



# NEWSLETTER

Spring 2012

No. 5

Dr Esther Cheung



Outstanding Teaching Award

Prof Frank Dikötter



Research Output Prize

Dr Stephen Matthews



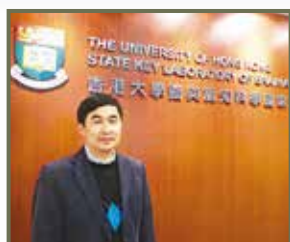
Outstanding Research Student Supervisor Award

## University Excellence In Teaching and Research Awards 2011



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## NEW STAFF APPOINTMENTS

The Faculty was pleased to welcome the following academic and academic-related staff who took up new full-time and fixed-term appointments between September 1, 2011 and January 31, 2012.

### *School of Chinese*

Dr Lin Pei-yin, Assistant Professor

### *School of English*

Dr F.L. Blumberg, Assistant Professor

### *School of Humanities*

Dr Opher Mansour, Assistant Professor (Fine Arts)

### *School of Modern Languages and Cultures*

Mrs Guillemette Fiot, Assistant Language Instructor (French)

## EXISTING STAFF

The following existing members of staff took up new full-time and fixed-term positions during the same period of September 1, 2011 to January 31, 2012.

### *School of Humanities*

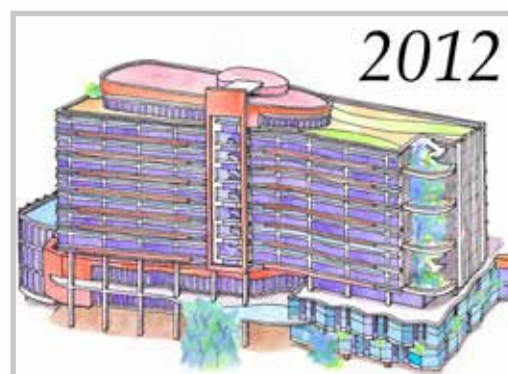
Prof Greg M Thomas, Professor (Fine Arts)  
Dr Giorgio Biancorosso, Associate Professor (Music)

## TOP PRIZE IN PHOTO COMPETITION

Ms Marie Yip, Administrative Assistant in the Faculty Office, won 1st prize in the Adult Category of the South China Morning Post "Portraits of Women" Photo Competition with her picture entitled, "Girlfriends, please don't pee in my bed!" SMCP organized the competition as part of their Celebration of Women month in October 2011. Her winning photograph was prominently featured in the newspaper as well as displayed at an exhibition in Festival Walk.



Marie's Prize-winning photo



## ARTS FAREWELL TO THE MAIN BUILDING A NEW CHAPTER IN OUR HISTORY

The Faculty of Arts will not only be celebrating its Centenary in 2012, but will also be leaving its home for nearly a hundred years and moving to its new building in the Centennial Campus. To mark this milestone in our history, we are holding an Arts Farewell to the Main Building event that will bring together Arts staff, students, alumni, and friends, in an emotional, yet joyful, celebration of our time in this iconic building at the heart of the University.

**22 April 2012 (Sunday)  
1:30 pm – 5:00 pm Main Building  
The University of Hong Kong**

An official ceremony at 1:30 pm in Loke Yew Hall will be followed by activities highlighting the Faculty's diversity taking place simultaneously throughout the Main Building from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

For details and registration, please visit:  
<http://arts.hku.hk/april22/>

We look forward to sharing the day with you.



**HONOURS FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH**

Five scholars in the Faculty have recently been honoured for their achievements in teaching and research:

**University-level Awards 2011**

The annual Award Presentation Ceremony for Excellence in Teaching and Research honours academics across the University. Recipients in the Faculty this year include:

Dr Esther Cheung, Associate Professor of Comparative Literature, who received an Outstanding Teaching Award. Her passion for both her subject and for teaching was consistently mentioned in student citations.

Chair Professor of Humanities Frank Dikötter, who won the Research Output Prize in the Faculty of Arts for his book *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe 1958-62* (see separate story in this issue).

Dr Stephen Matthews, Associate Professor of Linguistics, who won an Outstanding Research Student Supervisor Award. He has seen a 100 per cent graduation rate for his students over 20 years.

**Faculty Teaching Excellence Award 2010-2011:  
Dr Katherine Chen, Assistant Professor  
School of English**

Dr Chen encourages her students to become independent, critical and original thinkers and looks for innovative opportunities to help them achieve this.

Students design class discussions under her guidance, give two-minute pitches to their classmates on the worth of a research idea and use the latest technology to find effective ways of studying their discipline.

For example, she uses Web 2.0 in class, has students produce public websites instead of term essays and uses Google sites as a public outlet for students' societal relevant projects. She also gives students hands-on exercises in natural speech analysis and sociolinguistic methodologies which they then apply to



Dr Katherine Chen receives her award from Prof Kam Louie

investigate their social group's conversational style and conduct ethnographic research. These tools all support her goal of broadening students' minds.

"Students explore the connections between sociolinguistics and their social world and build awareness of power and discrimination in Hong Kong and the world. Often times students' assumptions are challenged and re-evaluated, but the learning experience helps them to develop a culturally-sensitive outlook and empathy," she says.

**Faculty Teaching Excellence Award 2010-2011:  
Dr Clarice Chan, Language Instructor  
Centre for Applied English Studies**

Dr Chan teaches students how to develop academic literacy and to write and speak effectively in their disciplines, and she is committed to ensuring that her teaching is informed by research. This means studying her students' needs so she can fill the gaps left by standard textbooks.



Prof Kam Louie and Dr Clarice Chan

"Existing research is helpful, but what and how to teach students in a particular teaching context requires local knowledge. In this regard, research by teachers can be extremely useful," she says.

"For example, in the area of business English, the textbook approach to teaching spoken business communication is to give students 'useful phrases', but my research on HKU students shows that most of them already know many of these phrases. What they need most help with is the ways in which politeness strategies can be used in different situations, in particular when performing what linguists call 'face-threatening acts'."

Her observations have led her to develop activities that encourage reflection and critical thinking, so students can better understand the difficulties they face and how to overcome them. She believes that learner independence and autonomy are particularly important in today's dynamic and changing world.



## AN ANTHEM IS REVIVED

On March 11, 1912, the University Anthem was first played to mark the opening ceremony of HKU. It became the set piece at University ceremonies but from the Second World War, it was mothballed and forgotten. Now, in honour of the University's centenary, two academics have helped to breathe new life into this artefact of the past.

Prof Daniel Chua, Head of the School of Humanities, spearheaded the effort, which culminated with a recording last year by the Hong Kong Sinfonietta and 80 singers of the Union Choir of the University and the DBS DGS Senior Mixed Choir, conducted by University Artist Yip Wing-sie.

The score was pieced together by Dr Chan Hing-yan, Associate Professor of Music, working from notation originally designed for a military band. He developed a full orchestration that captures the influences of Brahms and Tchaikovsky in the piece, and that also makes it more suitable for indoor playing. The Anthem originally was meant to be played loudly, outdoors.



Dr Chan Hing-yan and Prof Daniel Chua

"My work has more refined orchestral sounds so it is not just reviving the old anthem, it gives it new life because we have passed the colonial period already," Dr Chan says.

But it still retains the Romantic style and pomp of a ceremonial anthem, as Prof Chua wrote in his introduction to the Anthem for last December's Centenary Gala Dinner.

"Hearing the Anthem will transport you back a hundred years to Edwardian Britain. This is music of the Empire, with the pomp and circumstance of both the army (provided in 1912 by the military band), and the church (courtesy of the Choir of the St John's Cathedral). The work is not an anthem in the sense of a 'national anthem' that can be easily sung by all, but takes its bearings from the church anthem, with Latin verses that speak of the light of knowledge shining forth from the East," he says.

The Anthem was composed by Denman Fuller, who was the organist at St John's Cathedral at the time, and the lyrics were written by Cecil Clementi, a Sinologist and Cantonese speaker who later went on to become Governor of Hong Kong.

Ms Yip says she was pleased with the results and felt it was time the Anthem was brought to light. "I think it's great that after all these years we have a proper anthem for the University. It's been hidden for all these years and nobody knew about it. It sounds like a hymn," she says.

Two recordings were made of the Anthem, one the full piece at five minutes and the other abridged to three minutes. The abridged version provided the musical backdrop for a short film about HKU's centenary called Sapiientia, by University Artists Alex Law and Mabel Cheung.



### HONG KONG INSTITUTION OF ENGINEERS GRANT

Mr K.W. Fung, Associate Professor in the School of Chinese, has been awarded a nine-month research grant of HK\$ 392,150 by the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers to compile a monograph on the history of the engineering profession and the development of related institutions in Hong Kong between 1842 and 1950.



## PUZZLING OVER LANGUAGE AND THE CHINESE BRAIN

Here are some startling statistics: 70 per cent of Chinese patients with left brain hemisphere damage due to stroke, tumour, epilepsy or other diseases end up suffering a language disorder. In the US, the figure is below 50 per cent.

In patients with brain palsy, such as children born with cerebral palsy, the difference is even greater: 70 per cent of Chinese suffer language disorders against 20 per cent of Americans.

These disturbing statistics are behind a major project under Linguistics Professor Li-Hai Tan, Director of the State Key Laboratory of Brain and Cognitive Sciences.

The project obtained a grant of RMB 39 million (HK\$47 million) from China's 973 Program in January – the first Hong Kong-led project to be funded by the national research program – and builds on previous research by Prof Tan and others that shows there are distinct differences in the ways that native Chinese and English speakers process language.

“Why do so many Chinese have language disorders? Possibly because there are more regions in the brain involved in Chinese language processing,” he says.

“In Chinese speakers, the speaking and listening areas are the same as those for alphabetical languages but what's interesting is that researchers have [also] identified the right hemisphere temporal as important for listening. It's responsible for processing tones.”

“My lab has also found two regions quite unique to Chinese reading. Of course there are similarities with English readers, but the interesting point is that when Chinese people read English, they use the Chinese brain system. In the US they've found when native English speakers are taught to read Chinese characters, they use the same brain system as Chinese. This means the Chinese use an assimilation strategy and Western people use an accommodation strategy.”

All that makes Chinese speakers more vulnerable when the brain is damaged or not working properly. Apart from the higher levels of language disorders among Chinese patients with brain damage (whether or not they have surgery), there is also the prospect of wasted lives as 10-15 per cent of children suffer from language disorders – more than 20 million in number – yet 80

per cent of them have normal intelligence.

“We know nothing of the development of Chinese language – that is the purpose of this project,” Prof. Tan says.

The project has four parts that will try to shed light for surgeons, other healthcare professionals, teachers, social workers and others.

First, a baseline of the neurodevelopment of normal Chinese language users for people aged four to 75 will be established. Second, the brain regions involved in normal language activity will be investigated as well as how these interact. Third, the researchers will try to identify the candidate genes behind Chinese language disorders such as dyslexia and stuttering. And fourth, they will work on translating the research findings into clinical approaches. The latter is particularly important to neurosurgeons.

The project involves 25 experts in language science, neurosurgery, molecular genetics, neuroimaging, psychology, computer science and electrophysiology from Hong Kong, China and the US. The 973 grant was awarded through the HKU Shenzhen Institute of Research and Innovation that was set up in 2011.

### HARVARD-YENCHING FELLOWSHIP

Ms Zhang Yun, a PhD candidate in Modern China Studies in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures, Faculty of Arts, has been offered a prestigious Harvard-Yenching Institute (HYI) Visiting Fellowship for 2012-2013. This programme provides advanced PhD candidates at the Institute's partner universities with an opportunity to conduct dissertation research at Harvard University for three semesters.

During her stay at HYI, Ms Zhang, who holds an MA in Comparative Literature from Peking University, will conduct research for her thesis entitled, “New Writing and Women's Press: The Making of Gendered National Identity in Modern China (1898-1919).” The extremely competitive application process for the Fellowship included an interview with a Harvard faculty member and two former HYI visiting scholars.

Chair Professor of Humanities Frank Dikötter made a mark with his book *Mao's Great Famine*, the winner of the 2011 BBC Samuel Johnson Prize for non-fiction and a 2010-11 HKU Research Prize winner, which documented how at least 45 million Chinese people died in the largely man-made famine of 1958-1962.

Now he is shifting his focus to the regime's founding years when the way was paved for both the famine and the Cultural Revolution.

Drawing on little-used local, county and provincial archives and with support from a GRF grant, he is unearthing the social history of the People's Republic of China from 1949-1957 for a new book, *The Tragedy of Liberation*.

Many people at first welcome liberation, if only because they are tired of years of civil war and the corruption of the Nationalists. But it soon turns to tragedy, unleashing a wave of fear and terror in city and countryside in which neighbours denounce each other and the state knows everything – including the appropriate quota for executions.

In a campaign of terror initiated at the end of 1950, says Prof Dikötter, “the order is to kill one in every 1,000 people – to kill KMT Nationalists who surrender, counter-revolutionaries... Before you know it, you've got local bosses on the ground saying, can we kill more.”

By the time locally-led executions are stopped in spring 1951, some counties had achieved double the quota. Local cadres in the Fuling region in Sichuan went even further, killing 2,676 people, a rate of three per 1,000, in the final 10 days in which they had the power to execute.

“This is all recorded in party archives because an investigation was carried out later. But how often is no one around to take notes or investigate?” Professor Dikötter asks.

His research also shows how the party whipped up grievances in the villages to turn the majority against the minority. If someone had more possessions, such as ducks or glass window panes, they were denounced as landlords.

“They hang them, beat them to death. And of course they are extremely afraid the Nationalists will come back and take revenge. So they want to join the Communists and ensure they don't return. It's a pact sealed in blood.”

From about 1952 the campaign moves to the cities to target merchants, industrialists, shopowners and the like, and by 1956 many of them are purged and all farms and urban businesses are effectively collectivized. At this stage one group remains relatively untouched – intellectuals – but the 100 Flowers Campaign in 1957 puts that to rest by first encouraging intellectuals to speak out, then denouncing them for doing so.

Prof Dikötter says all of these developments lay the ground for the Great Leap Forward, in which collectivization made it possible for the state to engineer the great famine, and the Cultural Revolution, when the dependents of those persecuted in the 1950s were attacked. “You kill the landlord, but how about the son? There's fear of retribution, that the family of the so-called tyrant or landlord or capitalist will come back at you some day,” he says.

“You keep looking for a simple storyline but the whole thing is extraordinarily complex.”

Professor Dikötter's book will go some way to unraveling that story by revealing the terrifying but little-known human consequences of Mao's early policies.



Prof Frank Dikötter speaks at a History in the Making event





English may be the “global language”, but when it comes into contact with other linguistic varieties, the result is often new pronunciations, grammar and words and even the addition of tones. While that excites linguists, it has been an uphill battle to gain wider acceptance for these New Englishes.

Dr Lisa Lim, Assistant Professor in the School of English, teaches a course on World Englishes and starts out asking students if there is such a thing as Hong Kong English and whether it should be spoken.



Dr Lisa Lim

“Many of them are quite traditional, they say we should speak ‘pure’ British and American English,” she says. “But once a language spreads around the world, the ownership of that language has to be given over to its speakers.”

The modifications that come with that ownership are the topic of a GRF-funded project by Dr Lim, *The Ecology and Evolution of Asian Englishes*, that focuses on English in Singapore, Hong Kong and Sri Lanka, and other Asian Englishes.

One of her goals is to show that such restructuring, commonly labelled as error, is in fact a consequence of the influence of the local languages on English.

For example, Chinese-like tones are used in the Englishes of Hong Kong and Singapore to stress certain syllables (think of the central syllable of “umbrella” spoken with a high tone). People use Chinese particles such as *hor*, *lah* and *meh* in English that retain their Chinese tones. They may also drop the verb “to be” since it is not necessary in Chinese, saying for example “she very pretty”.

Dr Lim also digs deeper into the factors affecting the evolution of English, such as migration patterns and language policies. In Singapore, where she did previous research, English has been influenced by both Chinese and Malay, and the kind of Chinese influence has changed over the years. Hokkien was the main Chinese language until the government decided to make Mandarin one of the official languages at independence in 1965. An influx of Hong Kong immigrants in the late 1980s and flourishing Cantonese pop culture helped to popularise Cantonese and hence make Cantonese particles together with their tones

more susceptible to being acquired into Singapore English.

Other echoes of this history are also still heard in Singapore English today, as Singaporeans use Chinese tones but all the high tones are on the right-hand side of words and sentences, which is a feature of Malay intonation.

Turning to Hong Kong and Sri Lanka, Dr Lim hopes to explore the ecology of English in these places and how the local populations have restructured the language, such as through the use of tones or new phrases (for example, “add oil” is used in Hong Kong English SMS messages, a literal translation of a Cantonese encouragement to persevere).

“What I want to foreground is that the structures or changes you see in New Englishes have come about naturally and inevitably, and shouldn’t be seen as deviant. This has wider implications for the lay person and for policy makers. People are expressing their cultural identity, so you shouldn’t say it’s bad English and can’t be used,” she says.

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE ARTS FACULTY

*Africans in China: A Sociocultural Study and Its Implications on Africa China*, Cambria Press.  
By Adams Bodomo

*La globalización de las inversiones en África* (The Globalization of Investment in Africa), Casa Africa/Los Libros de la Catarata.  
By Adams Bodomo

《中華經典啟蒙》(Chinese Classics of Enlightenment), Peking University Press.  
By C.M. Si

*China and Orientalism: Western Knowledge Production and the PRC (Postcolonial Politics)*, Routledge.  
By Daniel Vukovich

*Strangers on the Western Front: Chinese Workers in the Great War*, Harvard University Press.  
By Xu Guoqi

## THE RISING POPULARITY OF OUR RPG PROGRAMMES

Interest in research postgraduate studies in the Faculty has doubled in recent years, resulting in intense competition for places.

Applications to the MPhil and PhD programmes increased from 255 in 2006-7 to 531 in 2010-11, with the result that only eight per cent of applicants are offered places.

The increase has developed alongside growing recognition for the Faculty, which was ranked number one for Arts and Humanities in Asia in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2011-12.

The keen interest from applicants is helping the Faculty realise a goal of attracting the best research students from Hong Kong, China and abroad, according to Dr Timothy O'Leary, Associate Dean for postgraduate programmes and research.



Dr Timothy O'Leary  
Associate Dean for  
Postgraduate Programmes  
and Research

"One of our principles is that whatever country students are coming from, we want them to be from the best universities in these countries. And we want our own third-year students who apply to the MPhil programme to be the very best. If they get a 1st-class honours degree and want to do an MPhil here, they can do that," he says.

The mix of postgraduate students currently includes 63 per cent from Hong Kong, 24 per cent from Mainland China and 13 per cent from elsewhere but it is being nudged towards a more diverse blend of 55 per cent local, 25 per cent Mainland and 20 per cent elsewhere.

Internationalism is also an important goal in terms of students' research and learning experience. While graduate students do not receive direct extra funding for overseas exchanges, they are being encouraged to consider alternative ways of getting overseas exposure, such as using funds for research travel or conferences, Fulbright scholarships and the Joint PhD with King's College London.

"One of my aims is to internationalise their experience, especially students who are Hong Kong natives and

Mainland students. It's important for them to get out and have some contact with graduate students in good universities in other parts of the world," he says.

Inter-disciplinary exchanges are also being promoted to heighten students' intellectual experience. Post-doc fellows in the Society of Scholars programme, which brings together talented young scholars from around the world, are holding forums with graduate students on practical and intellectual topics. Students are also forming groups to introduce the important theoretical texts of their subjects to graduate students in other disciplines.

These activities are coming with an awareness that the demands on graduate students are increasing. The University's Graduate School has added new requirements that apply to graduate students in all faculties, such as mandatory courses on research ethics and tutoring. Dr O'Leary is working to ensure these requirements are appropriate to the needs of Arts students.

### SOCIETY OF SCHOLARS IN THE HUMANITIES

Launched in September 2009, the Society aims to bring together exceptionally talented scholars at the beginning of their careers. Two new scholars joined the programme in 2011.

#### Dr Alma Mikulinsky (Fine Arts)

Alma Mikulinsky specializes in early 20th century European art with additional expertise in international contemporary art. Her research interests encompass interwar continental philosophy, early 20th century ethnographic discourses, strategies of art display, and theories of the avant-garde.

#### Dr Theodora Jim (History)

Theodora Jim is an historian from Hong Kong working on Ancient Greek History. She is currently researching a project on the concept of 'salvation' in ancient Greece and the comparison between Greek 'salvation' beliefs and practices and those in Christianity and Chinese religions.





Hong Kong has typically been viewed by military historians as a British outpost whose colonial ties led the Japanese to invade it in December 1941. But a PhD dissertation produced at HKU casts a whole new light on the city's role in the Second World War.

Canadian David Macri, who was named an Outstanding Research Postgraduate Student by HKU for his work, has shown that Hong Kong was in fact a major supply centre for the Chinese resistance against the Japanese, who invaded the country in 1937. Equally, it was viewed by the U.S. as a strategic player in containing the wider ambitions of Japan. It was therefore anything but an outpost.



Dr David Macri

Dr Macri's route to this conclusion was through the Canadian involvement in Hong Kong. Canadian troops were sent to the city in November 1941 – a supposed backwater – despite rejecting requests from Winston Churchill to send troops to other British colonies such as the Falkland Islands. The Canadians were also sent despite resistance from the French-speaking population against fighting for British interests.

“My research question was, why would the Canadian government send soldiers across the Pacific Ocean to fight in Hong Kong and defend a British imperial outpost?” Dr Macri says.

“What I found was that it was less important as a British colony than as a logistical centre for supporting China. Roosevelt wanted to keep the Chinese fighting but he couldn't commit US marines [to support them] because they were neutral at the time. So he worked with [Canada's Prime Minister] Mackenzie King.”

The timing was important. Germany had invaded Russia a few months earlier and destroyed the Red Army. Japan saw this as an opportunity and was considering invading the country from the east. “Roosevelt didn't want them to go into Russia because that would have been the end of the war,” Dr Macri says.

He got King to agree to distract the Japanese instead, taking advantage also of Japan's desire to secure itself in China and control Southeast Asia (especially Indonesian oil sources), where the British and Americans were beginning to amass troops.

Hong Kong at this time was using its rail link to the middle of China to send more supplies to the Chinese army in tonnage terms than the better-known route

along the Burma Road.

“Japan saw the Canadians coming into Hong Kong and had to act or concede to American pressure and withdraw from China,” Dr Macri says. They invaded on December 8, 1941, one day after the attack on Pearl Harbour.

“My work is the first to incorporate Hong Kong as part of the war in China. It's always looked like a sleepy British outpost that was just attacked but that didn't make sense – why reinforce it if it's not important?”

Dr Macri says being at HKU enabled him to fit the pieces together because he could fill his gaps in Chinese history and match that with his knowledge of the history of the war.

A book on his research will be published in November 2012 by the University Press of Kansas, one of the top military history publishers in the world, under the title, *Clash of Empires in South China: The Allied Nations' Proxy War Against Japan, 1935-1941*.

Dr Macri is currently working as a researcher for the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) at Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii. His work involves locating the missing remains of US military personnel from World War II so that they may be recovered and returned to their families. His research has so far taken him to London, and may involve an investigation trip to the South Pacific later this year.

## MCDONNELL INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

Melody Li Yunzi has been named a McDonnell International Scholar at Washington University in St Louis, Missouri, US. Melody Li graduated with an MPhil degree in Translation Studies in the School of Chinese from the University of Hong Kong in 2011, and is currently pursuing a doctorate in comparative literature in Arts & Sciences at Washington University. While at HKU, she was one of only three Chinese students to join the prestigious summer fellowship programme at Cornell University's School of Criticism and Theory (an account of her experiences there appeared in the January 2011 edition of this newsletter). She also took the People's Choice Award in HKU's Three Minute Thesis Competition 2011. The McDonnell Academy Scholars receive funding for full tuition and living expenses for the time it takes to get a degree at Washington University.

Food, China and literature would seem to be a natural combination of study, given the rich meaning attached to Chinese cuisine and the variety of its depictions in poetry, prose and film. Yet rarely have the three been brought together for discussion in scholarly circles.

That changed last December when the School of Chinese hosted Legacies of Taste: An International Conference on Food Narratives in China, which attracted 40 papers and speakers from different corners of the world.

Assistant Professor Dr Isaac Yue helped to organise the gathering. “The idea was to look not just at what people eat, but what they write about food and what food means to different people,” he says. “What really impressed me at the conference was the range of topics that were covered.”

This included everything from cookery and the cultural politics of the open door policy, food as retribution in the fiction of Li Bihua, and images of eating in Chinese idioms, to the fu as a source for Chinese culinary history, Chinese-American food and authenticity and identity, and nostalgic cuisines and food memoirs.

“There was something for everyone, whether they were a Sinologist working in traditional poetry or a scholar working on modern Chinese politics. Everybody was able to find their own niche and interest at the conference,” he says.

Dr Yue also made a presentation, on a late Qing dynasty book written by a Western missionary to train her Chinese servants in preparing proper Western meals. He had expected the text to be revealing about the interface of Chinese and Western cultures, but it turned out to be more about the writer herself and the interaction of two other cultures: American and English.

“The writer, Martha Crawford, was a missionary from Alabama and I expected her to write about her home cuisine. But there is a very traditional English middle-class discourse in this text,” he says.

“I’m conjecturing here, but this could have been the result of peer pressure. After the Opium War most of the missionaries were English. I suspect as a missionary from Alabama, she may have felt a sense of inferiority.

Maybe this was a way for her to re-invent and exert her own sense of identity through what she ate.

“Food literature lets you see so much more about people through what they write about food, what they ate at the time, their cultural perspective, whether there was an agenda. It opens up many possibilities.”

The hope now is that others at the conference will be inspired to organise the next gathering and turn this focus on food, China and literature into a regular event.



Dr Isaac Yue (first from right)

## SCHOOL OF CHINESE WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE

Man Asian Prize Winner Su Tong (蘇童) is the School of Chinese's Writer-in-Residence for 2012. Born in 1963 in Suzhou and now living in Beijing, Su Tong is a prolific and provocative author whose works have earned him a place at the centre of China's literary scene. Su Tong gained international recognition in 1993 when his novella *Wives and Concubines* (妻妾成群) was made into the film *Raise the Red Lantern* (大紅燈籠高高掛) by director Zhang Yimou (張藝謀). In 2009, he was awarded the Man Asian Literary Prize for his work *The Boat to Redemption* (河岸). He is currently serving as Vice-Chairman of the Federation of Professional Writers in Jiangsu Province.

Su Tong will be based at the School from February 20 to April 19, 2012, and will take part in a wide range of events during that period, including public talks, student workshops and seminars, as well as serving as a judge in the Hong Kong University Micro-Fiction Competition 2011-2012.



## WRITING WITH HISTORY IN MIND

Creative writing is flourishing in universities around the world, including in the Faculty of Arts where a postgraduate diploma in Creative Writing has been upgraded to an MFA (Master of Fine Arts) and saw its first students graduate last year. So why do the same questions keep cropping up: how do you teach someone to write? What is there to learn?

“People often ask this about creative writing,” says the programme director, Dr Page Richards, “but our programme is not so much about teaching someone to write, it’s about learning



Dr Page Richards

the history better. And because it’s history, there is everything to learn. It’s like doing architecture where you study the history of materials and forms and so on. Our patterns come from that historical information.”

Students are taught to appreciate the deep traditions of the different forms of writing so they can make more informed choices and better understand what genre works best for them.

For example, poetry and drama were the first forms of creative writing in English, followed by fiction and what we now call creative non-fiction. Interestingly, creative non-fiction is more closely related to poetry in structure and many poets end up writing in that form.

As students learn more, they are changing their minds about what they want to write. In the first year of the programme, 70 per cent switched their genre. “We’re happy with that,” says Dr Richards. “It shows there is a need for this approach.”

About 25 students are admitted to the programme every two years, which has added creative non-fiction and screenwriting to the previous options of fiction, poetry and drama offered by the diploma. The students are supported by a revolving group of guest lecturers, a writers’ series, workshops and an emphasis on the importance of reading.

Choice of language is also naturally important although that has added dimensions in a place like Hong Kong

where many people speak more than one language.

“We go back to the very instrument that students are using, which is English, to understand its strengths and weaknesses for individual writers. The strengths can be felt, for example, to be the number of words in the dictionary.” Someone like Toni Morrison will talk about the choices she has for a word like ‘hat’; “English is a polyglot language. That’s what makes it exciting to write in. There are so many other languages in it...” Samuel Beckett, on the other hand, felt that it could be oppressive to have so many words and he often chose to write in French.

“We don’t think students will necessarily continue to write in English but they have this as a point of reference.”

Students say these explorations into the nature of English have made them look at the Chinese language differently, Dr Richards says. “The minute you pick up a pen, it’s beautifully heavy with legacy and history. We’re trying to shape writing as deeply as possible from within.”

### INTERNATIONAL HKU POETRY PRIZE 2012

The School of English is pleased to announce that award-winning writer Ha Jin (哈金) will be the final judge of the International HKU Poetry Prize 2012. Ha Jin was born Jin Xuefei in 1956 in the Chinese Province of Liaoning, and studied at Heilongjiang and Shandong Universities before moving to the US in 1985. He is currently a Professor in the Department of English at Boston University. He has authored collections of poetry, short stories, as well as novels, including the widely acclaimed *Waiting* (1999). He is the recipient of the National Book Award, the PEN/Faulkner Award, the Flannery O’Connor Award for short fiction, the PEN/Hemingway Award and the Asian American Literary Award.

The School is inviting submissions for the International HKU Poetry Prize 2012 from poets around the world writing in English who have not previously published, or self-published, a full-length collection of poems. The winner receives publication of a first collection of poems with the Hong Kong University Press. **Deadline for submission is June 15, 2012.** For further information, please visit [www.english.hku.hk/prize.htm](http://www.english.hku.hk/prize.htm).



Animals may not be the first thing that come to mind when thinking of a BA/BEd, but in fourth-year student Helen Kwok Hiu-lam the two have come together to produce a force of change.

Helen is a keen animal lover and decided at the end of her third year of studies that she wanted to prick people's consciousness about animal rights issues at HKU while she still had time.



She persuaded the Centre of Development and Resources for Students and the University's catering manager to support her drive for "Less-Meat Mondays" on campus (a modification of Meatless Mondays seen in American and British universities) and rallied several students to her side to help her persuade people to at least give vegetarianism a try.

The success of her efforts are such that the major catering outlets on campus now display her Green Grin stickers and serve more vegetarian options, the campaign's Facebook page has a growing following, and more students are trying meatless meals.

"At first I didn't expect anybody to pick up on this campaign because the meat-free idea is quite new here. Most Chinese are traditional and say



we cannot not have meat. But now quite a few people are interested and they are eager to recruit more people. One vegetarian can save at least 100 animals per year," she says.

Her double major in Education and Linguistics with a minor in cross-cultural studies has been a help in countering resistance to vegetarianism.

"Arts courses train your mind and you can apply that to other things. For instance, when you write essays, you are trying to be persuasive. The same goes for educating people about animal rights. You're not trying to tell them not to eat this or not to wear that, but to show them how animal rights relates to their daily lives, like where their shoes or furs come from, and then let them decide if they want to support this exploitation," she says.

There is still a little bit of telling: the Less-Meat campaign promotes the benefits of vegetarianism, which include being more humanitarian because the resources used to rear livestock can go towards feeding people; better for the environment because livestock farming has a major impact on water quality, climate change and natural habitats; and, not least, better for animals.



It also offers health benefits, which were highlighted in a forum Helen organised in November that featured dieticians, academics, athletes and environmentalists.

Helen is now handing over the reins to other students and hopes to work in an animal rights NGO in future. In the meantime, she has designed her own animal rights T-shirts, started writing for a vegan magazine and is looking to import vegan shoes and clothes. She's also keeping up her campaigning by writing to major retailers to persuade them to have aisles of vegan goods.

"I don't give up. Universities are places where people are willing to try new things so if this is to work, it should work here first," she says.

## YALE VISITING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM

Three Arts undergraduate students have been offered the opportunity to spend a year studying at Yale University as part of a new programme launched by the Office of International Student Exchange. Six applicants were ultimately selected by Yale following a competitive application process, three of whom are from the Faculty of Arts. They include Ms July Yang, a Year 2 student majoring in English, Ms Rachel Leung, a Year 2 Chinese Studies student, and Ms Vanessa Lo, a Year 1 BA student. The Faculty is extremely grateful to the Office of International Student Exchange for enabling these three outstanding students to take up this offer.



The life of University Artist and Chinese contemporary art pioneer Gu Wenda has been neatly divided between East and West, socialist and capitalist, and classical and contemporary. Living at the extremes has driven him to make art that seeks the middle ground and expresses the universality of the human condition.



One of the best examples of his work is the acclaimed United Nations Project, a multimedia installation made of human hair collected from people in five continents.

“I want my work to address the human eternal spirit, the eternal condition. The United Nations Project is a kind of utopian ideal to bring people together,” he says.

It could also be seen as an effort to reconcile his own experiences living at two ends of modern society. Gu spent the first half of his life in China under the Cultural Revolution (“I didn’t have too much understanding of it because I was young; I was just excited that school closed so I didn’t have to go to class”), then in 1987 moved to the centre of capitalism, New York, arriving just before the New Internationalism art movement took off which questioned cultural identities. He quickly became a participant.

“I never think I am Chinese when I’m in China because everybody is Chinese, nobody reminds you that you are Chinese. Then I move to New York and everything reminds me of my Chinese-ness. When you talk to people, see things, wake up and watch the TV, it’s all different. Every day, especially at first, brings you such a contrast. After a certain time, more and more you feel part of it. But at the beginning, you feel very much a heavier sense of Chinese identity.”

That experience helped to enrich his art by deepening his understanding of Western contemporary art. Gu trained in China in classical landscape painting and calligraphy and while there started to combine these forms with contemporary art, although his first exhibition in 1986 was closed by the authorities before it even opened. (“If I exhibited today there would be no problem at all,” he says. “Even though society is far from what I would wish, it’s much better than before.”)

But he says he did not fully grasp contemporary art until he left China and moved to New York. Instead of just imagining what it was, he could see and experience it in its native home. “So I get both sides [American and

Chinese] of essential things instead of just imagining them,” he says. “In future every artist who doesn’t know two or more cultures cannot succeed because we are so much closer together” with the Internet and computers.

That goal of cultural broadening is also shared by many universities, including HKU where Gu is the first visual artist to be named a University Artist. He is introducing Fine Arts students to the process of making art and will collaborate with them to create a piece for the Centennial Campus.

Gu usually declines such offers because they detract from his work but he saw this as an opportunity to get a new initiative off the ground and deepen students’ understanding of art and the sources of creation. “Even originality comes from a certain background. I don’t think anything would come out and not in any way be related to tradition,” he says.



United Nations: We Are Fortunate Animals  
- an installation commissioned by the Herbert  
Museum of Art, Cornell University

**COLLABORATIVE PROJECT WITH GU WENDA**  
In conjunction with the Arts Centenary and the move to the Centennial Campus, the Department of Fine Arts has initiated a collaborative project with University Artist Gu Wenda. The project is based on the poetic scrambling of language Gu devised for his installation *Forest of Stone Steles: Retranslating Tang Poetry*.

We are inviting all current and former HKU students to provide their own poetic mistranslations, based on their thoughts and feelings about our University. Once all submissions have been received, participants will be invited to take part in an art workshop with Gu during the 2012 Autumn semester, to write out the phrases that they have devised in pen and ink. Contributions will then be bound into a book for display. Gu will also select examples of the participants’ calligraphy for inclusion in a larger-scale artwork. For details and registration, please visit: <http://guwendahku.wordpress.com/>

The University Artists Scheme 2011-2012 is hosted by the Faculty of Arts and generously supported by the Daniel Chan Fund.

### HKU CONCERT SERIES

The Department of Music opened its first semester 2011-2012 with an evening performance entitled, *When Two Phoenixes Meet* (笙笙不息), featuring Loo Sze-wang (*sheng*) and Eri Ito (*sho*). The sound of the Chinese *sheng* (mouth-organ) is said to imitate the call of a phoenix, with its pipes symbolizing the wings of the immortal bird. Archaeological findings have shown that the instrument originates from the Shang dynasty (ca. 1500-1050 BC). Modelled on the *sheng*, the Japanese *sho* has a history dating back to the Nara period (710-794 AD), when the Chinese instrument was introduced into Japan together with other aspects of Tang culture. This public concert brought together two outstanding performers who combined their respective traditions with a passion for exploring new sonic frontiers.

Other highlights included a piano recital by award-winning Hong Kong pianist Sheng-zhong Wu, a performance by German cellist Friedrich Gauwerky, and the Hong Kong debut recital of Canadian pianist Lucas Wong. The Series also featured a recital by students in the Department's Advanced Music Performance class entitled, *Love Diaspora*, and the popular Christmas Concert performed by the University Chamber Choir and members of the Hong Kong Chamber Orchestra.

### RTHK'S THE BIG IDEA

Several members of the Faculty's teaching staff have been invited to participate in a new RTHK Radio 3 programme entitled *The Big Idea*. The programme is the brainchild of presenter, writer and award-winning documentary maker Vanessa Collingridge. Every week, she and her guests explore the history, meaning and significance of ideas in contemporary society. Invited members of the Faculty have included:

- Dr Chris Fraser and Dr Timothy O'Leary from the Department of Philosophy: "Happiness"
- Professor Douglas Kerr and Dr Julia Kuehn from the School of English: "The Novel"
- Dr Janet Borland and Dr Charles Schencking from the Department of History: "Earthquakes"
- Dr Chris Fraser and Professor Chad Hansen from the Department of Philosophy: "Daoism"
- Dr Page Richards from the School of English: "The History and Development of Theatre, Parts I & II"
- Dr Alexandra Cook from the Department of Philosophy: "Evolution – Part I: Mapping Mother Earth" and "Evolution – Part II"

For programme details and podcasts, please visit <http://programme.rthk.hk/>.

### PETER CHAN'S WU XIA

University Artist 2008-2010 and award-winning director Peter Ho-sun Chan joined cultural critic Dr Ma Ka Fai in a discussion of his latest film *Wu Xia* on September 30, 2011. The public forum was moderated by Dr Esther Cheung, Associate Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature, and covered issues ranging from trends and developments in Hong Kong – China co-productions to gender relations and the film's innovative perspective on martial arts.

A screening of *Wu Xia* was held before the forum. The film premiered at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival in the Midnight Screenings category and has been nominated for eleven awards at the 31st Hong Kong Film Awards which will take place at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre on April 15, 2012. The forum and screening were held with the support of the Daniel Chan Fund and Peter Chan's own company, WE Distribution.

### INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE

The Centre of Buddhist Studies, School of Modern Languages and Cultures, and the Faculty of Law jointly organized an inter-faith dialogue on religion and violence involving the Hong Kong representatives of three monotheist religions on September 15, 2011. Guest speakers Imam Muhammad Arshad of the Kowloon Mosque and Islamic Centre, Reverend Will Newman of St John's Cathedral, and Rabbi Asher Oser of Ohel Leah Synagogue came together in a discussion moderated by the Acting Director of the Centre of Buddhist Studies, Venerable Sik Hin Hung. They were joined by panelists Ms Uzma Ashraf of the Department of Law, and Dr C Roland Vogt and Mr Simone Raudino of the School of Modern Languages and Cultures.

### 1ST WINTER SCHOOL ON HEALTH COMMUNICATION

The Centre for the Humanities and Medicine held its 1st Winter School on Health Communication on December 17-18, 2011. Health Communication is a key research cluster of the Centre for the Humanities and Medicine (CHM), inaugurated in 2009 as a joint initiative between the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Medicine. The Winter School was specifically targeted at professional practitioners, healthcare educators, as well as researchers and others engaged in the field of healthcare communication. The various sessions were led by Professor Srikant Sarangi of Cardiff University, an internationally renowned scholar in the field of health communication, and Dr Olga Zayts of the Department of Linguistics.





## A RESPONSIBILITY TO GIVE BACK

Arts alumnus Kwan Chuk-fai has the kind of resume that might inspire current Arts students to see a bright future for themselves in the business world: more than 20 years in management, corporate communications and executive development with such firms as Hong Kong Telecom, Cathay Pacific and Hang Lung Properties, where he is currently Assistant Director. But corporate achievement is not the message he wants to convey to today's youth.



Mr Kwan Chuk-fai

Rather, he hopes they will draw from the other side of his experience – that of unpaid volunteer – to have a positive impact on society and one's personal development. Mr Kwan serves on such organisations as the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund, Independent Commission Against Corruption and Urban Renewal Strategic Review Steering Committee and helps sponsor children in rural China to get an education.

"All students pursue academic excellence. But I encourage them to open their eyes to the world outside their own and make an effort to help those who are in need," he says.

That means also opening their eyes to the advantages of their own situations.

Mr Kwan grew up in a 200-square-foot home that housed seven people but, as an active member of the HKU Student Union's Social Service Group, he was also exposed to the harsh living environments of boat people and those living in cage homes. "I realised my situation wasn't so bad – and I still had the capacity to support others," he says.

He has given his son a similar experience, taking him to remote villages in Guangxi to see the primitive conditions in which Mainland students must study. "It was no doubt also a good way for him to see how privileged he is in comparison," he says.

With privilege comes responsibility, though. Mr Kwan, who is also a member of the HKU Court, encourages students to embrace responsibility and cultivate understanding and compassion so their giving is sincere. "We have to do it with our hearts, not just with money," he adds.

## ARTS CAREER FORUM

Mr Andrew Fung, General Manager and Head of Treasury and Investment at Hang Seng Bank, Ms Leonie Ki, Non-Executive Director of New World Development and Managing Director of New World China Enterprises Projects, and Mr Jo Yan, Senior Vice President of Studio Distribution, Greater China, for Walt Disney, generously donated their time to take part in an Arts Career Forum on October 14, 2011. The Forum was moderated by Dr Yoshiko Nakano, Associate Dean for Outreach and Development, and was held as part of the Career Preparation Programme for Arts students co-organized by the Faculty and the Centre of Development and Resources for Students.

## 97TH INAUGURATION CEREMONY OF THE ARTS ASSOCIATION, H.K.U.S.U.

The Arts Association, H.K.U.S.U., held its 97th Inauguration Ceremony in the University's Rayson Huang Theatre on January 19, 2012. The 97th Cabinet, Session 2011-2012, was introduced during the ceremony under the name "Aqua Arts." The event included speeches by guest of honor and alumnus Dr Chor-yung Cheung, Professor Agnes Lam, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Student Affairs, Dr Albert Chau, Dean of Student Affairs, as well as by the outgoing and incoming Chairmen of the Arts Association. Distinguished guests present at the ceremony were Prof Kam Louie, Dean of Arts, Dr Yoshiko Nakano, Associate Dean for Outreach and Development, and Mr Henry Lo, Vice President of the Arts Alumni Association. Staff from the Centre of Development and Resources for Students as well as representatives from student associations also attended.

The Executive Committee members, Session 2011-2012, are Mr Yu King Shing, Roy (Chairman); Ms Au Wing Man, Joey (Vice-Chairman, Internal); Mr Yuen Kit Shing, Bill (Vice-Chairman, External); Ms Or Hoi Yan, Denise (General Secretary); Ms Kwok Yan Ying, Amy (Financial Secretary); Chan Hin Ka, Nicole (Welfare Secretary); and Mr Leung Cheuk Him, Stephen (Publication Secretary).

## THANK YOU

We would like to thank all the staff, students, and alumni who sent in their comments and participated in the Faculty Review exercise carried out in December 2011. We are grateful for your support and views that can only help the Faculty build on what it has achieved so far to maintain its position as one of the finest arts faculties in the region and internationally.

**MARCH 2012**

Hispanic Month  
School of Modern Languages and Cultures

**MARCH 16-20, 2012**

Asian Cinema Studies Societies Conference  
Asian Cinema & Media  
Department of Comparative Literature

**MARCH 21, 2012**

Young Musicians Performance Platform Series,  
Concert IV  
The Composers' Guild Ensemble  
HKU Concert Series – Department of Music

**MARCH 22, 2012**

Writer-in-Residence Public Lecture by Su Tong  
School of Chinese

**MARCH 23, 2012**

Arts Career Forum: Enhancing your Career Prospects

**APRIL 2012**

Japan Month  
School of Modern Languages and Cultures

**APRIL 3, 2012**

The Rayson Huang Lecture 2012  
Prof Laurence Dreyfus, University of Oxford  
Department of Music

**APRIL 11, 2012**

History in the Making Public Lecture Series  
Prof Peter McPhee, The University of Melbourne

**APRIL 11, 2012**

Pierrot Lunaire, 100 Years On  
Hong Kong New Music Ensemble  
HKU Concert Series – Department of Music

**APRIL 18, 2012**

Tracing Schnittke  
Violinist Euna Kim and Pianist Evelyn Chang  
HKU Concert Series – Department of Music

**APRIL 22, 2012**

Arts Farewell to the Main Building  
A New Chapter in Our History

**APRIL 27, 2012**

International Conference on Pain, Suffering and Health  
Centre for the Humanities and Medicine

**JUNE 1, 2012**

Academic English Symposium  
Research into Practice in the Four-year Curriculum  
Centre for Applied English Studies

**JUNE 9, 2012**

Bard College Conservatory Orchestra Performance

**JUNE 25 TO AUGUST 18, 2012**

Summer Institute in the Arts and Humanities

**Arts Faculty Newsletter** <http://arts.hku.hk/newsletter>

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