Hong Kong Art History Timeline Project

# LEARNING FROM ARTISTS: MAPPING THE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES OF FOUR ARTIST EDUCATORS IN HONG KONG

Crystal Li & Ruby Weatherall

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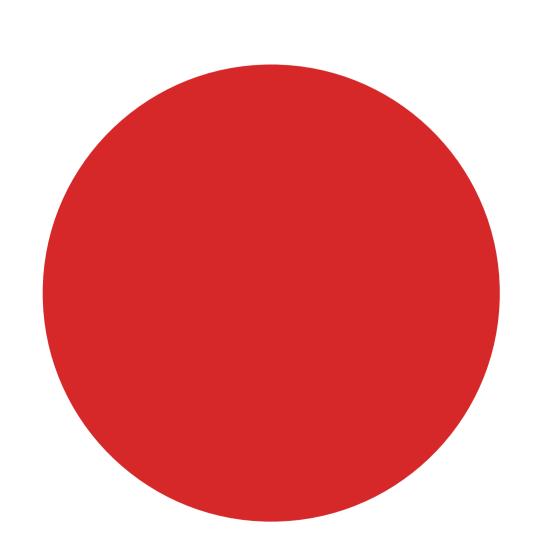
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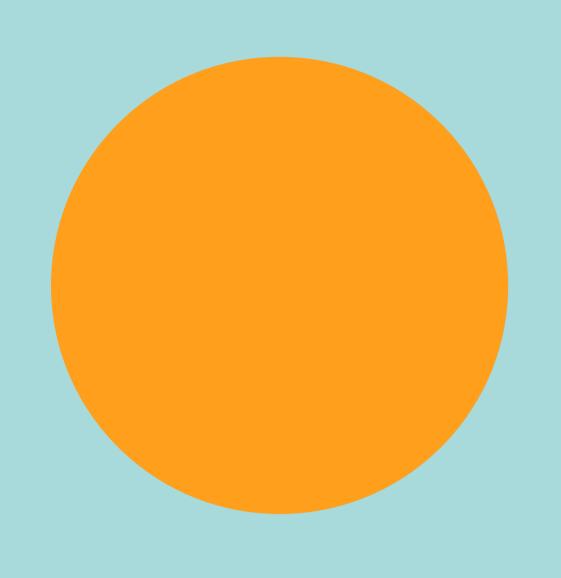
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Crystal Li and Ruby Weatherall Feburary 2021



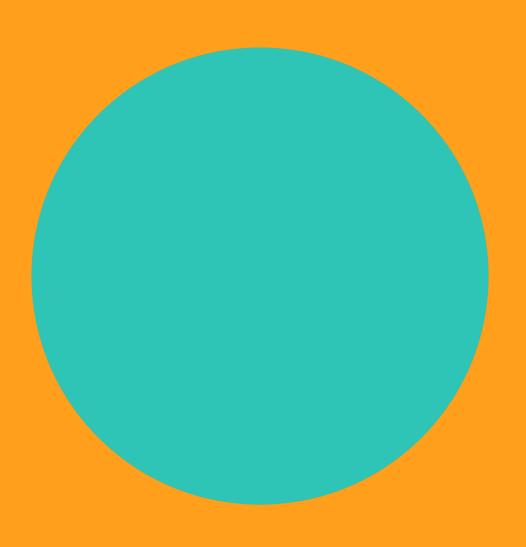
## PROJECT STATEMENT

Since the establishment of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council in 1995, arts education in Hong Kong has received increased attention and support, leading to a growth in visual arts education and informal arts learning programmes in schools and cultural institutions. Local artists have often been invited to lead or participate in these programmes, and in doing so, influenced the objectives and approaches through which art is being taught. As such, we see value in studying the pedagogical interests of artist educators as a means to understanding larger ideas and themes of arts learning that have been circulating in Hong Kong.

The aim of this research project is therefore to learn about the pedagogical approaches of artist educators in Hong Kong. We focused on investigating the following questions:

- 1. What kinds of pedagogical practices do select local artist educators engage in?
- 2. Why do they engage in these pedagogical practices?
- 3. In what ways are these practices important to overall arts education?

To conduct our research, we have chosen four artist educators to interview, including Yim Sui Fong and Law Yuk Mui of Rooftop Institute, Michelle Lee, and Michael Leung. All of them have ample experience with organising and/or leading arts education programmes, and have a dedicated interest in exploring alternative approaches to learning. After each interview, we transcribed and analysed our discussions to create a Venn diagram that visually represents the ways in which their pedagogical approaches overlap and differ. Unlike other projects on this platform, this is not a timeline. As learning itself is non-linear, the approaches of these artist educators have evolved gradually with no definite start or end dates. They are influenced by the art practices and pedagogical interests of each artist educator, as well as their personal experiences with both formal and informal learning. As such, our findings cannot be accurately captured on a linear timeline, whereas a Venn diagram allows us to map out the key similarities and differences in their pedagogical approaches in a non-linear, non-temporal way.



# RESERCH JURNLY

Working on this project has been a transformative experience for us-one that demanded a radical shift in our perspectives on the role of artist educators, arts learning and its value in Hong Kong. The project started off as an assignment for the Hong Kong Art History Workshop (co-led by Dr. Yee-wan Koon of The University of Hong Kong, Fine Arts Department, and Asia Art Archive researcher Michelle Wong), and has evolved considerably. Initially interested in learning about the overall development of visual arts education in Hong Kong, we created a linear timeline with the establishment of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council in 1995 as the starting point. It tracked major visual arts education programmes by schools, cultural institutions and independent arts spaces, as well as relevant arts education policies.

Our findings confirmed the dynamic nature of visual arts education in Hong Kong, and that its development is shaped by players of all levels, from government institutions to independent arts spaces. As colleagues at Asia Art Archive, a non-profit arts organisation, we were particularly interested in the role and contribution of independent arts spaces. We learned that they sought to respond to various gaps in the arts education system not only by offering focused and innovative programming, but also through collaborating with larger organisations to

bring their ideas to institutional spaces as well.

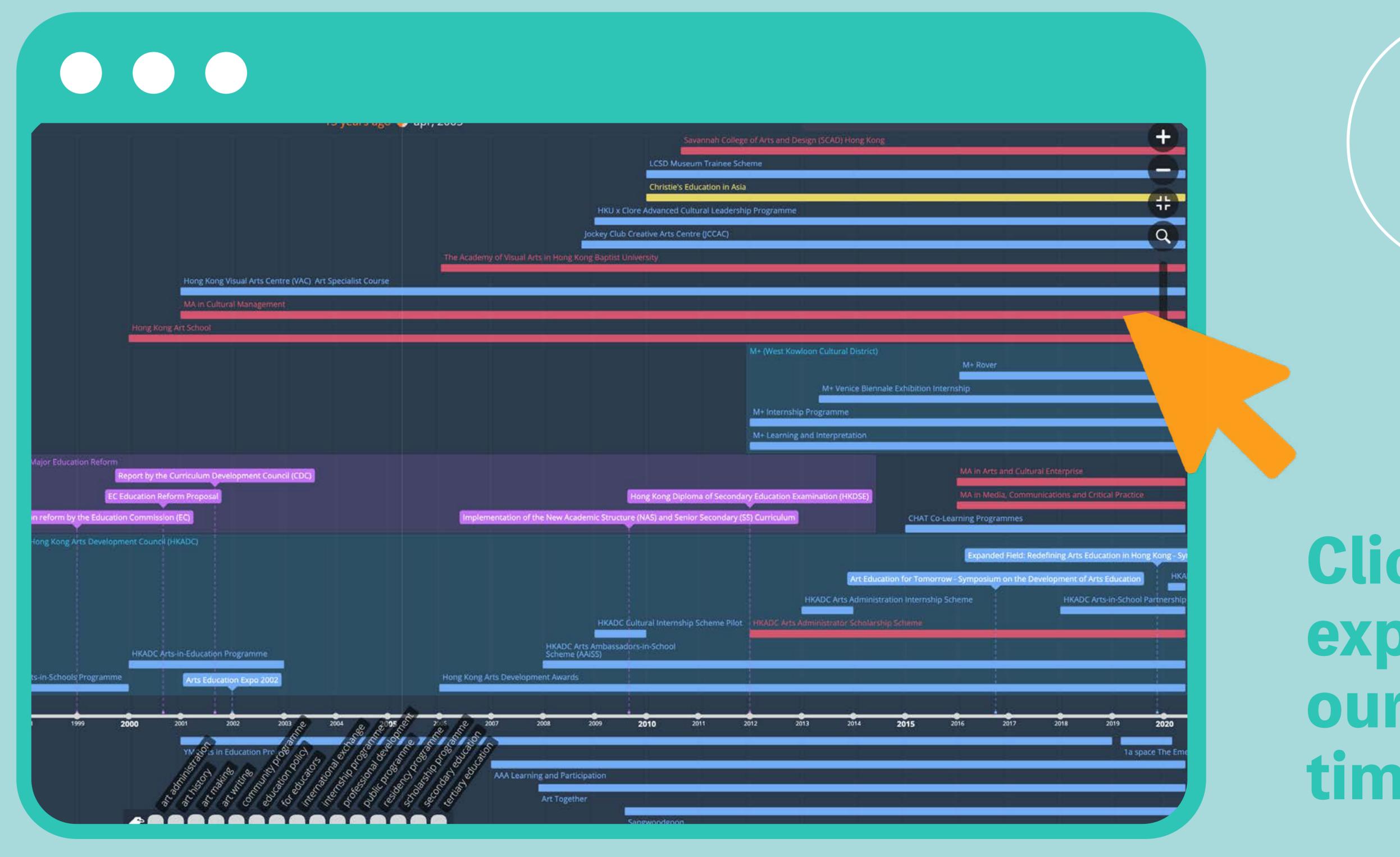
After completing the assignment, we wanted to learn more. The timeline felt like a starting point from which research could be built on, instead of a complete research project. Thus, with the encouragement of Dr. Koon and our supervisor at AAA, Alexandra Seno, we commenced the second phase of our project, this time looking at the actual learning that takes place in independent arts spaces. This was where we made our first shift in research focus: rather than study visual arts education as a formal system and subject for learning, we decided to examine arts learning as a pedagogical process. Instead of what, we are investigating how art is being taught.

As we interviewed the four artist educators to learn more about education programming in independent arts spaces, we realised that their work is determined more by individual pedagogical interests, beliefs and practices, rather than those of the organisations they work for and with. Since independent arts spaces act as informal sites of learning, the "curriculum" (for lack of a better term) is relatively flexible, giving artist educators more pedagogical freedom.

Furthermore, we learned that these artist educators—unlike regular teachers—move

between institutions and arts spaces to teach, research and create art. For instance, although Michael Leung teaches at Baptist University, he has also completed residencies in different arts spaces, such as Spring Workshop and Wooferten (both no longer running) (梁志剛- Michael Leung). Rather than existing as distinct entities, independent arts spaces appear more like a network in the context of arts learning, within which artists formulate, realise and exchange ideas. With this realisation, we made our second shift in research focus: instead of studying what programmes independent arts spaces are offering in order to learn about arts learning, we focused on the pedagogical practices of four individual artist educators.

Finally, we supplemented discussions from the interviews with research on different pedagogical frameworks in and outside visual arts education. In particular, we looked at artist-led pedagogy (Pringle 2009; Burnard and Swann 2010), transformative learning (Zibechi 2012), sustainable pedagogy (Tooth and Renshaw 2009; Burns 2015), place-based pedagogy (Tooth and Renshaw 2009; Semken and Brandt 2010), and spirituality in arts education (Gradle 2007; London 2007). The research by these scholars informed our understanding of what the artist educators are trying to accomplish, and the potential impacts of their pedagogical practices.



Click to explore our initial timeline

## 

Situated in Foo Tak Building in Wanchai, Rooftop Institute is the only independent arts organisation in Hong Kong dedicated to arts education. As cofounders of the space, artists Yim Sui Fong and Law Yuk Mui shape the development of its programmes, which are mostly workshops led by different artists. During the interview, key programmes were discussed including *Asia Seed* (2016-18), Hok Zaap (2018) and Hok Hok Zaap (HHZ): 15 Initiatives of Engaged Learning in Art (2019-20). For our research, we specifically focused on Hok Zaap workshops led by Zheng Bo and Luke Ching Chin Wai, and HHZ workshops led by Law Yuk Mui and Natalie Lo Lai Lai. Our findings are further informed by <u>The Situation of Learning-</u> Artist Talk, the transcript of a talk between Yim, Law and selected artist educators on HHZ's progress at the end of 2019.



Law Yuk Mui is a multimedia mainstream education.



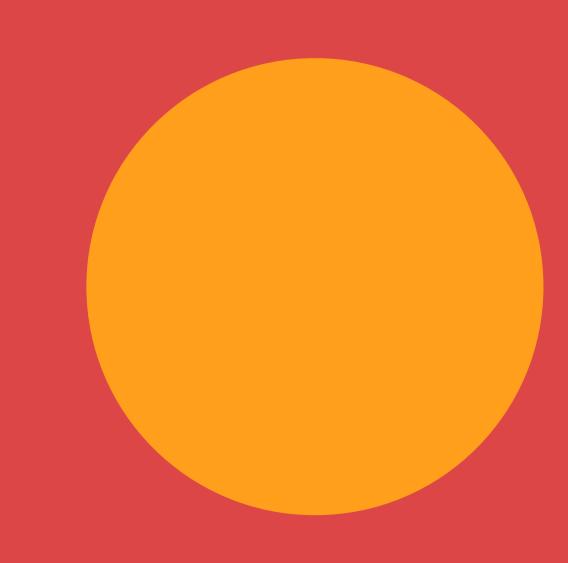
Yim Sui Fong is a multiartist, working with image, disciplinary artist who works sound and installation. Her with video and installation art. art practice intervenes in She explores discrepancies the daily life of the city, and tensions in communication reusing and reactivating and memory in connection objects through art-making, with everyday life. She is also and capturing the physical a core member of the artist traces of history, psychology, collective <u>L sub</u>, who 'visit time and political power in various communities across relation to geographic space the globe, create artwork with ("About Law Yuk Mui"). Law local people and transform co-founded Rooftop Institute the ordinary into artwork' because she wanted to ("Artwork / L Sub - Still Life engage with her interests Objects - Autumn exhibition in arts education outside of at Hong Kong House"). Yim previously worked in educational institutions before co-founding Rooftop Institute.



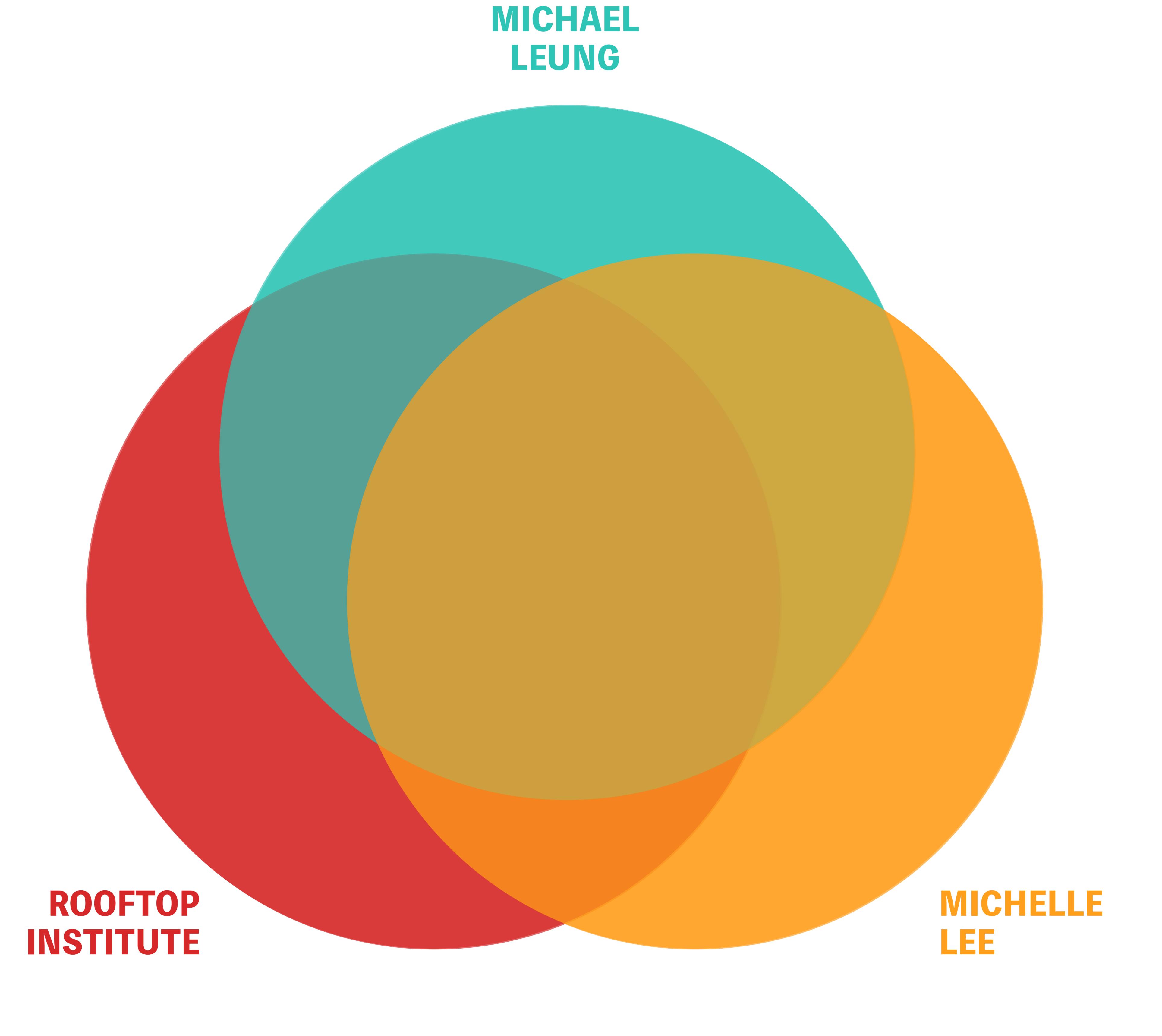
Michael Leung is an artist/designer, urban farmer, and visiting lecturer for the MA course <u>Critically Engaged:</u> Creative Practice in Context at Hong Kong Baptist University. Since the collectives including Archive of the course is his only teaching engagement <u>People</u>, which incorporates archival currently, it became our main focus practice as a form of art-making when studying his pedagogical to challenge the homogeneity of practices for this project. Outside of historical and political narratives, and teaching, Leung experiences moments <u>Floating Projects</u> ("About Archive of of learning in different projects, the People"). Lee previously taught at collectives, and social causes, such as Kai Fong Pai Dong, Wanwu Practice Group, and indigenous land justice independent educator, she has worked movements. He is a member of the with M+ on several programmes. In our village patrol in Wang Chau Village, interview, she specifically discussed a which is facing eviction from the pre-workshop for artist Ng Ka Chun's government. These experiences are M+ Rover programme *Things Beyond* reflective of his desire to integrate his Things (2018), and the trial of an artistcreative and pedagogical practices in led in-gallery learning experience his everyday life.



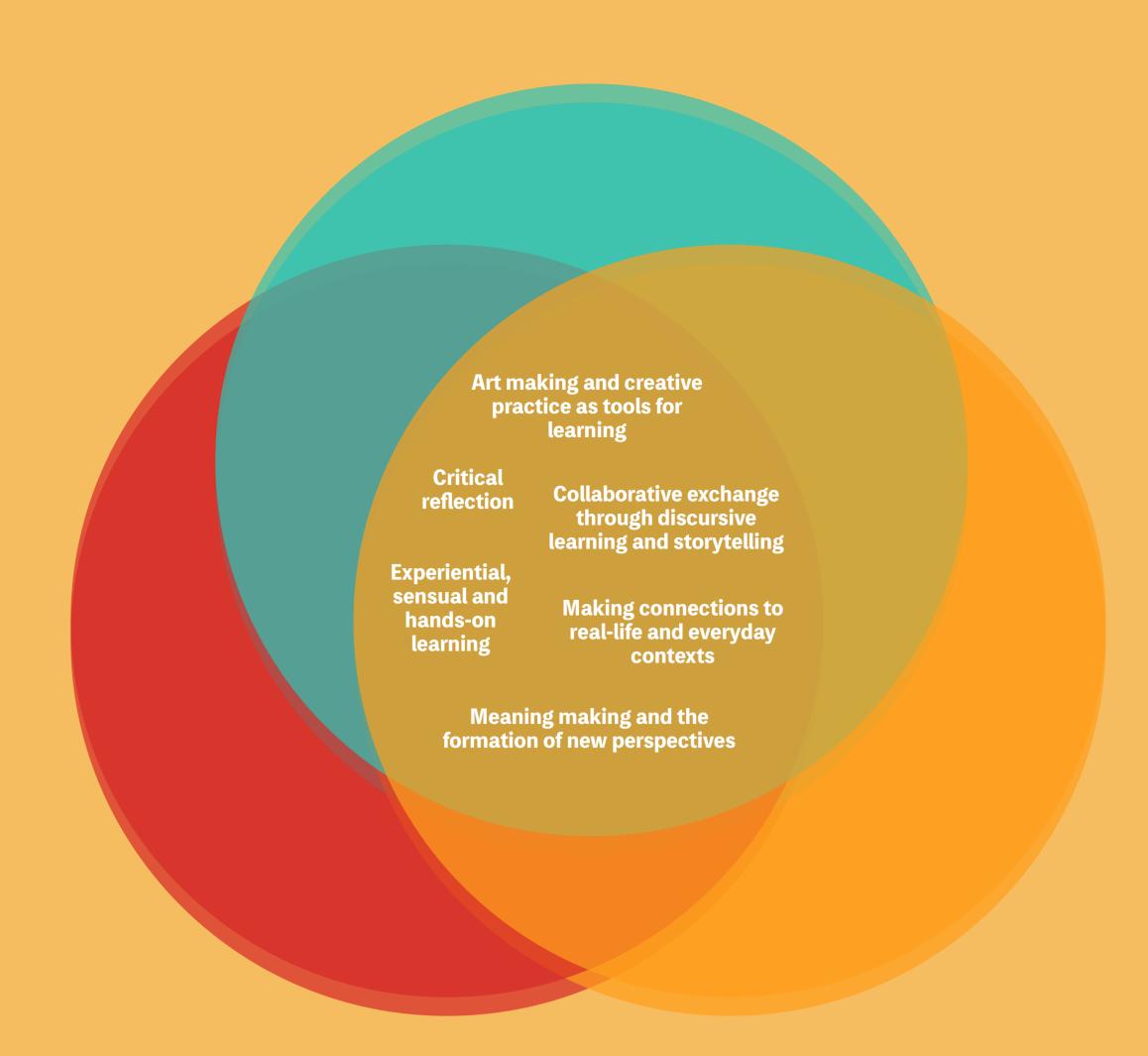
Michelle Lee is a multimedia artist with an interest in conducting social research through creative practices. She is a member of different artist a secondary school for ten years before quitting to focus on her art. As an at M+ Pavilion for the exhibition *Five* Artists: Sites Encountered (2019). Both programmes targeted secondary school students.



# PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES OF THE FOUR ARTIST EDUCATORS



After analysing the interview transcripts and consulting relevant literature, we have identified and determined key characteristics of the pedagogical approaches these artist educators are engaged with. They are shown in the Venn diagram above, which also map out their commonalities and differences. It is important to note that these characteristics are by no means definite, depending heavily on what the artist educators chose to discuss in their interviews as well as the literature we studied. Attempting to break down and categorise their pedagogical practices has proven to be difficult because the characteristics are highly subjective. There are many different ways to group the similarities and differences; for instance, it is possible to argue that 'Emotional learning' occurred in the workshops led by all four artist educators, even if it is not indicated as such in our Venn diagram. Nevertheless, we have mapped it in this way because emotional learning was brought up only in our interview with Lee. It is not our intent to paint an objective, comprehensive picture of their pedagogical practices. Instead, we aim to emphasise the key approaches of each artist educator to better understand their practice and the ways in which they are important to visual arts education overall.



#### SHARED PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

It is apparent that the artist educators seek to move beyond traditional ways of learning by creating holistic learning experiences that encourage participants to engage their full self-physically, emotionally and sensually. They emphasise the process of learning as a beneficial journey in itself, privileging how participants are learning over what they learn. In many ways, they are equipping their students with different learning tools so they can remain curious and actively make meaning of their world outside of the workshops. The topics of the workshops are also place-based and relevant to participants' immediate environment and community, which makes the knowledge acquired applicable to their daily lives. All of this contributes to a kind of learning which is more intentional and fluid-a process that is not limited to educational institutions, but extends into everyday life.

#### Art making and creative practice as tools for learning

Art-making is an experiential and inquisitive process that encourages curiosity and meaning-making, both materially and conceptually (Pringle 2009).

#### **Rooftop Institute**

As most of the educators Yim and Law invite to lead their programmes are also artists, their approach to teaching often incorporates creating artwork as a Rooftop Institute tool for learning.

#### Michael Leung

for knowledge production or exchange.

#### Michelle Lee

and experiences, which is reflected to speak their mind at all times. in her approach to teaching. A key example is when she invited her students to create sculptures using Michelle Lee themselves.

#### Collaborative learning through discursive exchange and storytelling

Discussions allow for educators and students to exchange and produce knowledge collaboratively. This allows students to take more ownership of their learning, while educators gain new perspectives from student responses. Storytelling enables discussions to become more personal, engaging students' emotions and imagination, which make for impressionable and meaningful learning experiences (Tooth and Renshaw 2009).

As part of *HHZ*, Yim and Law invited renowned storyteller and poet, Yuen Che Hung (or Uncle Hung Jai), to lead a programme. The workshop Leung is interested in the merging was recorded from the perspective of an of life and art. He not only views observer, Yan Liang, and was interspersed with art making and creative practice dialogue between Uncle Hung, Yan Liang and as useful tools for learning, the participating children. The course did not but identifies any happenings— aim at imparting knowledge, but culminated in or interactions in everyday a set of poems co-written by Uncle Hung and life as potential opportunities the children ("Imagination Exchange").

#### Michael Leung

Leung's approach to lecturing at Baptist University is a key example. He aims to create Lee views art making and research a learning environment in which his students as a journey for exploring new ideas engage in open discussion and are comfortable

apples. She encouraged them to Lee includes a reflection and sharing session embrace accidents and digression, at the end of each of her workshops, which to learn from making mistakes and gives students an opportunity to articulate their gain a better understanding of feelings, thoughts and what they have learned. She views open discussion as important for exploring one's subjective experiences and for understanding things in relation to the thoughts of others. For her, this is often the most interesting part as it allows her to understand her students' reactions to the learning experience, some of which she finds surprising.

#### Experiential, sensual and hands-on learning

Engaging the body and all five senses contributes to a more holistic and meaningful learning experience, where new information is received, processed and interacted with through multiple means (Gradle 2007; Tooth and Renshaw 2009; and Burns 2015).

#### **Rooftop Institute**

As part of HHZ, Yim and Law collaborated with artist and activist Natalie Lo Lai Lai to host Shelf Life —— Let Time Brew it (2019), a farm-to-table workshop at a secondary school in Wanchai. The workshop focused on learning about farming and fermentation, which involved the students creating an urban farm on the roof of the school and using text and video to research and document these processes. This was a very hands-on and physical learning experience.

#### Michael Leung

For Leung, engaging with social movements is 'an amazing learning experience that is embodied and requires all five senses.'

#### Michelle Lee

Lee uses 'alternative observation' in her teaching practice, which encourages students to engage with their senses as a means for observation. For example, in her pre-workshop for M+ Rover, Lee not only invited students to look at apples, but to touch, smell and taste them too.

#### Making connections to real-life and everyday contexts

A learning experience that brings an awareness to the realities of everyday life and equips participants with tools that are relevant for real-life situations. Making content applicable to participants' lives is more engaging because the knowledge is personal (Tooth and Renshaw 2009; Semken and Brandt 2010; and Burns 2015).

#### Rooftop Institute

The aim of Law's HHZ workshop after the rain (2020) was to put together an interactive, intertextual platform that connected Tse Pak Chai's Epidemic Zone Investigation to the current COVID-19 pandemic. This provides participants with an opportunity to process the realities of the current pandemic in a creative way ("後生者 after the rain").

#### Michael Leung

During his lectures at Baptist University, Leung openly shares personal anecdotes regarding his student loan and other lived experiences that his students might also be facing. He also updates the materials he shares with his students every year, to ensure they are relevant.

#### Michelle Lee

Lee uses 'close observation' in her teaching practice, which encourages students to closely observe objects that they often come across in daily life. This allows students to engage with their immediate surroundings and learn to recognise the significance of objects in daily life that may be overlooked.

#### Meaning making and the formation of new perspectives

The practice of formulating one's own understanding of newly acquired knowledge, and seeking new ways to perceive the world. Educators can encourage students to do this through sparking their curiosity, and exposing them to alternative worldviews. This leads to transformative learning, which is essential for students to adapt to a changing and increasingly dynamic world (Tooth and Renshaw 2009; Zibechi 2012; and Burns 2015).

#### **Rooftop Institute**

A goal of Law's HHZ workshop after the rain (2020) was to push participants to imagine alternative futures-through the perspectives of survivors from Tse Pak Chai's Epidemic Zone Investigationby collaboratively putting together an intertextual platform ("後生者 after the rain").

#### Michael Leung

Through his course at Baptist University, Leung encourages his students to rethink societal norms and conventions. For example, one of his students worked at a cultural institution and was often late to class due to late working hours. Leung suggested that they engage in institutional critique as their class project, by attempting to convince their employer to invest in their cultural development and allow them to leave on time for class. Though the student chose not to engage in this project, Leung's suggestion provided his students with a new perspective on democracy in the workplace.

#### Michelle Lee

During Lee's pre-workshop for M+ Rover, she encouraged secondary students to explore different ways of thinking by "thinking" with their hands. This was achieved by asking the students to handle and make sculptures with an insignificant object from daily life-in this case apples-to provide a new framework for looking at things and understanding how they perceive

#### Critical reflection

A practice of constantly evaluating one's beliefs and worldview against newly acquired knowledge and changing circumstances. It is an important process that enables more intentional learning and meaning making (Tooth and Renshaw 2009; Burns 2015). From an educator's perspective, critical reflection is necessary for improvements in one's teaching and creating more effective learning experiences for students.

#### Rooftop Institute

Yim and Law continue to rethink their understanding of education, which is regularly inspired by the different artist educators they invite and collaborate with to lead programmes.

#### Michael Leung

Leung's main pedagogical practices are currently taking place in his role as a senior lecturer at Baptist University for Critically Engaged: Creative Practice in Context. He acknowledges the importance of learning from the needs of his students, and for himself to unlearn certain approaches to teaching.

#### Michelle Lee

Since quitting her job as a secondary school teacher to focus on her art, Lee's engagement with informal learning has led her to rethink how she might share her art practice or her own ideas concerning learning.



# Learning from relationship and community build? Engaging with place-based ecological and social topics and issues Collective learning through mutual aid

#### INDIVIDUAL PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

As the Venn diagram indicates, there are differences in their pedagogical practices as well. Law and Yim, as co-founders of Rooftop Institute, are instrumental in the direction of the organisation's programming and provide a variety of different learning experiences by inviting artist educators to lead workshops for audiences of different ages. Unless leading a workshop themselves, Yim and Law are relatively hands-off in the execution of guest programmes. Furthermore, they are interested in sharing teaching resources with the wider community. Their current programme, Hok Hok Zaap (2019-20), invites fifteen Hong Kong artists and collectives to propose a series of teaching plans for engaged arts learning in a community setting, which will be shared with other educators online. By contrast, Lee's work is more focused and specific. She makes detailed plans in preparation for her programmes, which culminate in a clearly guided teaching experience with distinct learning objectives, as well as a session dedicated to group discussion and sharing. In comparison, as a lecturer at Baptist University, Leung attempts to create a non-hierarchical learning environment that is less structured and allows for flexible learning outcomes. For Leung, this allows students to take ownership of their learning, and gives him opportunities to learn about and effectively respond to their interest and needs. He also identifies an opportunity for learning through the act of discussion and listening in everyday life, which allows for the exchange and contamination of information and ideas.

#### Learning from relationship and community building

Educators can highlight the pedagogical value of relationship and community building by making room for these experiences in their programme design. When students interact and form positive affective bonds with each other and the wider community, they develop trust and a collective sense of belonging that facilitates a sustaining learning environment. These relationships encourage exchanges of knowledge and experiences to continue beyond the initial programme or workshop (Zibechi 2012; Burns 2015).

#### **Rooftop Institute**

As part of Rooftop Institute's Hok Zaap programme, Luke Ching Chin Wai worked with local primary schools in collaboration with primary schools in the Philippines to encourage an understanding of each other's cultures through the exchange of language and art.

#### Michael Leung

class Interdisciplinary Practice for the Visual Arts engaged with the stall workers at the threat of closure. The students formed the Pang Jai Concern Group in solidarity with the stall workers. These students continue to have a relationship with the stall workers, seeking to help them sustain their resistance of being displaced.

#### Engaging with place-based ecological and social topics and issues

Through programmes and workshops, educators highlight different socio-ecological topics and issues in Hong Kong, and prompt participants to respond by coming up with solutions and taking action. Increased place-based knowledge and agency each other. These experiences are active, pedagogical process. This approach education institutions. These collaborations enables students to form emotional attachments to the city. experiential and more importantly, self-This sense of belonging and connectedness are imperative in affirming, as they can help to build one's the nurturing of responsible and engaged citizens (Tooth and confidence. Renshaw 2009; Semken and Brandt 2010).

#### Rooftop Institute

Hok Zaap (2018) is an example of Rooftop's Institute's interest in programming with place-based ecological and social concerns in mind. Yim and Law invited artists Zheng Bo and Luke Ching Chin Wai to each lead a workshop; Zheng's practice is ecofocused, while Ching's is often socially-engaged. Zheng Bo invited participants to observe and draw weeds in different parts of Hong Kong, as a way to think through their personal relationship with the city and its environment. Luke Ching led a creative workshop for cultural exchange between Hong Kong and Filipino secondary school students.

#### Michael Leung

Students in Leung's class at Baptist University engage with in Hong Kong facilitates the co-learning of Michael Leung In 2015, a group of students in Leung's MA marginalised communities that face challenges in everyday different approaches to teaching. Yet, it is In class, Leung facilitates open discussion survival in Hong Kong. Two examples from 2016 include important to note that during a discussion without specific learning outcomes. He is engaging with domestic workers through art interventions with select artist educators in 2019, Yim and willing to let anyone lead discussions and Pang Jai Fabric Market, which was facing and conducting ceramics workshops with the students from a Law realised the production of teaching plans learn simply from conversing, debating, disabled school. Furthermore, Leung is part of a closed research can be restrictive for the educators leading and engaging with each other. group of local students doing works and projects on ecological the workshops, and sometimes difficult for issues and concerns. Participants engage in a co-learning other teachers to implement (Char, n.d.). experience that involves discussion and research on ecological, multi-species and land activism projects.

#### Collective learning through mutual aid

Engaging in a voluntary exchange of resources and services for mutual benefit, through which people are able to learn from

#### Michael Leung

Leung is part of a neighbourhood patrol in Wang Chau village, New Territories, which involves supporting the villagers facing eviction. Through this, he identifies moments of learning for both himself and the villagers.

#### Rooftop Institute

HHZ (2019-20), is a two-year programme through which Yim and Law have invited fifteen Hong Kong artists and collectives to propose a series of teaching plans for engaged arts learning in a community setting. Sharing these experience for students. resources with the wider educator community

#### Openness and digression

To allow for teaching and learning experiences to organically unfold, and embrace any unexpected outcomes as natural and integral to the overall enables learning to be more sustainable, as it makes room for ambiguities, uncertainties and changes inside and outside the classroom (Gradle 2007; Tooth and Renshaw 2009; Zibechi 2012; and Burns 2015).

#### Michelle Lee

Lee embraces digression in her approach to research and art making, which she describes as 'a temporary departure from the main subject of the narrative'. This is reflected in her workshops; although they have clear learning objectives, she makes room for digression and embraces this as an important part of the learning

#### Collaborations with formal education institutions

While Rooftop Institute is an independent space and Michelle Lee an independent educator, they have collaborated with formal are opportunities for them to share their practices and build on existing visual arts curricula.

#### **Rooftop Institute**

As part of HHZ, Rooftop Institute facilitated a workshop led by artist and activist Natalie Lo Lai Lai at a secondary school in Wanchai, titled Shelf Life —— Let Time Brew it (2019). Working with the school teacher, she led the students to re-work the soil on the school roof, then plant, ferment and eat the vegetables they harvested. This provided a valuable farmto-table experience that students might not have been exposed to otherwise.



#### Michelle Lee

As an independent educator, Lee builds on her prior experience as a secondary school teacher of ten years. She continues to work with secondary school students for M+ programmes, offering a holistic learning experience that engages students physically and emotionally without being restricted by assessment.



# INDIVIDUAL PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

#### Non-hierarchical learning environment

Unlike in traditional classrooms where teachers assume the role of knowledge authorities or transmitters, learning is equally guided by students and teachers in a non-hierarchical learning environment. This dynamic is conducive to building trust between students and teachers, which makes for more effective learning (Burnard and Swann 2010).

#### Michael Leung

For Leung, this is important as it is conducive to meaningful learning experiences. This environment offers students the freedom to express their academic interests and learning needs, which he can respond to quickly and effectively. He aims to democratise the classroom by having consensus decision-making for all, whether they are a teacher or a student.

### Learning from close observation

Close observation of everyday objects, which encourages students to think about and pay attention to things in their immediate surroundings that they may overlook. This not only promotes an attentiveness important to learning, but also curiosity and creativity (Tooth and Renshaw 2009).

#### Michelle Lee

Lee uses 'close observation' to increase her students' awareness of their physical surroundings and better understand how these things make them feel. For example, in her pre-workshop for M+ Rover, she invited students to conduct close observation and create sculptures with apples—a common object not traditionally used as art material.



To learn using one's emotions, and to form emotional attachments and connections to oneself, others and the broader world. Emotional learning helps students develop compassion, and contributes to creating more meaningful and transformative educational experiences (Gradle 2007; London 2007; Tooth and Renshaw 2009;

**Emotional learning** 

#### Michelle Lee

and Burns 2015).

For Lee, it is very important that her students connect with themselves when they learn, especially when they look at art. This is not only to learn from the artist, but also to learn from their own feelings. Therefore, she always tries to include a sharing and reflection session, where students reflect on their feelings, as well as learn from those of others.

### Guided teaching with clear learning objectives

An approach to teaching that involves designing detailed activities with clear directions that guide students to achieve learning objectives. This ensures students feel supported during learning, while allowing room for experimentation and exploration (Burns 2015).

#### Michelle Le

For the guided tour at M+ Pavilion exhibition *Five Artists:*Sites Encountered, Lee's learning objectives included an increased awareness of the body as a site for experience and its relationship with our immediate surroundings. To achieve this, she invited the students to take part in a 'water tasting.' She provided a clearly organised worksheet and asked the students to record their thoughts on the age, taste and character of the water in relation to the key vocabulary she provided to aid the process.



#### Targetting an intergenerational audience

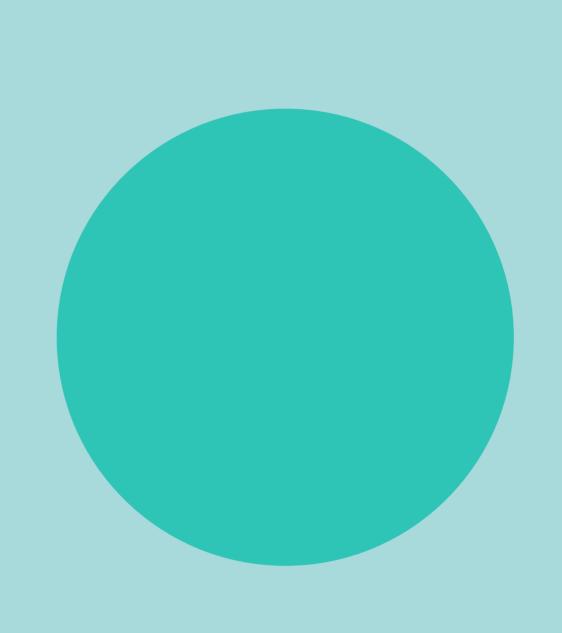
An opportunity for co-learning that isn't possible within the formal education system.

#### Rooftop Institute

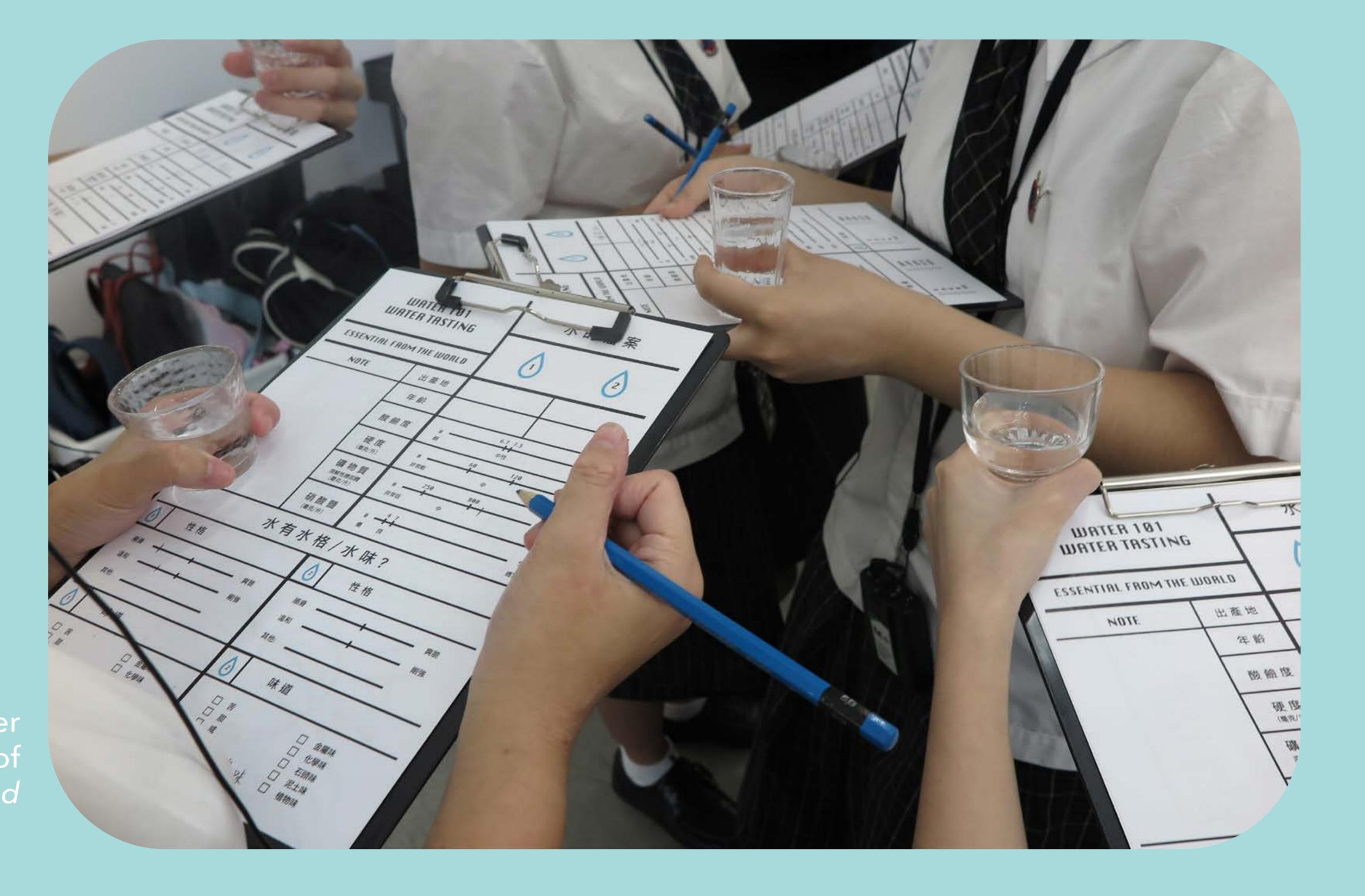
After completing *Asia Seed* (2016-18), a cross-cultural art education programme aimed at secondary school students in Hong Kong, Rooftop Institute chose to target a more intergenerational audience. They identified that secondary school students already have access to educational resources and believed that art learning should be available to all ages. This led them to develop *Hok Zaap* (2018) and *HHZ* (2019-20), which cater to different ages and are led by invited artist educators that engage with different communities across Hong Kong.



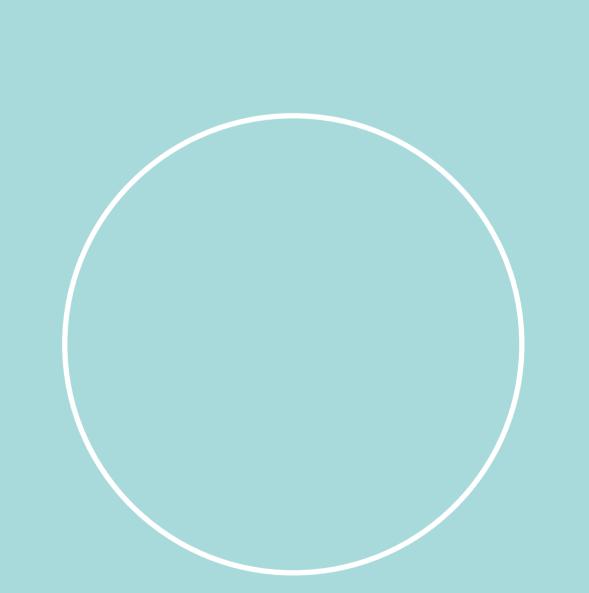
Group sharing the Pang Jai map with Leung Mee-ping and Michael Leung outside of Pang Jai, March 2015. Photograph provided by group.



Students take part in a 'water tasting' at the guided tour of Five Artists: Sites Encountered led by Lee. © M+, Hong Kong.







HHZ workshop after the rain (2020) led by artist Law Yuk Mui. Courtesy of Rooftop Institute.



#### Pedagogical Approach as an Extension of Art Practice

In many ways, these artist educators engage in pedagogical practices that mirror their own artistic practices. They take what they have learned from their art and share it with their students. For instance, Leung brings his experiences with local land justice movements to his classroom through the sharing of food and storytelling; Lee tries to incorporate intuition and digression, which she practices when doing creative research, with her students; Law continues to investigate concepts of history and time and social issues with the use of multimedia technology in her HHZ programme after the rain (2020). Our findings are in line with Emily Pringle's research on artistled pedagogies in the contemporary art gallery space (2009, 174-82). She also found that 'artists draw on their experience as creative practitioners to instigate a learning process which resembles their art practice' and that they 'seek to pass on skills and knowledge intrinsic to their artistic know how' (Pringle 2009, 176).

According to Pringle, art practice can be 'constructed as an experiential process of conceptual enquiry that embraces inspiration, looking, questioning, making, reflective thinking and the building of meanings.' (2009, 176). To create artwork, an artist needs to make a series of decisions that require them to incorporate previously-known knowledge and skills, utilise their intuition and emotions, identify and carry out ideas as well as solve problems. Thus, art making is an active and mental exercise which demands engagement with the world through multiple means, and expression of one's ideas and thoughts in a carefully-considered manner.

Furthermore, viewing someone else's artwork may also prompt inner dialogue and a process of reflection that is instrumental to knowledge production. In her research, Pringle observed that 'art works are [...] active contributors to meaning. Engagement with a work involves participants asking questions of it, whilst acknowledging what it communicates and how ideas are shaped by that ongoing communication' (2009, 178).

and programmes. Engaging in dialogue mainstream arts education. with other people and their artwork is a of new perspectives.

the world.

### **Education System**

and responded by working to fill in the public. perceived gaps. Although this is not shown in the Venn diagram, each artist educator

Leung, who is the only artist educator of schools. In particular, Yim found it difficult different capacities and spaces, including

If art making is a means of expression, then to experiment or try new ideas, while Law an artwork is the product of that expression, felt unable to adapt the culture in schools embodying the ideas and knowledge of the from within the system. Since Rooftop artist. This is also why the artist educators Institute is dedicated to exploring different we interviewed actively hold group possibilities and approaches to arts learning, discussions and sharing in their workshops their comments hint at the restrictiveness of

pedagogical experience which perpetuates Lee discussed this in further detail in her knowledge production and the construction interview, emphasising that there is simply not enough time and resources for teachers to experiment with their teaching. Although As we can see, the process and learning recent reforms on arts education have shifted opportunities presented in art making and the focus to more conceptual and processthe overall artistic practice is reflected in driven learning, the examination-driven many of the characteristics we have identified culture continues to make it challenging for in the artist educators' pedagogical teachers to teach and explore topics beyond approaches. More than hard knowledge the curriculum. She described schools as and skills, the pedagogical experiences a 'time capsule' where knowledge is often offered by these artist educators open up not up-to-date. When she was teaching at different ways of knowing and processing a secondary school, she struggled to keep up with new ideas and practices trending in the contemporary art world. For instance, Response to Limitations in Formal there were—and still are—limited resources on video, performance and community art that visual arts teachers can access and use. Hence, The artist educators also engage in these working outside mainstream education has pedagogical practices with the aim of afforded Lee and the other artist educators expanding the possibilities of arts learning the time and freedom to explore and develop for students and the general public. They pedagogical approaches relevant to their have observed the limitations of the visual own artistic practices and interests, which arts curriculum in mainstream education, they then share with students and the general

#### Significance of these Pedagogical has highlighted this aim in their interviews. Practices to Visual Arts and Overall

the group to work directly in an educational Based on our findings, it is evident that institution, notes that bureaucratic the pedagogical practices of these artist challenges hinder his approach to teaching educators offer significant value to visual arts and learning. As for Rooftop Institute, both education in Hong Kong. Aiming to share Law and Yim decided to start an alternative their ideas and approaches to arts learning space for arts education precisely because to a broader community, the artist educators they are dissatisfied with arts learning in have led programmes and workshops in



partnering with schools and universities (see Collaborations with formal education institutions). These collaborations offer invaluable support to teachers by introducing them to alternative teaching approaches, as well as contemporary art trends and practices. Overall, this contributes to diversifying skills and knowledge taught in visual arts classrooms in Hong Kong.

Beyond visual arts education, we believe the work of these artist educators positively contribute to pedagogy in Hong Kong overall. After the handover from Britain to China in 1997, the change in socio-political climate prompted the Education Commission to conduct a year-long review of the city's education system in 1998 (Cheng, Jackson and Lee 2017). What resulted was a major education reform at the turn of the millennium, focusing on the key guiding principle, 'Learn to Learn,' as well as the concepts

'whole-person development' and 'life-long learning' (The Curriculum Development Council 2001, 10). In order to achieve these educational aims, the following measures were identified:

- the development of generic skills (e.g. critical thinking, creativity, communication, etc.) in the context of Key Learning Areas and other relevant contexts
- the use of different methods of learning and teaching to achieve learning targets
- the development of students' own interests and potential
- the widening of students' learning space for the whole-person development (The Curriculum Development Council 2001, 10)



They encompass a wide set of knowledge, skills and values that the EC believed would make students more competitive in the twenty-first century. However, as noted by Cheng, Jackson and Lee (2017), many obstacles have hindered the progress of this reform, such as a deeplyembedded system and culture that privilege assessments and examinations (14).

In effect, it seems as if the artist educators we interviewed may have had more success with the educational aims proposed by the EC. As previously mentioned, art making is a pedagogical experience that can help students develop a host of generic skills-creativity, problem-solving, decision-making, and critical reflection-that can be widely applied in different subject areas (see Art making and creative practice as tools for learning). The collaborative learning encouraged by these artist educators is also critical to honing teamwork and communication skills for students. Moreover, arts learning prompts the engagement of the whole self when learning, using the body, senses, emotions, and intuition to process information and construct knowledge. As for helping students develop their own interests and potential, these artist educators create learning environments that allow students to build confidence in their own voices, and take ownership of their learning (see Openness and digression, and Non-hierarchical learning environment). Finally, there are many ways in which the artist educators widen the learning spaces of their students and integrate learning into their everyday lives. Ensuring knowledge is place-based and connected to students' lived experiences, and promoting learning through relationship and community building, all contribute to the broadening of places and experiences in which students find meaning and identify learning opportunities. Therefore, we believe the pedagogical work of these artist educators inherently achieves the educational

aims laid out by the EC. We suggest they should be taken as case studies for the ongoing reform, as the EC continues to make improvements to the curriculum and education system.

All of this speaks to the inherent value of arts learning, and the benefits of applying its principles across disciplines in education. We believe it may have even more value in the coming decades, in the wake of socio-ecological changes and crises such as COVID-19 and climate change. Overlapping with the approaches and beliefs of the four artist educators we interviewed, proponents of sustainable education believe that education needs to support 'transformative personal and communal shifts to ways of being and acting that critically question dominant systems and are more relational, interconnected, place based, and in balance with ecological systems' (Burns 2015, 260), or more simply, 'learning as change' (Sterling 2002 as quoted in Burns 2015, 260). In a city and world that is changing so rapidly, it is crucial that the coming generations are adequately equipped with knowledge and skills that can help them cope and adapt. Teachers will need to educate in ways that are more fluid and flexible to multiple outcomes (see Openness and digression). As stated by Zibechi (2012), instead of attempting to control learning outcomes, it is perhaps more important for students to learn, above all else, 'how to live with uncertainty' (24).

Images in previous spread:

Left: Hok Zaap (2018) workshop led by artist Luke Ching Chin Wai, titled Easy to learn Tagalog. Courtesy of Rooftop Institute. Right: HHZ (2019-20) workshop led by artist Natalie Lo Lai Lai, titled Shelf Life — Let Time Brew It. Courtesy of Rooftop Institute.

# All of this speaks to the inherent value of arts learning, and the benefits of applying its principles across disciplines in education.





it is evident that the pedagogical practices of the four artist educators—Yim Sui Fong and Law Yuk Mui of Rooftop Institute, Michelle Lee, and Michael Leung—hold significant value for the development of visual arts education in Hong Kong. Through interviews and relevant literature, we have identified the similarities and differences in their pedagogical approaches, and demonstrated their benefits to both visual arts and overall education. Responding to the rigidity and limitations of the formal education system, these artist educators attempt to facilitate learning experiences that are in line with their personal artistic and pedagogical interests. The learning they promote is more holistic, intentional and applicable to their students' daily lives and surroundings. As mentioned, these are pedagogical practices that will be relevant and sustainable in the context of coming decades due to further and more rapid socio-ecological changes. As such, we believe it is imperative to continue to support pedagogical endeavours by local artist educators, and for the government to include them in formal discussions and conversations regarding the development of visual arts education in Hong Kong.

What we have found with this project is only the tip of the iceberg. There are so many more local artist educators to speak to and learn from, such as Zheng Bo and Natalie Lo Lai Lai whom we briefly mentioned in our research. Our findings could also be enriched from the inclusion of student and participant feedback and perspectives, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of whether and how such approaches to arts learning impact learning experiences. As our Venn Diagram only presents an overview of the pedagogical practices of these artist educators, we also encourage further in-depth research to be conducted on the specific characteristics we have highlighted, and how they can be applied to other subjects and disciplines within the Hong Kong context.

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