

For Immediate Release

Hong Kong International Cultural Summit 2026 Gathers Over 1,000 Global Arts and Cultural Leaders at WestK, Sparking Dialogues on Community Engagement and Sustainable Development



Summit speakers and MOU signatories from global arts and cultural institutions, along with representatives from the WKCDA, gather at Xiqu Centre for the Hong Kong International Cultural Summit 2026

(23 March 2026, Hong Kong) Arts and cultural visionaries and thought leaders worldwide gathered today at the West Kowloon Cultural District (WestK) for the second edition of the Hong Kong International Cultural Summit (HKICS or the Summit), the first international event of the Hong Kong Art Week 2026, hosted by the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA or the Authority). The Summit brings together close to 30 eminent speakers from 14 countries and regions, including heads of major cultural districts and top international arts and cultural institutions to engage in constructive dialogue and exchange on key issues affecting the future development of arts and culture globally.

The Opening, Plenary Session and the new Performing Arts Panel Discussion took place this morning at the Xiqu Centre, the flagship performing arts venue at WestK, bringing together over 1,000 delegates from Hong Kong, Chinese Mainland, Asia and beyond. Addressing the Opening were Rosanna Law, Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and Bernard Charnwut Chan, Chairman of the Board of WKCDA. Other guests include Lin Zhan, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Publicity, Cultural and Sports Affairs of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR, along with senior officials from cultural authorities in the Chinese Mainland, Macao Special Administrative Region and overseas; as well as consul-general of various countries in Hong Kong.

Bernard Charnwut Chan, Chairman of the Board of WKCDA, reaffirmed the Authority's dedication to fostering cultural dialogues and partnerships globally, positioning WestK as a leading arts and cultural hub and strengthening Hong Kong's position as an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange. He said, "The Hong Kong International Cultural Summit serves as a vital platform for reimagining how global arts and cultural institutions can foster community connections and social cohesion in today's rapidly evolving landscape. This year's theme, '**A New Era: Reimagining Community through the Arts**', reflects a global shift as cultural districts and museums move beyond exhibitions and performances to weave creativity into society by reimagining their relationship with communities. Through this Summit, we are forging new global partnerships and sparking inspiration that will advance sustainable cultural development both in Hong Kong and internationally."

Rosanna Law, Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism of the HKSAR Government, said, "The Hong Kong SAR Government will proactively align with the national 15th Five-Year Plan, and we are drawing up Hong Kong's first Five-Year Plan, an important element of which will no doubt be facilitating greater arts and cultural exchange between the Chinese Mainland and overseas countries. This Summit, an integral part of that proud mission, invites us to explore how we can respond to change, and how we can ensure that arts continue to bring people together, no matter how communities themselves may transform."

A strong start to the HKICS 2026 as Plenary Session and Performing Arts Panel charting new directions for innovation, community building and cultural leadership

The theme of the HKICS 2026, "**A New Era: Reimagining Community through the Arts**", centres on the integration of sustainable development within the arts and cultural sector and explores how cultural practices can enhance public engagement and foster social cohesion.

The Plenary Session took place this morning at the Xiqu Centre following the Opening. In anticipation of the impending opening of the WestK Performing Arts Centre (WestK PAC) in 2027, this year's Summit features a new panel discussion dedicated to the performing arts.

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.

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

Following the Plenary Session, the Summit's first panel, **Performing Arts Panel Discussion: Arts, Community and Leadership – Reframing the Relationship**, explored how arts leaders are responding to a rapidly changing cultural landscape marked by rising public expectations and increasing budgetary pressures. Moderated by **Paul Tam**, Executive Director, Performing Arts of WKCD, the 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 Siriwanij**, Artistic Director, Bangkok International Performing Arts Meeting, Thailand. 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 redefine their relationships with artists, audiences, funders and communities to remain relevant in a period of significant transformation.

Four panels at the Hong Kong Palace Museum (HKPM) and M+ probe into the future of sustainable, community--centred museums

At the HKPM, two sessions will explore new ideas and practices that position museums as spaces for community building and entrepreneurial experimentation. Global leaders will discuss how museums can lead and innovate to ensure long-term financial sustainability and continued relevance to their audiences.

At M+, two sessions will address the challenges museums face today and the need to adopt new learning approaches that prioritise curiosity, plurality, interactivity and social engagement over passive knowledge transmission. The first panel will focus on how museum learning can transform an institution, while the second will consider the work of building community and what meaningful audience connection looks like today.

Launching Hong Kong Art Week: The Summit provides exclusive access to HKPM, M+, WestK Performing Arts programmes and other cultural highlights

The Summit is the first international event launching the Hong Kong Art Week 2026, coinciding with the vibrant celebrations of Art Basel Hong Kong, Art Central, and other major arts and cultural spectacles. The Summit participants can immerse themselves in the rich cultural tapestry of Hong Kong, enjoying complimentary access and exclusive tours at the HKPM and M+. They can also participate in the annual WestK FunFest by WestK Performing Arts, where they can enjoy the large-scale outdoor art installation at the Harbourside East Lawn, Art Park, along with visits to other prominent cultural institutions and events that showcase the city's artistic spirit.

WKCDCA extends its heartfelt gratitude to the sponsors whose generous support makes 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 as well as WKCDCA's Exclusive Travel Partner; **The Peninsula Hong Kong**, Hotel Partner, **HKT**, Technology Partner, and **Volvo**, Limousine Partner of the Summit. **South China Morning Post**, and **The Art Newspaper** are the Media Partners of the Summit.

The Authority collaborates with the Hong Kong Tourism Board, the Information Services Department and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department of the HKSAR Government and Art Basel in publicising 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.

Live streaming is arranged to enable local and global participants to participate in the Summit online. 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.