

For Immediate Release

Fruitful Discussions and New Partnerships Bring Hong Kong International Cultural Summit 2026 to a Successful Close



(24 March 2026, Hong Kong) Bringing together nearly 2,000 delegates from around the world, the Hong Kong International Cultural Summit 2026 (HKICS or the Summit), hosted by the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCD or the Authority), concluded successfully yesterday following inspiring dialogue held across the West Kowloon Cultural District (WestK) from 22 to 23 March.

Under the theme “A New Era: Reimagining Community Through the Arts”, this year’s Summit gathered close to 30 eminent speakers from 14 countries and regions for fruitful discussions on community engagement and sustainable development. Together with the related activities staged as part of the Summit, a total of over 6,000 people from Hong Kong, the Chinese Mainland, Asia and beyond participated. The Summit also attracted over 630,000 views via various livestreaming platforms globally.

Bernard Charnwut Chan, Chairman of the Board of the WKCD, expressed his appreciation to all speakers, partners and participants whose contributions brought this year’s Summit to a tremendous success. “The insights shared by cultural leaders throughout the Hong Kong International Cultural Summit 2026 demonstrate a genuine commitment to keeping arts and cultural institutions connected to the communities. The success of this Summit opens

a new chapter of meaningful collaborations with our international partners to foster global cultural development. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all participants and look forward to building on this momentum as we work together to create a more connected, resilient and inclusive cultural ecosystem for Hong Kong and beyond.”

WKCD A boasts 46 global partnerships with the addition of 12 new MOUs



Global arts and cultural leaders and delegates gathered at the MOU Signing Ceremony on 22 March 2026

This year’s Summit marked a key milestone for WKCD A with the addition of 12 MOUs covering diverse areas, including programme development, talent exchange and professional training, increasing the total number of MOUs and collaborative agreements to 46 to date.

Key new partnerships*:

- WKCD A Performing Arts Division is forging strategic alliances with five distinguished groups and institutions to strengthen programme development, talent exchange and professional training, in preparation for the impending opening of the WestK Performing Arts Centre (WestK PAC) in 2027.
- The Hong Kong Palace Museum (HKPM) will collaborate with Museums Victoria, Australia and Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Germany to co-organise exhibitions. The HKPM, the Palace Museum and Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Germany express their intention to co-curate a touring exhibition for presentation at the Palace Museum in Beijing (2027), the Hong Kong Palace Museum (2027-28) and Dresden in Germany (2029).
- Organised under the WestK Academy established in late 2025 with the aim of advancing WKCD A’s mission to foster global connectivity, nurture talent and build professional capacity across the local and global arts and culture sector:

- WKCDA will partner with China Association of Auctioneers to strengthen talent development and promote professional exchange between Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland art market.
- Agreements signed with overseas cultural organisations and universities will support the launch of a series of professional training courses and the pilot Artist-in-Residence Programme.

*Please see appendix for the full list of new MOUs signed between WKCDA and its international partners.

Fruitful panel discussions explored the future of sustainable, community-centred arts and cultural institutions

Plenary Session: Multi-disciplinary Arts Districts in the 21st Century – Challenges and Opportunities



Speakers and moderator of the Plenary Session of the HKICS 2026

The Summit's **Plenary Session**, moderated by **Betty Fung**, CEO of WKCDA, examined the fast-changing arts and cultural landscape spurred by globalisation and technological advancement which necessitates more flexible spaces and facilities to accommodate cross-disciplinary and cross-media creations. Speakers, including **Elaine Bedell OBE**, Chief Executive, Southbank Centre, United Kingdom, **Adrian Ellis**, Chair, Global Cultural Districts Network, **Douglas Gautier**, CEO, Royal Arts Complex, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and **Dr Mariët Westermann**, Director and CEO, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum & Foundation, United States, shared their experience and insightful views on whether multidisciplinary arts

and cultural districts can achieve sustainable development while meeting the needs of the sector, as well as fulfilling their mission of inspiring and connecting communities.

The discussion highlighted the importance for cultural institutions to measure their impact on local economies, including but not limited to job creation, consumption and social cohesion; as well as the continued need for live events, technology integration, and social media engagement to attract young audiences. It concluded with a call for collaborative efforts to engage diverse communities and reimagine cultural districts.

Performing Arts Panel Discussion: Arts, Community and Leadership – Reframing the Relationship



Speakers and moderator of Performing Arts Panel Discussion: Arts, Community and Leadership – Reframing the Relationship of the HKICS 2026

Moderated by **Paul Tam**, Executive Director, Performing Arts of WKCD, the Performing Arts Panel discussion brought together panellists including **Sir Alistair Spalding CBE**, Artistic Director and Co-Chief Executive, Sadler’s Wells, United Kingdom, **Rachid Ouramdane**, Director, Chaillot – National Theatre of Dance, Choreographer, Dancer, France; **Toufic Maatouk**, Artistic Programming Advisor, Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation, Conductor, Musicologist, United Arab Emirates, and **Sasapin Siritwanij**, Artistic Director, Bangkok International Performing Arts Meeting, Thailand. The session highlighted the evolving role of performing arts centres as hubs for creativity, community engagement, and civic involvement. As performing arts institutions evolve from traditional venues into civic hubs that foster creativity, learning and community engagement, the speakers offered timely insights into how organisations can reframe their relationships with artists, audiences, funders and communities to remain relevant in a period of significant transformation.

M+ Panel Discussion (I) – Building a Community for the Museum



Speakers and moderator of M+ Panel Discussion (I) – Building a Community for the Museum

The first panel of M+, **Building a Community for the Museum**, examined how museums develop strategies to build and sustain meaningful relationships with diverse audiences. With a focus on audience engagement and community building in contemporary museum practice, the panel, moderated by **Suhanya Raffel**, Museum Director, M+, brought together **Jochen Volz**, General Director, Pinacoteca de São Paulo, Brazil; **Dr Manal Ataya**, Advisor, Sharjah Museums Authority, United Arab Emirates; **Fatima Bintou Rassoul Sy**, Director of Programmes, RAW Material Company, Senegal; and **Karen Smith**, Head, Academic Programmes, De Ying Foundation, China, to discuss how institutions can develop inclusive strategies to connect with new audiences, rebuild relationships with local communities and strengthen long-term audience participation.

M+ Panel Discussion (II) – The Positioning and Value of Museum Learning



Speakers and moderator of M+ Panel Discussion (II) – The Positioning and Value of Museum Learning

The following M+ panel, moderated by **Dr András Szántó**, New York-based cultural strategy consultant and author, delved into how evolving approaches to museum learning are reshaping the relationship between audiences, objects and artistic practices, with panelists **Christophe Cherix**, David Rockefeller Director, The Museum of Modern Art, United States; **Seb Chan**, Director and CEO, Australian Center for the Moving Image, Australia; **Devyani Saltzman**, Director for Arts, Barbican Centre, United Kingdom; and **Dr Carol Yinghua Lu**, Director, Inside-Out Art Museum, China. It explored how learning-led approaches can empower audiences and support more participatory forms of cultural engagement across institutional operations.

HKPM Panel Discussion (I) – Knowing Our Audiences: Shaping Community-Centred Museums



Speakers and moderator of the HKPM Panel Discussion (I) – Knowing Our Audiences: Shaping Community-Centred Museums

At the HKPM, the first panel discussion examined how museums can develop a deeper understanding of their audiences and translate these insights into inclusive visitor experiences. The discussion was moderated by **Dr Louis Ng**, Museum Director, HKPM, and joined by **Lynley Crosswell**, CEO and Director, Museums Victoria, Australia, **Dr Sharon Shaffer**, Principal, Early Learning in Museums, United States, and **Dr Hiroyuki Shimatani**, Executive Director, The Museum of the Imperial Collections, Sannomaru Shozokan, Japan. As museums continue to respond to changing social trends and technological developments, the speakers reflected how audience research can inform exhibition planning, programming and outreach strategies to better resonate with diverse communities that they serve.

HKPM Panel Discussion (II) – Entrepreneurship and Innovations in Museums



Speakers and moderator of the HKPM Panel Discussion (II): Entrepreneurship and Innovations in Museums

The second HKPM panel broadened the conversation by looking at how museums are increasingly adopting entrepreneurial mindsets to evolve their operations and respond to emerging opportunities. Moderator **Lou Wei**, Executive Deputy Director, The Palace Museum, China, sat together with **Dr Chu Xiaobo**, Director, Shanghai Museum, China, **Dr Bernd Ebert**, Director General, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Germany, and **Manuel Rabaté**, Chief Executive and Director, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, India, to discuss how innovation and cross-sector collaboration can support long-term institutional sustainability. The discussion also underscored how these approaches can deepen public engagement by enabling more tailored and unconventional visitor experiences.

WKCDCA extends its heartfelt gratitude to the sponsors whose generous support made the Hong Kong International Cultural Summit 2026 possible. These include the **Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau of the HKSAR Government**; **Cathay**, Major Sponsor of the Summit and WKCDCA's Travel Partner; **The Peninsula Hong Kong**, Hotel Partner, **HKT**, Technology Partner, and **Volvo**, Limousine Partner of the Summit respectively. **South China Morning Post**, and **The Art Newspaper** are the Media Partners of the Summit.

The Authority collaborated with the Hong Kong Tourism Board, the Information Services Department and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department of the HKSAR Government and Art Basel to promote both the Summit and Hong Kong Art Week. This concerted effort aims to elevate Hong Kong's international profile as a cultural hub and premier cultural tourism destination.

For details, please refer to the Summit's website: www.culturalsummit.hk

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Notes to Editor

Appendix 1 – Global arts and cultural institutions signing MOUs with West Kowloon Cultural District Authority

Appendix 2 – Highlighted Programmes of WestK in Hong Kong Art Week 2026

Appendix 3 – Insights from speakers and moderators on the HKICS 2026

Appendix 4 – Hong Kong International Cultural Summit 2026 – Image sheet

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About the West Kowloon Cultural District (WestK)

WestK is one of the largest and most ambitious cultural hubs in the world and Hong Kong's new cultural tourism landmark, spanning 40 hectares alongside Victoria Harbour. WestK comprises a mix of landmark arts and cultural facilities, including world-class museums M+ and the Hong Kong Palace Museum, intricately designed performing arts venues the Xiqu Centre and Freespace, the 11-hectare Art Park with a waterfront promenade, and the upcoming WestK Performing Arts Centre.

Hosting over 1,000 exhibitions, performances, programmes, and events each year, WestK provides a vital platform for both emerging and established artists. WestK welcomes more than 10 million visitors each year, evolving as the international cultural brand of Hong Kong and strengthening the city's strategic role as an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange.