscientious choices behind the works. We are grateful for the spectrum of art lent to the show, and are proud to present: “Under 30”, collection of Bart Dekker and Marleen Molenaar; “Homage”, collection of Wendy Lee; “My home, My art”, collection of Nelson Leong; “The Painterly Strokes”*,* collection of Cissy Pao and Shin Watari; and “Non-Chinese Art Inspired by or Resembling the Ink Tradition”, collection of The Yiqingzhai Collection. The collections represent Hong Kong as a fun and dynamic place for art, full of hidden treasures and serendipities.

Thank you collectors.

Chang Tsong Zung

**策展人語**

香港以優秀的中國古董私人收藏聞名，公共博物館亦獲收藏家慷慨捐贈他們的豐富珍藏。然而，縱使收藏家圈內已有識見之士在悄悄收集能彰顯我們這個時代的精神的傑出當代藝術作品，當代藝術至今仍然沒有引起應有的重視。

由於香港藝術中心是次展覽與另一個重要藝術展在同月舉行，不得不在此簡介一下後者這個矚目盛事。香港第一屆巴塞爾藝術展的前身為香港國際藝術展（ART HK），自二零零八年以來已經成為亞洲最成功的藝術展之一。香港突然吸引了許多的畫廊和收藏家，當中原因甚多，最主要的兩個原因是中國內地市場的崛起，及越來越多國際人士對香港作為文化理念的交流平台感興趣。雖然在這個藝術季節中，藝術家和藝術品備受注目，但收藏過程中發揮的創造力和策展能力還沒有受到適當的重視。於是，香港藝術中心推出了「1st Annual Collectors’ Contemporary Collaboration – May Dialogues」來填補這一縫隙。

「May Dialogues」強調收藏家和他的收藏品之間的特別對話。藝術品和展覽空間的互動一直受到廣泛討論，但它們如何與其收藏家生活、與生活空間裡的普通物件如何融合，則沒有被深入研究。將藝術品及「裝飾性」的藝術「巧妙地」與「品味」混為一談，已算是最類近的討論。在十五至十六世紀的明朝，有關品味的手冊經常會把整個環繞品味高雅的收藏家的物質世界闡述得巨細無遺。這些手冊的功能有如今天那些標榜為「高級生活風格大師」的「藝術」版本一樣。至於如何審視那些惱人的藝術錄像、粗鄙的雕塑和與裝飾者的色調搭配格格不入、令人費解的照片，則有待定奪。

當代藝術常常擾亂「生活風格」，破壞其主人的家居環境和生活，並冒犯他的客人。然而，作品也反映了學識，以及房間內其他物件所欠缺的特別敏感性。有的收藏家有其收藏的主題，有的雖無法用語言表達自己的收藏觸覺，但心裡知道怎麼樣的東西會特別吸引自己。我們不能輕易地對收藏一概而論，但我們知道，那些喜歡與藝術生活的人，總喜歡給予自己的收藏獨有的個性。香港藝術中心的「1st Annual Collectors’ Contemporary Collaboration – May Dialogues 」有幸得到五個收藏單位的支持，我們邀請每個參與單位各選擇一個主題，並圍繞該主題選擇一部分藏品。這定下了展覽的範圍，使得策展工作變得輕鬆。我們亦從中發現，收藏過程中的細膩情感，跟展出的藏品本身同樣豐富多彩。每個收藏所採取的詮釋角度進一步證明，挑選作品的過程是何其謹慎。我們感謝參與的收藏家借出多項藏品，呈獻Bart Dekker及 Marleen Molenaar的收藏「三十未滿時」、利宛虹的收藏「致敬」、梁國輝的收藏「我的家‧我的藝術」、包陪麗及渡伸一郎的收藏「大師的筆觸」和怡情齋收藏的「啟發自或近似傳統水墨的非中國藝術」。這些收藏呈現了香港作為一個有趣和充滿活力的藝術之都，且蘊藏寶藏和意外收穫。謝謝各位收藏家。

張頌仁