East Meets West: UK/China creative collaborations

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this panel session we discuss some of our experiences and aspirations of UK/China collaboration in arts and arts education. The panellists are comprised of senior members of the School of Art and Design at Guangdong University of Technology (GDUT) in China. Like many universities in China, GDUT has an active International Professor scheme that brings people from around the world, including the UK, to teach at the university.

2. PANELISTS

2.1 Sean Clark (Chair)

I am an artist and curator and an International Professor in the School of Art and Design at GDUT. During the last two and a half years I've been working with colleagues at the university to run a programme of digital art workshops and exhibitions. We've been using the term "East Meets West" to describe these activities since they bring "Western" STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) project-based learning approach to an "Eastern" student cohort.

In the relatively short time I've been involved I've seen interest in the STEAM teaching approach grow massively. When I first came over to Guangzhou in 2016 I went to the Shenzhen Maker Faire and there was relatively little discussion of STEAM (the "Art-less" STEM approach was more

common), or teaching technology such as the Raspberry Pi or BBC Micro:bit. I went to the same event in 2018 almost every exhibitor was using the term and it was satisfying to see both the (British) Pi and Micro:bit being used extensively.

As well as teaching hands-on digital creativity, we've also run exhibitions that include a mix of UK and Chinese artworks (Interact Digital Arts 2018a, 2018b). For these we show the professional artwork alongside the students work. This approach definitely goes down well.

If I were to identify the main challenge of working with China I would have to say, unsurprisingly, communication. While many students have good English, it helps to have translators in class. Workshop-based learning can sometimes be new to students, many of who would prefer to be told what to do rather than have to generate their own ideas! This is changing though and I am regularly surprised by the quality of independent thought and student work produced.

I am very pleased to have a distinguished panel of guests their creative work and how they see the further development of UK/China collaboration in the arts.

2.2 Yi Ji

YI JI is an associate professor in the School of Art and Design at GDUT. He is an interaction designer,

digital artist and new media curator. His research is mainly focused on interaction design, smart art and personalised interaction design systems. In 2014 he was recognised by the Hong Kong Dragon Foundation as one of 100 young Chinese leaders.

His research results and design works have been exhibited around the world (including Sydney, London, Singapore, Shanghai and Beijing) and he has run workshops at several academic conferences and art exhibitions. He is a member of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), the Australian Interactive Design Association, the Singapore Computer Information Association and the User Experience Design Association (UXPA). He is chair of 2019 Chinese CHI Conference and was chair of the 2016 Australia HCI Exhibition.

He and his research team has been working on a Virtual Reality reconstruction of a 500 year-old Pailou Gate, or memorial archway, that is currently located at GDUT (Ji & Clark 2018). The project has two goals. First, to accurately model the building for presentation and future study. Second, to create an interactive Virtual Reality experience that will place the building in a reimagining of its original context.

2.3 Xiaoying Tang

Prof Xiaoying Tang graduated from the School of Fine Arts at Tsinghua University with a Bachelor's Degree in literature in 2000. She obtained her Master Degree from Hubei University of Technology in design and art in 2006. She then graduated from Huazhong University of Science and Technology with her Doctor's Degree. Since 2012 she has been Vice-president and Professor at the School of Art and Design at GDUT.

Her research interests include new media art and technology, new media communication and design and digital inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. She has presided over more than ten research projects, including "Inheritance and Revitalization of Guangfu Arts and Crafts in the New Media Era", "Research on Creative Integration of Pearl River Delta Animation and Game Design and Traditional Industries", "Digital Inheritance of Guangfu Intangible Cultural Heritage" and the "Low-carbon Life, Green Guangzhou" animation and interactive popular science system.

She has published over 20 papers on topics such as research in to the exploration of Guangfu furniture based on AR technology, interactive narrative research on new media animation and digital inheritance of folk arts and crafts based on cognitive psychology. She has published 15 monographs and textbooks, and created more than 300 works on new media and animation. The AR

presentation of traditional Chinese nursery rhymes is being presented at this conference (Llang & Tang 2019).

2.4 Hai Fang

Professor Hai Fang is a distinguished professor and doctoral supervisor who is part of the Hundred Talents Plan at Guangdong University of Technology. He is also the Dean of the School of Art and Design. He was the first Chinese scholar to be awarded the Cultural Achievement Award of Finland, the Distinguished Alumni Award of the University of Aalto and he was made a Knight of the Order of the Lion of Finland, which was awarded by the President of Finland.

He has been engaged in interdisciplinary research in to architectural and environmental design, industrial design and the comparative study of Chinese and Western design for more than 30 years. He is a strong advocate of combining traditional Chinese design – and design wisdom – with international influences.

Professor Fang has a particular interest in Nordic design and has written extensively on the topic, exploring aspects of design functionalism and the influences of regional culture on design, as well as green design principles.

In addition to looking internationally for design influences, Professor Fang is also constantly reflecting on the current situation of design in modern China. He is actively involved with China's Green Development Policy and is currently researching the practical impacts of ecological and green design approaches.

3. REFERENCES

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