

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY, HONG KONG BRANCH

NEWSLETTER

20th June, 2002

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Council members 2002-2003

Dr. Patrick Hase, President	Mr. Robert Nield, Hon. Treasurer & Vice President
Dr. Elizabeth Sinn, Vice President	Rev. Carl Smith, Hon. Vice President
Mr. Peter Stuckey, Hon. Secretary	Miss Julia Chan, Hon. Librarian
Dr. Janet Lee Scott, Hon. Activities Co-ordinator	Dr. Peter Halliday, Hon. Editor of Journals
Mrs. Valery Garrett, Member	Mrs. May Holdsworth, Member
Mr. Tim Ko, Member	Dr. Joseph Ting, Member
Mr. Jason Wordie, Member	Mr. Robert Horsnell, Co-opted Member
Dr. Dan Waters, Immediate Past President	

Visit to the Kingdom of Bhutan, 8th to 19th February, 2002

Twenty-seven society members journeyed to the Land of the Thunder Dragon, after a stop-over in Bangkok to prepare for the very early flight to Paro, during which Mount Everest was seen. The first glimpse of Bhutan was all that everyone had hoped for, clear air, blue skies and towering mountain scenery. We quickly found the two coaches that were to be our homes for the next week, and we were off to see Paro museum, a couple of dzongs, village houses with eye-catching symbolic paintings, and the local bazaar, before arriving at our hotel for the night.

The rest of the days followed a similar pattern, with a lot of travel as we traversed most of the length of this small Kingdom, over twisting narrow roads, while we enjoyed the most spectacular scenery including frequent glimpses of snow capped mountains in the distance. A full description of the visit will appear in the next edition of the Journal, but here are a few of the things we will remember; the sedate picnic lunches prepared for us by our traveling cooks, the wood burning stoves in the bedrooms that had to be relit in the early hours of the morning, the crystal clear rivers bridged by swaying suspension bridges and the Society members who dived in to cool off, the magnificent dzongs, the national dress worn by all Bhutanese, the opportunity of going into village houses and the friendly, smiling inhabitants, the frequent photo stops, our leader's bell, his wealth of knowledge which he imparted to us, the long suffering guides – all of these and hundreds more memories of a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Many thanks from all the travelers to Brian and Felicity for their efforts, which made this visit so special for us all. A second visit is being planned to eastern Bhutan at Chinese New Year next year.

Over the last few months we have enjoyed a whole series of excellent lectures and visits. On Friday 15th February the Society had the pleasure of hearing from long established local dealer Jonathan Wattis, who spoke on *China and the Pearl River Delta in European Printed Maps, 1584-1855*. Starting in the sixteenth century, with some of the earliest Western printed maps of China, Jonathan traced the development of the mapping of China and the Pearl River Delta up to the nineteenth century. As promised by the title, the talk was very well illustrated with many early and unusual maps, including those by Abraham Ortelius, Martini, du Halde, and John Speed. This gave a fascinating insight into this aspect of Chinese studies by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable collector.

On April 12th, our President, Dr Patrick Hase, gave a very well-attended talk at City Hall on the Smaller New Territories Market-Towns, and, the following day, April 13th, he led a group of about 45 people to Ha Tsuen Market, and a few places nearby. So well-subscribed was this visit that it was repeated on June 1st, when another 45 people took part. We visited the fine Ancestral Hall of the Tang Clan of Ha Tsuen, and the adjacent superb, but sadly run-down, offices of the Clan Militia, and then went to see the village school, the market temple, one of the old shops in the market, and the premises of the old Oil Press business in the town, which were opened for us courtesy of the clan elders. Then we had a quick stop at the beautifully restored Hau Wong Temple at Tung Tau, before finishing the visit at the lovely Tin Hau Temple at Sha Kong Miu, facing the totally unspoiled Deep Bay coastline. A marvellous day, on both occasions. "One of the most memorable RAS days ever". Many of those who came on the trip echoed the President in hoping that many of the Ha Tsuen buildings could be preserved by the Antiquities and Monuments Office (five of whose staff joined the first trip) as a Heritage Trail in the future.

On May 3rd our Immediate Past President, Dr Dan Waters, and the Catholic Diocesan Archivist, Dr Fr Louis Ha, gave a joint lecture on "Hong Kong's Lighthouses and the Men who Manned Them", to another packed-out City Hall Extension Activities Room. Louis gave us a detailed history of our lighthouses, when they were built and by whom, while Dan spoke on the Lighthouse Keepers who had manned them before automation some 20 years ago. Both speakers were excellent, and the audience left knowing a lot more about this subject than they had when they arrived! We were very gratified that a substantial number of Marine Department staff from the Aids to Navigation Section of the Marine Department (including a number who had started their career as Lighthouse Keepers) came to the lecture. The next day over 90 Members and their guests visited the Waglan Island Lighthouse. The Marine Department not only helpfully opened the Lighthouse to us, but also turned the light on to greet us as our ship approached! This was a most memorable day - the weather was beautiful and crystal clear, with only a gentle breeze, and the 1891 Lighthouse was a fascinating place, as were the old quarters alongside. A number of staff from the Hong Kong Museum of History joined us on this visit, which was particularly pleasing.

Another spectacularly fine day came on 18th May, when 40 Members and guests visited North Sai Kung. We first of all stopped at the Sheung Yiu Village Museum, where our President, Dr Hase, gave a brief talk on the village, its holdings of village furniture and the Lime-Kiln just outside the village which, in the past, provided the village with most of its income. We also had time for a quick look at the substantial colony of bats in the village gatehouse, lovingly guarded by the Museum staff! We then went on to Uk Tau, where we had a picnic lunch in Branch Councillor May Holdsworth's lovely weekend cottage - a very fine traditional New Territories village house. There, Dr Hase gave a brief talk on the library of books that had been found in that very house some 20 years ago. From there we drove to Pak Sha O, a superb, and quite unspoiled village, where most of the old houses are being used as weekend cottages or homes by a group of country-loving expatriates. In the village, Tom Goetz, a member of the Society, welcomed us to his house, and

showed us his lovely collection of traditional Hakka farming equipment, while Dr Hase gave yet another brief talk in the late nineteenth century Catholic Church in the village (this village was almost entirely Catholic from the late nineteenth century) on the church, and on Catholicism in the area. The church had been kindly opened for us by staff of the Catholic Scouts Association, which uses the Church today as a camp-site. Despite steady light drizzle, the day was a great success, and everyone who came on the trip enjoyed it thoroughly.

On 7th June, Dr Lindsay Porter gave an excellent presentation at City Hall on the Marine Mammals of Hong Kong. Dr Porter enlightened us on the very large number of species of Marine Mammals known to live in Hong Kong waters, and then zeroed in on the Pink Dolphins, explaining the size of the local population, their social characteristics, and the problems they face as a result of increasing degradation of local waters in the western part of the area from industrial pollution flowing down from the Pearl River Delta. Luckily, the population has, so far, remained steady at about 200 individuals, or a little less, but Dr Porter is concerned that the signs suggest that this may change for the worse in the near future, as pollution is causing a decrease in successful breeding. Those Members who have been out "Dolphin Watching" with Dr Porter on one of the several RAS trips to the waters off Lantau will know how fascinating and charming these animals are, and this talk was a very useful addition to these trips, giving us more of the academic background to them.

On the same day, 7th June, the Society jointly sponsored a talk at the Chinese University of Hong Kong with the Department of Japanese Studies there. Professor Ian Nish gave a lecture on "Anglo-Japanese Relations in the Twentieth Century". Some six Members were able to make the journey out to Sha Tin to hear a very interesting talk, which centred on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of the early twentieth century, and its eventual collapse. Afterwards, we joined Prof. Nish and his wife for lunch at the University Staff Club.

On Friday, 14th June, Council member and local historian Jason Wordie gave an interesting talk on the lesser-known places in Hong Kong Island and the history behind some of the people who lived there. We learnt about the populations of Portuguese, Eurasians and White Russians who were very much a part of Hong Kong life until the 1950s, when the majority of them left Hong Kong to emigrate overseas. See "RAS Business" for details of his recently published book *Streets: Exploring Hong Kong Island*.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Saturday, 10 th August	Local Visit/Talk	Da Qin – An Imperial Christian site of the Tang Dynasty
Saturday, 31 st August	Local Visit	Hong Kong Catholic Cathedral and Diocesan Archives
Friday, 20 th September	City Hall Lecture	The Development of Cemeteries in Hong Kong: 1841 - 1941
September 27 th – 2 nd October	Overseas Visit	Angkor Wat and Saigon
Friday, October 4 th	City Hall Lecture	Hong Kong's Justice System

Local Visit

Saturday, 10th August

**Da Qin – an Imperial Christian site of the Tang Dynasty
Talk by Martin Palmer at Fung Ping Shan Museum, Hong Kong University**

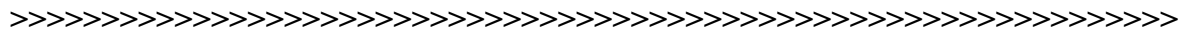
For some four hundred years we have known that there was a Church in China during the Tang dynasty. However it was assumed that this was an expatriate church, primarily serving the needs of foreigners who were Christians, such as the Persians, Sogdians and Tibetans. In 1998 a discovery of an extant Tang dynasty Christian building and site radically changed this concept, challenging traditional assumptions about Christianity, and about China.

Fifty miles south west of Xian, the Da Qin - meaning ‘Of the West’ - site was found with an intact pagoda containing the two earliest Christian statues ever found in China. But more significantly, the site is within the sacred compound of what was the Imperial Ancestral Shrine of the Tang Dynasty, and which was also the greatest Taoist Academy China ever had. Lou Guan Tai is where, according to legend, Lao Tzu wrote the Tao Te Ching (The Sacred Scripture of Taoism). It was by Imperial Decree that the Christians were given this site - an astonishing statement of the significance of Christianity in the Tang dynasty.

Now a full-scale excavation of this, the oldest Christian site yet found in China, is planned in association with Beijing University. Martin Palmer will tell the story of the discovery of the site - including Japanese spy maps and 115-year-old Buddhist nuns - as well as explore the importance of the discovery for understanding both Christianity and China.

Martin Palmer is Secretary General of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, founded by HRH Prince Philip in 1995 to work on environmental and conservation projects with the world's major faiths. He is author of over fifty books, including many translations of Chinese classics, and is a regular presenter on BBC World Service Radio. He is the newly appointed International Consultant to the Da Qin Foundation Hong Kong, which is undertaking the work on the site.

The talk will be held in the lecture room of the Fung Ping Shan Museum. It will be followed by a visit to the galleries where we will see some Nestorian crosses from a collection acquired by Mr. F. A. Nixon, who was a founder member of the RAS Hong Kong Branch.



Local Visit followed by lunch

Saturday, 31st August

Hong Kong Catholic Cathedral and Diocesan Archives

Traditionally, cathedrals were situated in the centre of a town, dominating the town square where people gathered not only for religious functions but also for social and commercial activities. These century old churches are found everywhere in Europe, bearing witness to the past; many of them have their aged appearances defaced with scars resulting from natural disasters and human calamities.

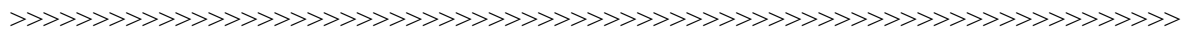
However, all the above do not apply to the Hong Kong Catholic Cathedral which was situated on the margin of the town centre. Built in neo-Gothic style in 1888, the structure is modest in

Kong as a trading centre had attracted traders of various backgrounds, creating the need for their own special cemeteries.

As cremation was not popular with the Chinese population - at least before the Second World War - burial was the standard form of disposing of the dead. A large number of cemeteries designated for the Chinese have been established since the 1870s. However, by 1941, with rapid urban expansion, these cemeteries had largely been cleared and most had disappeared without a trace.

The talk will be illustrated with slides.

Mr. Tim Ko is a Council Member of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society and a keen local history reader. He has conducted numerous studies and has written several books in the Chinese language on local history. Tim is co-author with Jason Wordie of *Ruins of War* about the World War II battlefield sites in Hong Kong.

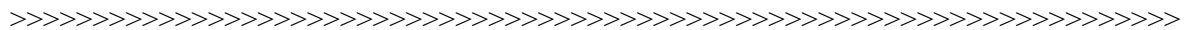


Overseas Visit

Friday 27th Sept. - Wed 2nd Oct. 2002

Visit to Angkor Wat and Saigon

Dr Patrick Hase will lead a tour to Cambodia and Vietnam between Friday September 27th and Wednesday October 2nd, 2002 inclusive (the tour will last six full days, of which three are holidays, and three are working days). The tour will visit the spectacular remains of Angkor Thom, the capital of the Khmer Empire in the days of its greatest extent and glory, centred on the twelfth century, when the greatest of the Angkor Thom temples, Angkor Wat, was built. The tour will spend two full days, and two half days, in Angkor Thom. Following the time in Angkor, the tour will go to Saigon, the capital of French Cochinchina and later of South Vietnam, where it will spend one full day plus an evening. This is an excellent opportunity of seeing two significant places at one go!



RAS BUSINESS

Extraordinary General Meeting to be held at 6 p.m. on Friday October 4th, 2002

An Extraordinary General Meeting will be held at 6 p.m. in the Extension Activities Room, 8/F, City Hall High Block (prior to a scheduled talk) to vote on the following amendments to our constitution:-

1. Addition of New Category of Membership: Honorary Institutional Membership.
2. Alteration of Permissible Date for Annual General Meeting.

Two papers, giving full details of these proposed amendments, will be included in our August newsletter.

Change of Honorary Activities Co-ordinator

Many Members have commented on the excellence of our programme of Visits and Lectures. Indeed, for most of our Members it is the programme of Visits and Lectures for which they join the Society, and stay as Members of it. Producing a worthwhile programme is a very difficult and heavy task, involving many meetings, and long hours of telephoning and networking. The post of Honorary Activities Co-ordinator is, indeed, perhaps the heaviest and most problematic of all the posts on Council. Mrs Valery Garrett has been our Honorary Activities Co-ordinator for four and a half years now, and the very high quality of our activities programme is due to a very large extent to her.

Valery has now decided that "four and a half years is enough", and that she needs a break from this heavy responsibility. Council has, with considerable regret, accepted her resignation, with effect from 1st July 2002. The President and Council both wish to take this opportunity of thanking her for everything she has done for us. Indeed, she deserves the thanks and praise of all our Members for what she has done for us all. The President and Council are glad to inform Members that Valery has agreed to continue to serve as a Councillor, and she will still sit on the Activities Committee of Council as an ordinary committee member.

Valery will be succeeded as Hon. Activities Co-ordinator by Dr Janet Lee Scott, who will be assisted by Mr. Tim Ko as Deputy Hon. Activities Co-ordinator.

A full programme of events for the autumn is already well in hand, and details will be announced in the upcoming Newsletters.

Views on Annual General Meeting

Council would welcome Members' comments on the Society's Annual General Meetings.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Society held at the end of March this year, only 61 Members attended, out of a total Membership resident in Hong Kong of 492 (12%). This is, clearly, a very small percentage of the Membership. Council hopes that Members will write in to the President, Dr. Patrick Hase, or else telephone him (2658-6529, before 12th July or after 28th August), or E-mail him (at pphase@hkusua.hku.hk) with their views. In particular, Council would welcome comments as to why Members chose not to attend the AGM.

Council is aware that one problem is the coincidence of the AGM date with the Hong Kong Rugby Sevens Tournament. An amendment to the Society's Constitution is being recommended, to allow the Society to hold its AGMs in early April as well as late March, so that, for the future, the weekend of the Sevens can be avoided, as well as the weekend of Easter. This apart, Council would welcome comments on the venue, format, notice arrangements, and any other factors which led members to choose not to attend the AGM this year.

Comments, please, by the end of October 2002.

New Policy - Priority for Visits Organised by the Society

Recently, comments have been heard from a number of Non-Members of the Society that they see no need to become Members of the Society, since they can attend all the Lectures put on by the

Society and go on all the Visits organised by the Society without becoming Members of the Society and paying any annual fee, and thus they cannot see any advantage in becoming a Member. This is because the Lectures of the Society at City Hall are co-sponsored by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and are thus designed to be open to members of the public, a policy Council does not wish to see changed. We have, up to the present, allowed Non-Members of the Society to apply to come on visits organised by the Society on an equal footing with Members. It is, in fact, the case that more and more Non-Members have been applying directly to come on Visits organised by the Society. This situation is, clearly, unfair to Members of the Society, and Council has decided that our policy on applications for Visits arranged by the Society should be amended to ensure that Members receive priority for such Visits.

With immediate effect, therefore, Visits arranged by the Society will be clearly categorised as being "For Members Only", "For Members and Accompanied Guests Only", or "For Members, Guests, and Others".

Control of Visits in the first category ("Members Only") will be strictly enforced. Applications will only be accepted from Members. Guests will not be permitted. Spouses and children of Members will *not*, therefore, be accepted on such Visits unless the spouse or children in question are Members in their own right (where there is a Joint Membership in existence, both spouses, of course, are Members, but *not* children). Applications received from Members including payments for guests for such visits will be rejected. Members wishing to bring family members or other friends on such visits will have to apply for Membership for these family members or other friends at the time of application for the Visit.

Control of Visits in the second category ("Members and Accompanied Guests Only") will also be strictly enforced. Guests will be permitted, but only if they accompany the Member in whose name they applied. Unaccompanied guests will not be permitted to take part in the Visit. Most local Visits will be categorised for the future as "Members and Accompanied Guests Only". All guests, including spouses and children not themselves Members in their own right, must pay the fee prescribed for the Visit for Non-Members. Normally, but subject to the discretion of the Society, the fee for local Visits for Non-Members will be double the fee for Members.

Applications for Visits in the third category ("Members, Guests and Others") will be prioritised. Applications from Members for themselves and accompanied guests will be considered on a first-come-first-served basis. Applications from non-Members will be held in reserve for two weeks from the date of the Newsletter announcing the Visit, or up until a date specified in the Newsletter. These applications will only be considered if, on the date specified, there remain spaces for the Visit, so that Members and their accompanied guests will thus get preference and priority. Most overseas Visits will be in this category.

Non-Members may, however, at any time apply for any visit if, with their application, they express a wish to join the Society. In such circumstances, the Non-Member will be treated as a Member while the application for Membership is processed.

Persons temporarily visiting Hong Kong (persons who will be in Hong Kong for less than three months), especially if Members of other Branches of the Royal Asiatic Society, may, at the discretion of the Society, be treated as if they were Members of this Branch in applications for Visits, and pay the fee prescribed for Members.

Please note that annual single adult Membership only costs \$475 per year. Joint Membership (husband and wife) costs only \$700 a year, and Student Membership (children under 18 or in full-time education if over 18) costs only \$50 a year.

The British Empire and Commonwealth Museum at Bristol, U.K.

The permanent galleries of this new museum will be opened on 26th September and this will be followed by a Royal opening in October. They are looking for members. If you're interested browse their web site www.empiremuseum.co.uk. The address is: Clock Tower Yard, Temple Meads, Bristol B51 6QH, UK.

Publications by RAS Members

Streets: Exploring Hong Kong Island, written by long-time RAS member Jason Wordie, explores and details some of Hong Kong Island's more interesting, lesser-known corners, and aspects of its multi-faceted culture and society that many people often pass by without really noticing.

The reader is taken on 50 rambling walks, in areas ranging from Central and Causeway Bay to Shek O and Aberdeen. In each locality a random selection of important, historically illuminating or simply curious sites are vividly described and illustrated.

Fully illustrated with numerous black-and-white photographs by Richard Abrahall, Tony Hedley and John Lambon, *Streets: Exploring Hong Kong Island* is much more than just another coffee table book.

Published by Hong Kong University Press, ISBN 962 209 563 1. Price : HK\$195.00. Available at all major book stores in Hong Kong.

An Annotated Bibliography of Hong Kong History by Lee Pui-tak, Joint Publishing (HK) Ltd, over 230 pages, HK\$120. ISBN 962-04-1649-X. This is the sort of book many of us have been looking for for some time. The term 'history' is interpreted in a broad context and for books and theses written in English the entry in this book is in English. For books written in Chinese the entry is in Chinese. The drawback is that the short introduction and other limited introductory information is all in Chinese. It is a pity the book was not made totally bilingual. It would have been easy to do so. Nevertheless, it is still useful for a researcher with no knowledge of Chinese. The book may also be obtained from Hong Kong Commercial Press.

Origins of Street Name

Has anyone any idea how Pilkem Street, near Jordan, Kowloon, got its name? Pilkem, it is understood, is a surname and there is a Pilkem Ridge in the Flemish part of Belgium. There was fierce fighting there during World War One. Any ideas please contact Dr Dan Waters (T)2858 1858 or email benefit@netvigator.com.

Last Chance to Renew your Subscription for 2002

If you are an annual member and have not yet renewed your subscription for this year, this is your last opportunity to do so. If your cheque is not received by the 30th June, your name will be

deleted from our database and you will receive nothing further from us. Please call Mary Painter on 2813 7500 if you have any questions about your subscription or you wish to pay by autopay. If you are leaving Hong Kong in the near future or do not intend to renew your membership, please let us know, so we can remove your name from our database.

Advertising in the RAS Newsletter

In an effort to defray newsletter costs, we are accepting ads that would be of interest to RAS members. Would you like to advertise a business or a service you can provide, or do you know someone who might be interested? Our rates are very reasonable: Full Page HK\$1150.00; 2/3 Page HK\$850.00; 1/2 Page HK\$725.00, 1/3 Page HK\$450.00. If you have a short ad and would like to pay according to the number of words in the ad, you may do so at the following rates: First 10 words: \$70.00; each additional word: \$2.50.

OF INTEREST TO MEMBERS

The Hong Kong Anthropological Society and the **Hong Kong Museum of History** present a talk in English by Wang Yu entitled *Naxi and Ethnic Tourism: A Study of Homestay Tourism in Lijiang, Yunnan*. The talk will take place on Thursday July 11th, 2002 at 6:30 p.m. at the Hong Kong Museum of History, in the Ground Floor Lecture Hall. Concerning the Naxi people and ethnic tourism in Lijiang, Yunnan, the focus of the talk will be on homestay tourism and the strategies adopted by the Naxi in coping with tourists, government bureaus, migrants and international NGOs. The presentation seeks to explore how ethnic culture survives in the context of the local and the global as forged by tourism and heritage preservation. Miss Wang Yu is from Yunnan Province and is an M.Phil candidate in the Anthropology Department of CUHK. This talk is based on the collected data from her fieldwork in Lijiang Old Town.

Textile Society of Hong Kong

Dr. Janet Lee Scott, Associate Professor at the Dept. of Sociology, Hong Kong Baptist University and Hon. Activities Co-ordinator of the RASHKB, will give a talk at 6:30 pm on Tuesday 27th August at the Helena May Institute entitled *Chinese Paper Costumes*. Janet will talk about the intricate paper dolls made as replicas of the genuine items and offered to the gods, ghosts and ancestors by worshippers. Enquiries : 2301 2215 or email cheung_edith@hotmail.com.

Royal Over-Seas League Royal Jubilee Garden Party

The Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Over-Seas League is planning a Royal Jubilee Garden Party to celebrate H.M. Queen Elizabeth II's fifty years as Queen. It will be jointly organized with the Oxford & Cambridge Society of Hong Kong and RASHKB members will be invited to attend. The event will take place in late October or early November, 2002 at a country club in Hong Kong and will take the form of a garden party with cream teas, champagne, Pimms, music, loyal toast, etc. etc. Full details will be given in our August newsletter. Members of several other Royal and Loyal clubs in Hong Kong will also be invited. For information about the ROSL, email publicity@rosl.org.hk or write to ROSL, GPO Box 9954, Hong Kong.

The Siam Society, Bangkok

For any members who will be visiting Bangkok, the Siam Society are holding a lecture on Thursday 11th July at 7:30 p.m. by Edward Van Roy entitled *The Bangkok Mandala: Mapping the First Reign (1782-1809)*. Edward Van Roy is visiting professor at the Center for East Asian Studies, University of Pennsylvania and has spent many years researching and mapping the history of the city. The Siam Society are also planning a trip to Vientiane and Luang Prabang from 9th to 12th August. For information : tel. 0 2661 6470 7 or email info@siam-society.org or visit their web site www.siam-society.org. If you are visiting Bangkok, please do call in to their office at 131 Asoke Road, Sukhumvit 21 and say you are a member of RASHKB.

University of Hong Kong Museum and Art Gallery

They now have a new website at www.hku.hk/hkumag. A new exhibition is to be held from 26th June to 11th August entitled *Love of Art: Works by HKU SPACE Western Art Teachers*, which will be showing works in various media by artists who teach Western art at SPACE.