



▲ Ning Po College

# Starting Young: Hong Kong Schools Get Creative

▼ NPC Art Festival's Visual Art Exhibition featuring students' work.  
— Michele's photo



▲ Lee on the guzheng. — Michele's photo



▲ Yu and Chan create paint-blowing art. — Michele's photo



▲ Yu's artwork. — Michele's photo

FOR a long time, the international city of Hong Kong had focused its energy and resources on maintaining its status as a booming financial hub – leaving little room for the art scene to flourish. That's all about to change though. Projects like the West Kowloon Cultural District and the Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre provide a great opportunity for budding artists to stretch their creativity. On a micro-level, local schools are encouraging their students to discover their inner artist too, and Ning Po College is one of these pioneering schools.

IN recent years, organisations, the education system, and even the Hong Kong government have recognised the importance of nurturing creative talent on a local level. The Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre (JCCAC) is a registered charity that opened in 2008, and provides an interactive platform for artists and the public through interesting arts and cultural events. Their aim is to build a creative and civilised society by sowing the seeds of increased public awareness, participation and enjoyment of the arts in Hong Kong. The Government is behind this movement as well, and has established the Consultative Committee on the Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of the West Kowloon Cultural District in April of 2006. The West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) is the Government's investment to meet the long-term infrastructure needs of the arts and cultural sector,

which they view as "a vital part of any world-class city's economic and social fabric."

Earlier this month, Ning Po College (NPC) hosted its fourth Annual Ning Po Arts Festival. The Art Market is one of the highlights at the festival, and was held in the auditorium this year during the students' lunch break from May 6 – 10. Ivonne Nee is the NPC's Assisting Principal, and responsible for the extra-curricular activities in the school. "We aim to provide opportunities for students to have a closer encounter with various arts," she explained. Nee recalled that when the school first organised this festival, there were only a handful of students who participated, and some of the musical acts were performed by the teachers or other staff. Things were quite different this year. The NPC Art Market was packed with excited students, and all the stalls and musical performances were done by the school's

students themselves – the teachers and staff merely helped coordinate the event from the sidelines, while the students took center stage. "This is a great platform for the students to engage in an arts exchange," smiled Nee.

This year at the NPC Art Market, musical acts included a solo singer, a piano duet, and even a guzheng performance. Amy Lee is an S.1 student at NPC, and she learned to play the guzheng two years ago. When asked why she chose to learn this instrument, Lee replied, "I really like the way it sounds, and there are so many different techniques involved." After a short pause, she cleverly added, "It's also more competitive" – implying that not many people know how to play the guzheng in comparison with other instruments per say.

Jenny Yu and Venus Chan, both S.4 students at NPC, manned the paint-blowing stall at the Art

Market. They take art classes outside of school and wanted to share what they learned with their classmates. "When it comes to art, some people don't think they're good with their hands," explained Yu, "that's why we want to introduce this different way of creating art to them." Many students flocked to their stall to learn how to make their own paint-blowing painting. Another stall that was very popular among the students was the Art Club's bracelet-knitting table – the club's S.4 students Ka-yun Wu and Hiulam Chan even knitted a couple of bracelets for ES! The Math Club's paper-folding lesson was also very interesting, and they taught other students to fold various puzzles.

What was most refreshing about this event was to see how much the students enjoyed each other's creative talents. Events like these give students a chance to take more initiative, and in this case, they rose to the occasion.



▲ Soloist at the NPC Art Market. — Michele's photo



▲ Ms Chan and students try their hand at bracelet knitting. — Michele's photo

The WKCD aimed to explore the boundaries of public space in Hong Kong by hosting the Freespace Fest last year – an event that lasted for two days. This was part of the government's initiative to provide a more readily available and accessible platform for artists and spectators alike to engage in art and cultural exchange.



—WKCD photos

## GLOSSARY

1. flourish (v. 繁榮)
2. budding (adj. 新進的)
3. interactive platform (phr. 互動平台)
4. vital (adj. 至關重要)
5. imply (v. 暗示)
6. flock (v. 成群地去)
7. initiative (n. 主動的行動)
8. occasion (n. 場合)

\*Big words and Amazing phrase(s) are published on ES16.