School of Creative Media
香港城市大學
City University of Hong Kong

SCM RESEARCH

ISSUE 16 | 2026

FROM THE DEANERY:
WHAT IS SCM'S IDENTITY?

When explaining the School of Creative Media to outsiders, I often joke that I don't really know what "creative media" means; it's a moving target of new technologies and practices. But it is time to find a better answer. SCM combines three main approaches: art, technology, and humanities/social sciences. We teach students to make art, understand art, and master the technologies of artmaking. This is our distinctive strength.

In *The Republic*, book VII, Plato argues that knowledge acquired under compulsion will not take root; instead, learning should take the form of play. Herbert Read (1893-1968), a British art historian, critic, poet, philosopher, and anarchist, drew inspiration from Plato, arguing that education should occur through art rather than by conforming to accepted knowledge. Read argues in *Education Through Art* (1943) that art should be the basis of education, unlocking learners' potential to become what they are, rather than what they are not. Confucius, in a different tradition, also understood education not just as the transfer of knowledge but as the cultivation of the whole person through artistic practices.

Inspired by Read, the art historian and critic Christopher Frayling, in his highly influential essay "Research in Art and Design" (1993), outlines three different types of art and design research:

RESEARCH INTO ART AND DESIGN

RESEARCH THROUGH ART AND DESIGN

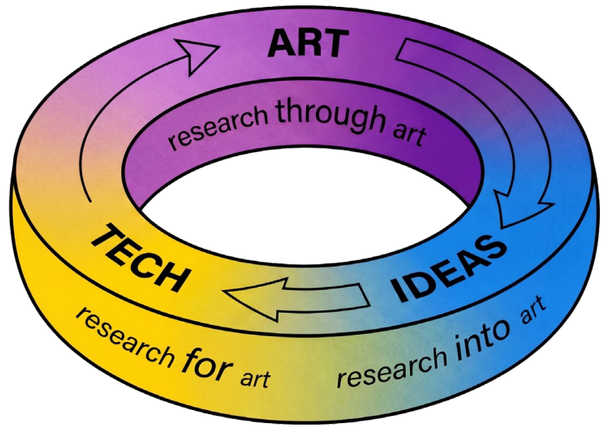
RESEARCH FOR ART AND DESIGN

Frayling's triptych of a model is highly relevant for our school, especially with a few slight modifications. *Research into* is the classic study of art: critical, theoretical, philosophical, trying to make sense of artistic creations and their uses. *Research through* is the artist producing new insights, for example, by utilizing new technologies or exploring new techniques. *Research for* can be technological development leading to new methods and tools, which, when used or appropriated by artists, generate new forms of art.

Frayling himself does not suggest that these three approaches should be combined, and we typically find them separated by institutional barriers and traditions. However, they are the very three cornerstones of our School. Primarily, our humanists and social scientists conduct research into art; our artists conduct research through art; and our technologists conduct research by developing technologies that can be applied to creating art.

SCM combines Frayling's three traditions in a way he himself did not envision, because our researchers typically combine more than one of these approaches in their work, sometimes in pairs and sometimes across all three domains.

Whether we call it synergy, interdisciplinarity, or an ecosystem, SCM is strongest when these three approaches collaborate. This ideal form of collaboration can be illustrated through the following hermeneutic circle:



Here, technologists produce tech tools that artists use to create artworks, which our critical thinkers explore to develop their ideas and conceptual models, which can then be used to inspire new tech tools and artworks. Research for art leads to research through art, which then leads to research into art, inspiring new tools and new artworks.

Making people work together across boundaries is difficult and should never be enforced from the top; it should happen serendipitously, through bottom-up processes, facilitated by a playful and inclusive environment. Too often, the incentive structure just isn't there, or is even negative, where solo achievement gets rewarded far more than collaboration. This "lone star" model, often unfairly and incorrectly, is the ideal for philosophy and art, and here we can, and should, learn a lot from our technologists. It is crucial for any collaboration that everyone is served well by it, rather than merely serving others. On the other hand, collaborations are not for everyone, and if your methodology works successfully, let's not fix it.

However, if SCM is to be something more than just a collection of excellent individuals working on their own, then something like the model above could make SCM more than the sum of its parts. Not just as a rationale, but as our institutional identity.

Espen Aarseth
Dean, SCM

ON THE COVER:
Installation view of *Pavilion* (2025)
Courtesy of the New Taipei City Art Museum
Photo credit: Chu Chi-hung

RETHINKING DICTATION: SEMANTIC INTERACTION WITH SPOKEN TEXT

Oral communication is the quickest and most natural way for humans to express ideas, but it remains an imperfect method for creating written text. Despite the widespread adoption of speech recognition on smartphones and computers, dictation is not yet a prevalent writing tool. According to Prof. Can Liu, the main challenge lies not in transcription accuracy but in editing. “Should today’s technology treat speech like typing on a keyboard?” she asks. This is the starting point of her research, “Semantic Interaction with Text and Speech.”

Prof. Can Liu

Traditional dictation systems convert spoken words into written text, utilizing editing tools originally designed for typing. However, typing and speaking are fundamentally different. Typing is deliberate and iterative, supported by visual and tactile feedback, which enables continuous micro-revisions. Speaking is spontaneous and less structured. “Speaking,” notes Prof. Liu, “is akin to externalizing a stream of consciousness.” This often yields verbose, repetitive, and loosely organized content, replete with hesitations and disfluencies. People also tend to have a weaker memory for spoken words than typed text.

This difference makes traditional word-level editing ineffective for spoken content. Prof. Liu advocates for systems that prioritize meaning over precise cursor placement and letter accuracy. Current tools emphasize precision but do little to support meaning composition. Semantic interaction, however, enables users to manipulate meaning without having to manually edit every word.

A practical realization of this concept is Rambler, a gist-based dictation interface developed by Prof. Liu’s team in collaboration with UC Berkeley and Google. Rambler supports non-linear composition, iterative drafting, and efficient review of spoken text. It frees users from meticulous manual editing by enabling “macro revision.” Users can dictate in segments and then use AI to chunk, drag, drop, merge, and split them. A semantic merge reduces redundancy, while a semantic split reorganizes complex ideas into coherent units.

User studies have revealed that people are comfortable with AI rephrasing their words as long as it retains their meaning. Prof. Liu notes, “People were less concerned than expected about alterations to their wording, as long as the intended meaning was preserved,” attributing this finding to our limited memory for exact spoken phrasing. Compared with a chat-based GPT interface, Rambler gave users greater control and encouraged more iteration, as changes were localized and visible rather than applied wholesale.

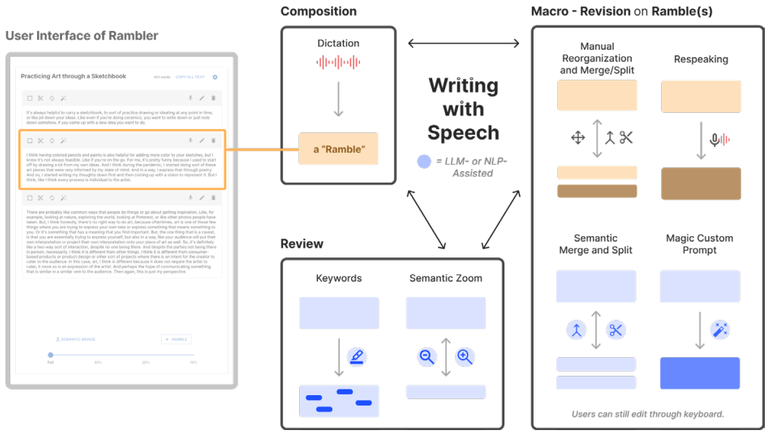
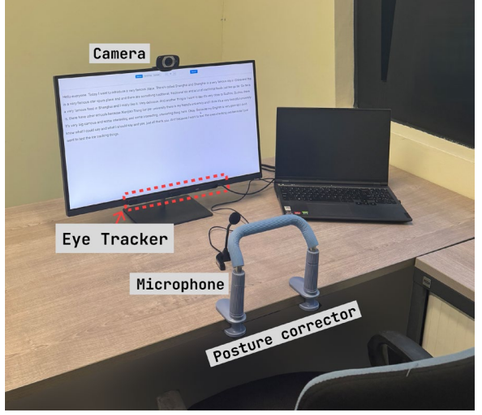


Figure 1. Concept Illustration of Gist-based Writing with Speech



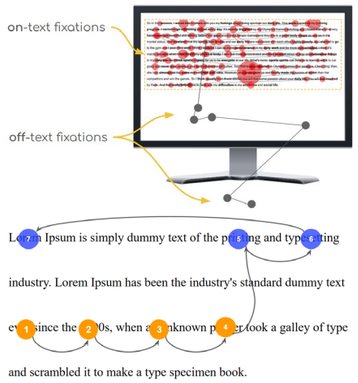


Figure 2. Eyetracking experiment setup and measurement metrics

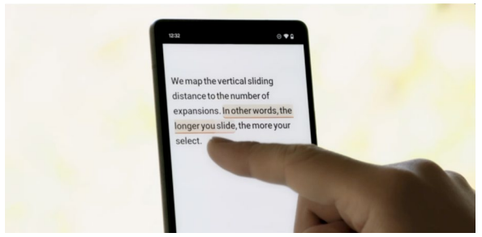


Figure 3. 1D Touch (left) versus Word-snapping selection on Android (right)

The team also investigated how to display dictated text for better readability. In an eye-tracking study, LLM-generated summaries were—surprisingly—found to outperform raw transcripts, lightly corrected text, and highlighted versions. Users showed fewer eye regressions and clearly preferred the summaries. “The polished text, while preserving the essence of the original content, made the summaries the preferred choice,” reflects Prof. Liu. This suggests that dictation software could confidently introduce more aggressive auto-correction while carefully preserving intended meaning.

Beyond speech, Prof. Liu’s work extends semantic interaction to touch-based text selection through a technique called 1D Touch. This method shifts selection from precise target acquisition by letter—a challenge on the multitouch surface—to selecting a “linguistic object.” Using a one-dimensional sliding gesture, users can expand or contract selections word-by-word or chunk-by-chunk, guided by natural language processing. These techniques are about 20% faster than standard word snapping tools available on Android and iOS. They work especially well for selecting semantically meaningful chunks.

Looking forward, Prof. Liu sees semantic interaction connecting conversational user interfaces and graphical interfaces. “The conversation interface is merely a transitional product,” she states. Future systems will combine speech, language models, and direct manipulation to enhance rather than replace cognitive processes. Speech will thus become a primary channel for meaning-driven input to interact with computers.

口述輸入的再思：基於語義的多模態文本交互

劉燦教授的《基於語義的多模態文本交互》研究，探討儘管語音識別技術已有重大進步，何以口述輸入作為書寫工具仍未普及；她認為問題不在於轉錄的準確度，而在於編輯語音轉錄文本的繁瑣度。目前大多數系統會先將語音轉換為文字，然後依賴為打字而設計的編輯工具。

從認知科學的角度來看，打字與口語的運作方式截然不同。打字透過視覺與觸覺回饋，促進微細且持續的「微調」。反觀口語，通常像「意識流」般自然流露，這可能導致內容重複、結構鬆散及缺乏流暢性。正因這種差異，在處理口述文本時，傳統的逐字逐句編輯往往效率低下。

劉教授提出「語義型交互」的方法，著重編輯內容含義而非操作單一詞彙。Rambler 就是建基於「要點」的語音輸入介面，與加州大學柏克萊分校及 Google 合作開發。Rambler 支援非線性撰寫、反覆草擬以及粗顆粒度的整體修訂。使用者可分段口述，隨後利用 AI 輔助的圖形化介面將想法分組、拖放、合併或拆分。諸如「語義合併」等功能，可減少段落間的累贅，而「語義拆分」則有助重組複雜的思路。

使用者研究顯示，只要原意不變，參與者通常都能接受 AI 進行的改寫。相比基於對話的 GPT 介面，Rambler 也讓使用者有更多掌控權，因為修改內容會以局部段落顯示，且便於檢視。

為了用科學的方法提升語音文本的可讀性，劉教授的研究進一步探討口述文本的展現策略。透過眼動追蹤實驗，比較轉錄稿、經修正的文本、標註版本以及大型語言模型 (LLM) 生成的摘要，結果發現 LLM 摘要通常更易於閱讀，更受使用者歡迎，進一步驗證了使用者對口述文本被 AI 修改程度的接受度高。這表明若能強化自動修正與摘要功能，將有助於提升未來的口述文字輸入系統。

The *CITY IN TIME* project team in front of the *CITY IN TIME* AR clock at Kowloon Walled City Park (from left rear to right rear) Mr. Alan Leung, Project Manager; Ms. Maggie Wong, Illustration Artist; Ms. Carmen Ng, Illustration Artist; Mr. Kachi Chan, Creative Technologist; Prof. Jeffrey Shaw, Artistic Director; and Prof. Richard Allen, Project Director.

CITY IN TIME: KOWLOON CITY IN AR

Users can use the app's selfie function and share their experience on social media.

SCM is proud to celebrate the groundbreaking project *CITY IN TIME*, which breathes new life into Hong Kong's rich cultural heritage. Using smartphones as augmented reality (AR) windows that overlay panoramic scenes of the past onto today's urban landscape, *CITY IN TIME* transforms our relationship with Hong Kong's history. This visionary concept has grown into a dynamic digital platform with over 40 locations, with new sites added as the project evolves.

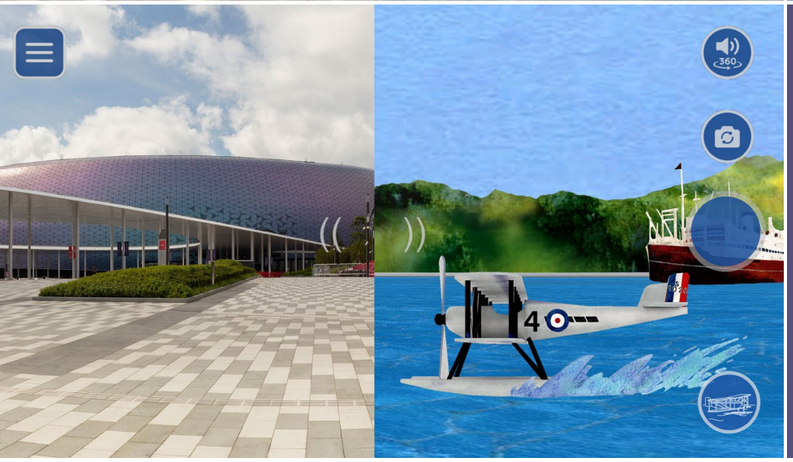
Hong Kong's famous districts—Central, Tsim Sha Tsui, the Peak, Sham Shui Po, and Yau Ma Tei—were animated in the first phase of *CITY IN TIME*, inviting viewers to journey back in time within recognizable surroundings. The second phase expanded to more intimate neighborhoods, including Lei Yue Mun and Tai Hang, with the more recent additions of Kai Tak and East Kowloon. The project was conceived and developed by Jeffrey Shaw at the Centre for Applied Computing and Interactive Media (ACIM), School of Creative Media, CityUHK, for the Hong Kong Tourism Commission. The project is now led by Richard William Allen, ACIM Director, with Shaw as Artistic Director.

The project uses AR technology to conjure up the city's past in vivid, life-like, animated landscapes rendered by local artists and carefully based on archival photographs, which are supplemented by clips from well-known Hong Kong movies. The recently added Kowloon City is a historically rich, a living archive of Hong Kong's cultural legacy. Its landscape bears traces of the Qing dynasty and the once-notorious Kowloon Walled City—known as Sam But Kwun (a lawless realm beyond the rule of three governments)—and the legacy of Kai Tak Airport, a symbol of the city's ascent into the modern era of aviation. AR "clocks" have been placed in five prominent spots in Kowloon City—one each in Kowloon Walled City Park, Carpenter Road, and Stone Houses Family Garden and two in Kai Tak Sports Park. Each serves as a portal allowing visitors to "time travel" to the past and witness Hong Kong's development firsthand.

The project introduces exciting new elements, including the integration of Hong Kong movie clips, reflecting Kowloon City's rich cinematic legacy. The district has long served as a backdrop for iconic films, and users can scan the AR clocks at specific spots to view selected scenes from these films at the corresponding locations. The team has recreated the film studios surrounding the Stone Houses from the 1950s, showcasing a filmmaking center from the golden age of Hong Kong cinema, which is rarely shown on screen. Beyond its cinematic heritage, the app guides users through Kowloon City's broader history — from its function as an administrative hub during the Qing dynasty to its time as a dense, self-enclosed urban neighborhood in the 1980s. The current phase also honors Kai Tak's aviation legacy, tracing its transformation from the early seaplane operations of the 1920s into a thriving international airport of the jet age by the 1960s.

Each new location in the project presented unique challenges, which the team addressed through creativity, research, and collaboration. "A key research challenge was to accurately identify the buildings and transportation in a scene once we had chosen a time and location, which required a lot of detailed historical and archival research," shares Prof. Allen. The team recreated the city's historical landscapes

Using the *CITY IN TIME* app, users can compare the present-day environment with the historic Kowloon Walled City in ca.1910.



In Kai Tak Sports Park, the *CITY IN TIME* app allows users to view the pre-war Kai Tak landscape in ca.1927, juxtaposed with today's surroundings.

from architectural drawings, street-level photographs, aerial images, films, and maps from both domestic and foreign sources, combined with local oral histories and sound recordings. From these diverse sources, they constructed fully realized 3D scenes that accurately depict Hong Kong's evolving urban and cultural history. The rigorous research process was supported by the project's historical advisor, Mr. Wong, Calvin HT, and architectural adviser, Mr. Ho Shahng Herng, Alfred.

CITY IN TIME has significantly promoted cultural heritage tourism. Organizations such as the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Heritage Centre, Jockey Club Lei Yue Mun Plus, Stone Houses, and Kai Tak Sports Park have enriched their tours with interactive 3D experiences of the city's history provided by the *CITY IN TIME* app and AR markers. Moreover, the Hong Kong Docent Association has incorporated the interactive AR application into its online docent training course, advancing docent education by introducing technology-driven engagement with cultural heritage.

The project also promotes and displays local artistic talent. In Prof. Shaw's words, "*CITY IN TIME* has served as a vital platform for brilliant Hong Kong artists to present their illustrations of the city's past to a broad public." The project has commissioned 14 local artists to produce its 360-degree panoramic landscapes, each of which is infused with the distinct aesthetic and individual viewpoint of the artist. Two artists, Maggie Wong and Carmen Ng, were involved in the project for Kowloon City.

Overwhelmingly positive responses were recorded in a recent set of public surveys carried out in selected Phase I areas—Yau Ma Tei, The Peak, Kowloon City, and Tai Hang—between September 19 and October 4, 2025. Of the respondents, 96% were willing to recommend the app to others; 94% said that it had enhanced their knowledge of Hong Kong's history; 93% found that the app's high-tech, interactive features made learning about history more engaging; and 84% shared that the app had increased their interest in revisiting the city.

CITY IN TIME encourages locals and tourists to travel into the past and enter Hong Kong's historical landscapes, from its busy avenues to its lesser-known neighborhoods. Every area reveals layers of history, culture, and memory, from well-known city landmarks to lesser-known nooks, and from famous streets in Kowloon City to the skies over Kai Tak. *CITY IN TIME* offers a fresh perspective on the city—one step, one scan, and one story at a time. It successfully transmits Hong Kong's rich past to today's world, making it experiential, playful and unforgettable.

CITY IN TIME incorporates local films, such as *Twilight of the Warriors: Walled in*, which set its story against the Kowloon Walled City in the 1980s.

「城市景昔」結合藝術與科技：擴增實境重現九龍城寨與啟德歷史

「城市景昔」是一項創新的文化創意旅遊項目，利用擴增實境（AR）技術，透過智能手機鏡頭，將歷史場景與您身處的現場實景作對比，讓香港精彩的歷史重現眼前。此項目最初涵蓋中環及尖沙咀等主要旅遊地區，現已擴展至超過 40 個地點，並延伸至更具文化生活氣息的社區，包括鯉魚門、大坑，以及新加入的啟德和九龍城等。

在內容方面，最新增設於九龍城的「AR 時鐘」，讓使用者得以「穿越時空」，遊歷從晚清以至 80 年代、九龍城寨以至啟德機場航空發展等重要歷史時刻。項目更加入新的「電影熱點」，使用者不僅能在電影取景原址觀賞香港電影的經典片段，還能透過歷史全景圖及 3D 動畫，體驗 1950 年代電影外景拍攝的實況。

本項目使用大量歷史照片、影片、地圖及口述歷史，在嚴謹的考證及歷史顧問的指導下，與 14 位本地藝術家以 360 度全景圖的形式呈現。同時，項目亦與文化保育及導賞員培訓的計劃合作，共同推動文化旅遊與教育。

公眾反響極為熱烈，超過九成使用者表示，對香港歷史的認知與參與度顯著提升，肯定了「城市景昔」成功提供了一種生動、互動且豐富的方式，讓市民與旅客重新與香港的文化遺產連結。

RELENTLESS MELT NO. 42: GENERATIVE ABSTRACTIONS AT CLOCKENFLAP

No Man's Land (2025), 3'19 By MFA students Wu Zeyang, Tmoi Zhang, Klee Cao, and Jonathan Chan Pok Him

Relentless Melt No. 42: Generative Abstractions is a special showcase of music videos produced by Hong Kong artists, utilizing generative AI (GenAI) models such as Midjourney and Kling as tools for abstract visual experimentation. The work was featured at the Clockenflap Festival on December 5–7, 2025, through a curatorial collaboration between Max Hattler, an experimental animation professor at SCM, and Clockenflap's artistic director, Jay Forster. The videos were adapted to Clockenflap's vertical LED screens, creating a striking visual experience within the live music setting.

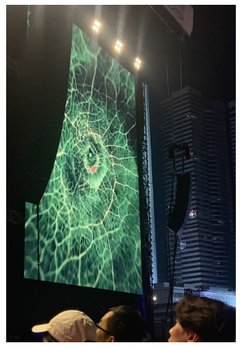
Relentless Melt, a Hong Kong-based society dedicated to abstract and experimental moving image, was founded in 2017. It has presented over 46 screening programmes both locally and internationally.

The programme's thematic direction was set by Prof. Hattler's 2025 teaching, which enabled students to create abstract films with GenAI, supported by a Teaching Development Grant. "I've been toying with the idea of using GenAI in experimental animation for a while, and the grant provided us with the necessary setup and support to do so," says Prof. Hattler.

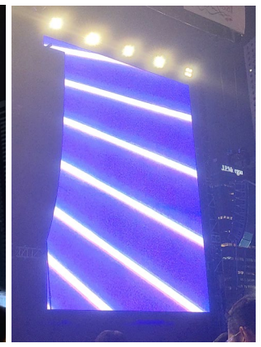
The films presented comprised *Soil* (2025) by Hong Yina, Zhou Yiwei, Hong Shengtao, and Gao Joyce, with music by Julien Mier; *No Man's Land* (2025) by Wu Zeyang, Tmoi Zhang, Klee Cao, and Jonathan Chan Pok Him, featuring music by Kazuto Okawa/LLLL; *Textura Vitae (2025)* by Li Junqing, Wang Ziqi, Ou Lan, and Sit Sin Wun, with music by Julien Mier and Magical Mistakes; *Wanderers* (2025) by Muhammad Mustefa Bukhari, with music by Muta; and *Steen* (2025) by Mane Cheung Chin Yiu and Sammi Tsui Pui Yu, with music by Julien Mier.

Prof. Hattler and his team discovered that GenAI tools can be effectively integrated into the exploratory and iterative processes of abstract and experimental animation. "Artists who are open to the unpredictable nature of GenAI can leverage it as a source of inspiration and 'found footage,'" he states. "It's essential, however, to refine these generated materials and shape them into a finished product that reflects the artist's voice and intention."

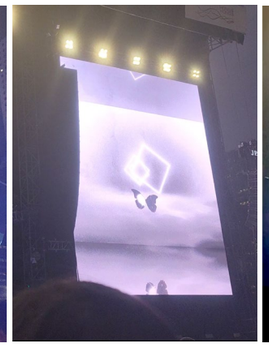
Relentless Melt No. 42 exclusively features student films produced in Prof. Hattler's class at SCM. "I wanted to showcase these films because they are amazing and demonstrate what can be achieved with generative AI in abstract animation," he explains. "With Jay Forster acting as the gatekeeper, this speaks to the quality of the works."



Textura Vitae (2025), 4'55
By MFA students Junqing Li, Ziqi Wang, Ou Lan, and Sin Wun Sit

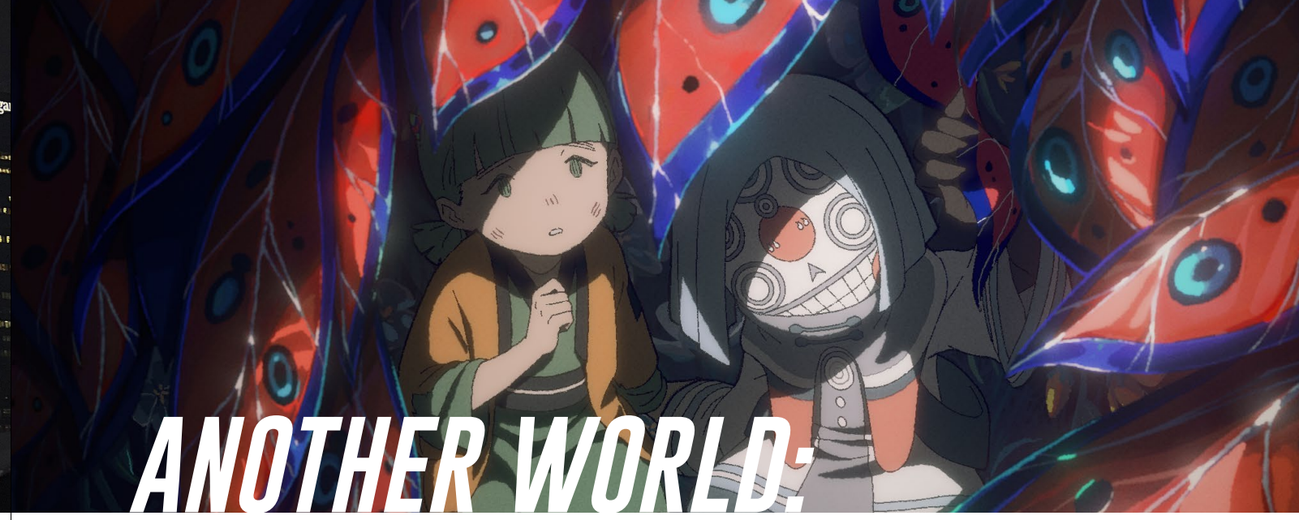


Soil (2025), 3'47
By MFA students Hong Yina, Zhou Yiwei, Hong Shengtao, and Gao Joyce



Wanderers (2025), 3'46
By BACM student Muhammad Mustefa Bukhari

Steen (2025), 3'55
By students Mane Cheung Chin Yiu (BACM) and Sammi Tsui Pui Yu (BAS)



ANOTHER WORLD:

AN AWARD-WINNING ANIMATED FILM BY SCM STUDENT AND ALUMNI

The animated film *Another World*, created by alumni Tommy Ng Kai-chung (director) and Ng Tsz Ching (animation director) and SCM PhD student Wong Fei Pang (assistant director and editor), won Best Animated Feature at the 62nd Taipei Golden Horse Awards. The film has received several other accolades and been showcased at prestigious events, including the Annecy International Animation Film Festival and the Sitges Film Festival. This visually enchanting animation invites audiences into a realm between life and rebirth, "another world," where the spirit guide Gudo leads lost souls on their journey toward reincarnation. When summoned by the goddess Mira to alter the fate of a young girl, Yuri, whose rage threatens to unleash devastation, Gudo embarks on a challenging thousand-year mission. This film makes a significant resurgence of Hong Kong animation on the global stage, with Ng's adaptation of the Japanese novel *Sennenki* offering a poignant exploration of grief, anger, and redemption.

(Back row, 2nd from the left) : Ng Tsz Ching, Carol (BACM alumna), (Back row, middle) : Wong Fei Pang (PhD student)

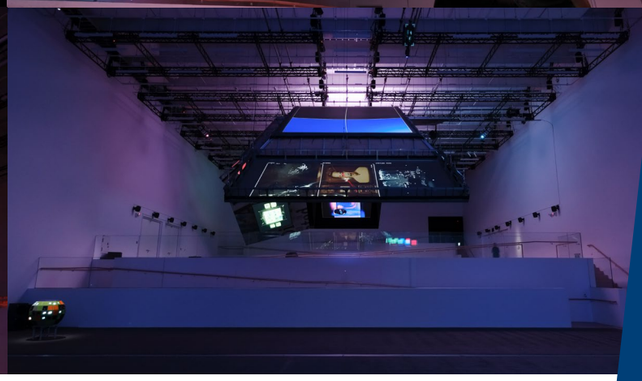
(Front row, right) : Ng Kai-chung, Tommy (BACM alumnus) and the production team at the 62nd Golden Horse Premiere.

Reflecting on the film's success, its director Tommy Ng describes it as both humbling and profoundly meaningful. "These recognitions are not only an honor for our team but also a powerful affirmation for the Hong Kong animation industry," he states. "They demonstrate that Hong Kong animators are capable of producing high-quality work that competes internationally and achieves commercial success. We hope that these achievements will encourage greater government support and investor confidence, enabling the creation and global sharing of more exceptional Hong Kong animated films." Tommy believes that the film's compelling narrative inspires audiences to embrace self-forgiveness.

The team experimented with various editing techniques to effectively convey the film's intricate narrative. Assistant director Fei Pang explains, "Ultimately, we chose to center the film around Gudo's personal growth. We believed that guiding the audience through this millennium-long journey alongside Gudo was the most crucial narrative element, which became our primary focus in the editing process." Reflecting on the film's success, he adds, "I sincerely hope that *Another World*, proudly carrying the 'Made in Hong Kong' label, will inspire and pave the way for more local animated projects to thrive in the near future."

Animation director Tsz Ching emphasizes the importance of having a platform for a small team in Hong Kong to showcase their work to a broader audience. She also expresses her deep gratitude for the recognition the film has received.

(From left): Chan Gin Kai (Co-producer); Polly Yeung (Author and Producer) and Ng Kai-chung (Director)

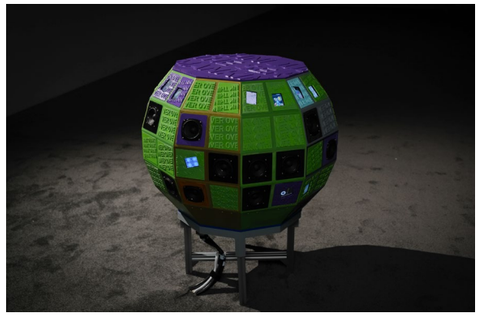


SAMSON YOUNG'S MULTI-CHANNEL INSTALLATION AT NEW TAIPEI CITY ART MUSEUM

Prof. Samson Young explores sound, performance, video, and installation art. He represented Hong Kong at the 57th Venice Biennale with his solo project *Songs for Disaster Relief*. His accolades include the BMW Art Journey Award, a Prix Ars Electronica Award of Distinction in Sound Art and Digital Music, and the inaugural Uli Sigg Prize. His recent multi-channel installation *Pavilion,* was on view at the New Taipei City Art Museum from September 9, 2025 to January 4, 2026, featuring the Taipei Male Choir and sound engineer Hsieh Hsien Te from the Taiwan Sound Lab.

Pavilion is the inaugural project of the NTCAM COMMISSION, a biennial programme inviting international artists to create site-specific works for the museum's most challenging spaces. In developing *Pavilion*, Prof. Young engaged deeply with this demanding site, which shaped the final work.

Amid the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI), the exhibition examines how technological systems shape our perception and self-understanding. The project revisits *THINK*, a seminal movie created by Charles and Ray Eames for the IBM Pavilion at the 1964 New York World's Fair. Created at the dawn of the computer age, *THINK* framed computers as analogues for human cognition, immersing viewers in a dynamic environment of images, sounds, and information. "What made *THINK* unique was the Eameses's proximity to projects of cultural exchange," said Prof. Young. "In their hands, multi-source media became a pedagogical information architecture."



Installation view of *Pavilion* (2025).
Courtesy of the New Taipei City Art Museum
Photo credit: Chu Chi-hung.

Echoing *THINK*'s multiscreen presentation and its meticulously structured audio-visual pacing, *Pavilion* revisits this early experiment in "database cinema." It reflects on the hope and unease that characterised the movie's historical context, drawing parallels with the present, where generative AI has significantly accelerated data production and patterning. By combining newly shot footage with archival materials, *Pavilion* uses generative AI to iteratively layer and recompose images.

THINK is frequently cited as an early example of database cinema, diverging from traditional linear storytelling to embrace an information-driven structure composed of diverse

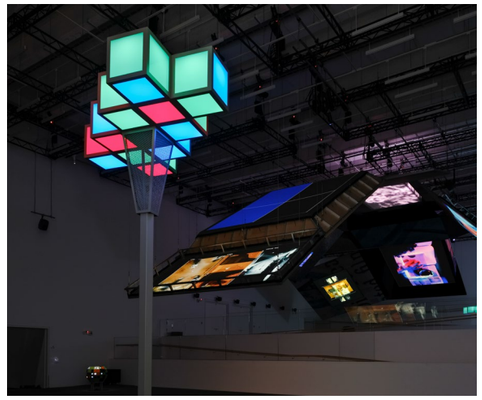
Installation view of *Pavilion* (2025).
Courtesy of the New Taipei City Art Museum Photo credit: Chu Chi-hung.

media sources and fragmented imagery. Prof. Young connects the fragmented logics of 1960s media with sixteenth-century cabinets of curiosities (*Wunderkammern*) and contemporary generative AI. Through these comparisons, he explores how databases across different historical periods have influenced the relationships between time, space, and narrative. "*THINK* organized information as spatialized fragments: time nested in space, versus time nested within time," explains Prof. Young. "Today, statistical AI is collapsing this distinction. AI functions as a comprehensive database whose architecture, at the moment of prompting, compulsively advances and moves itself forward, along a line of the most probable arrangement."

Prof. Young used *Requiem* as a conceptual framework for the music, drawing on his interest in the complex relationship between HAL 9000 and the human characters in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The movie's iconic use of György Ligeti's *Lux Aeterna*, derived from the Communion chant of the Requiem Mass, evokes themes of mortality, transition, and the unknown. These themes resonate with the movie's concluding scenes, as HAL's luminous eye gradually dims during its shutdown, leaving open the question of whether this moment signifies the demise of AI or the decline of human reason itself.

Asked about his hopes for what visitors might reflect on or feel after engaging with *Pavilion*, Prof. Young states, "The overwhelming sense of scale is very much a part of the work. These feelings are connected to the research into *THINK*. However, hopefully I have intentionally created enough space so that individuals don't feel pressured constantly to piece together fragments at every single moment."

Pavilion invites viewers into a contemplative space where technology, art, and human perception intersect, prompting questions about our relationship with data, AI, and the ever-changing landscape of innovation. Prof. Young's intricate layering of visuals and sound encourages personal reflection on how history and contemporary technology shape our understanding of identity and existence. As visitors leave the installation, they are not only witnesses to a meticulously crafted artistic experiment but also participants in an ongoing dialogue about the roles of machines and humans in shaping our collective future. *Pavilion* critiques and reimagines the complex relationships defining our digital age.

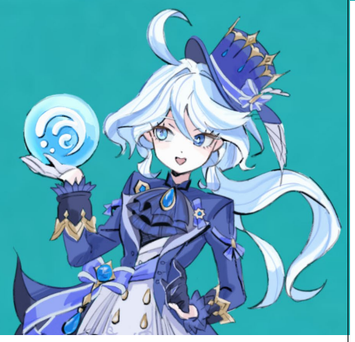


Installation view of *Pavilion* (2025).
Courtesy of the New Taipei City Art Museum
Photo credit: Chu Chi-hung.

School of Creative Media
香港城市大學
City University of Hong Kong

GachaCon 2026

City University of Hong Kong



GACHACON 2026:

A GLOBAL CONVERSATION ON *GENSHIN IMPACT* AND GACHA GAMES

In February 2026, the School of Creative Media hosted GachaCon 2026: *Genshin Impact*, an international conference dedicated to the academic study of gacha games. Spearheaded by Assistant Professor Leon Xiao, the event brought together interdisciplinary scholars from Europe, Australia, North America, Asia, and Latin America to explore one of today's most commercially successful and culturally influential gaming formats.

Gacha games are characterized not by genre but by monetization strategies. Players spend money on gacha mechanics to obtain randomized rewards, often requiring multiple attempts to acquire desired characters or items. These systems bear structural similarities to Western "loot boxes," although regional terminology varies. "These are purchases made with real money within the game to obtain random rewards," Prof. Xiao explains. He thus describes gacha and loot box mechanics as "fundamentally the same," while acknowledging the cultural and contextual distinctions perceived by others.

The inception of GachaCon was inspired by a straightforward observation. "In recent years," recalls Prof. Xiao, "I've attended various gaming conferences and noticed research relating to this specific game being presented. However, it was always just one single presentation here in the Netherlands or there in Malta." What was lacking was a dedicated forum to thoroughly explore a single title and its broader ecosystem. "It's quite rare to gather everyone together for an in-depth discussion of one game. We have the opportunity to do this here in Hong Kong, so I thought, we should seize it."

The conference centered on *Genshin Impact*, developed by the Shanghai-based company miHoYo. For Prof. Xiao, the game's launch was pivotal for the global games industry.

Prof. Leon Xiao, convenor of GachaCon 2026.

"I believe it's the first Chinese game to achieve significant international impact," he says, "not just within China." Beyond its gacha mechanics, the game's expansive open-world design has redefined expectations of mobile gaming capabilities. "Compared with previous gacha games, it was truly revolutionary. It introduced open-world exploration to the mobile platform," Prof. Xiao adds.

GachaCon was not intended to focus solely on controversy. While monetization and gambling-related concerns were discussed, they did not dominate the proceedings. Prof. Xiao notes that the emphasis on gambling harms was minimal: "honestly, not very much." He highlights the importance of balance, acknowledging regulatory issues while also recognizing the game's entertainment value and cultural significance.

Indeed, panel attendees discussed a wide range of themes, from probability disclosures in East Asia to religious governance in Southeast Asia, and from digital asset ownership to the role of leaks as cultural capital. The diversity of topics emphasizes the richness of gacha games as research sites.

A primary goal of the conference was to foster interdisciplinary dialogue. Scholars from fields such as law, psychology, sociology, game studies, and human–computer interaction convened to share insights. Rather than seeking a single conclusion, Prof. Xiao hoped to raise awareness, emphasizing that various disciplines are addressing these issues. "It was just important for other people to know that people from other disciplines are also working on this issue," he remarks. "I just hope this was an opportunity for people to know that others are working on it too. And I think that is enough."

The conference also prioritized early-career researchers. "If you look at the list of speakers who were invited, it's not a list of senior professors," says Prof. Xiao. "We very much focused on promoting early-career researchers and junior talents." This approach resulted in a dynamic and welcoming atmosphere, which many attendees described as energizing and affirming.

Ms. Bitong Lin's participation in this conference was both personal and scholarly. Initially motivated by what she describes as a sense of "academic revenge," Ms. Lin—a dedicated miHoYo-game player who has invested considerable time and money in gaming—sought to achieve a "return on her investment" through academic research. Her sociological research explores how players justify monetization within gaming communities. She discovered that explicit criticism of spending is relatively uncommon among Chinese players. Instead, many view their purchases as a means of supporting high-quality content and as participating in a broader cultural community. Within the animation, comics, games, and novels subcultures, Ms. Lin notes that player identity often takes precedence over consumer identity, transforming spending into a form of patronage and source of collective pride.

Mr. Yixiang Que examined *Genshin Impact* from the perspective of cultural representation, focusing on intangible Chinese cultural heritage. His research revealed that players experience both familiarity and a sense of discovery when encountering regional elements within the game. "When players encounter familiar or local cultural elements, they feel a direct sense of proximity," he explains. "Conversely, when faced with unfamiliar cultural elements, a unique sense of cultural pride and sense of belonging emerges, highlighting the vast diversity of Chinese culture." Through emotional connection, aesthetics, playfulness, and knowledge acquisition, mobile games can significantly shape and enhance cultural identity.

Dr. Gabriela Birnfeld Kurtz from Brazil analyzed community reactions to new digital regulations. A key aspect of her work focused on how Brazilian players interpreted Law 15.211 in relation to the game's "Wishes" gacha mechanic. She observed that discussions quickly expanded into broader debates about censorship, governance, and state control. Despite widespread misinformation, these debates underscored the deep intersection of monetization systems with national political contexts. Dr. Birnfeld Kurtz concluded that multiple policy-related talks from different jurisdictions at GachaCon showed gacha regulation to be a global governance issue rather than a series of isolated national cases.

Early-career researchers and emerging talent from diverse fields unite at GachaCon 2026 to explore the impact of gacha games.

Dr. Anh-Thu Cathy Nguyen offered an insightful cultural analysis of the game's world-building, describing Teyvat as operating through a "touristic logic." She explained that regions inspired by European medieval fantasy, Japanese Shintoism, and Chinese mythology function like themed lands, empowering players to explore diverse cultural landscapes. While the game draws extensively from real-world cultures, mythology, and folklore, these influences can also reduce cultures into aesthetic spaces for consumption. Dr. Nguyen states, "Rather than viewing this as merely a representational issue, the process of theming inherently questions the strategies these themes follow. Why is a certain region portrayed in a particular way? Do such themes enforce certain perceptions of a culture, or do they immerse players in that culture? Highlighting the processes of theming underscores the commodified and commercial aspects of such representations and how certain cultural ideas become part of global circulations."

GachaCon 2026 showcased both the multifaceted nature of gacha games and the importance of cross-disciplinary collaboration to understand these complex phenomena. By bringing together diverse perspectives and fostering early-career talent, the conference illuminated the cultural, economic, regulatory, and social dimensions of gacha gaming on a global scale. As gacha games continue to evolve and influence digital entertainment worldwide, such scholarly engagements will be crucial in shaping informed discussions, policies, and innovations that balance commercial success with cultural sensitivity and player well-being. GachaCon marked a significant step toward building a robust international academic community dedicated to this dynamic field.

NEW FACULTY: ARTIST LAU HOCHI RETURNS TO SCM

SCM is delighted to welcome back the artist Lau Hochi, who has returned as a teaching fellow after serving as a student, research assistant, exhibition coordinator, and lecturer. Hochi's artistic practice centers on exploring interfaces, illusions, and interpretations. He observes that our perceptions of today's world are heavily influenced by interfaces that have been designed and refined to direct and influence users. Through his work, he reflects on the decline of human agency and seeks new ways to foster human expression by working creatively and meaningfully alongside machines.

Hochi's works have been exhibited internationally at the Japan Media Arts Festival, Ars Electronica Festival, Sónar Festival, ISEA, LA Artcore, and Miller ICA. Hochi holds an MFA in Art from Carnegie Mellon University and co-founded the multimedia design studio ioio, where he has worked as an artist, producer, and technical director on various cultural and commercial projects.

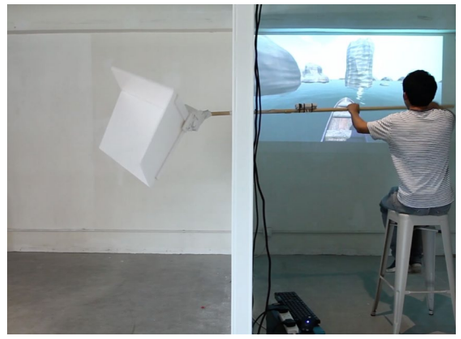
Hochi's interest in how interfaces shape daily life and influence human control stems from his exposure to early cybernetic concepts, such as B.F. Skinner's *Project Pigeon*, in which pigeons were trained to guide missiles. "I can relate to the pigeon," says Hochi. "I have no idea where this is going, but I've trained to do it. I frequently feel the same way when interacting with various interfaces in daily life." He employs similar strategies to influence his audience.

His recent work *Minimal Senses* features a synthesized breathing sound that slows and calms the environment, guiding the audience into a reflective state. "When people enter, the sound slows them down," Hochi explains. "It puts the audience in a different state—somewhere between calming, snoring, and meditative. In this way, the manipulation serves a different purpose."

Another recent project is *Plant Your Seat*, an exhibition developed by Hochi with ioio for the HKDC Immersive Space. Inspired by how small animals and insects rest on flowers, the exhibit invites visitors to sketch a flower and then use generative AI to transform it into an organically shaped, polished chair.

Hochi is excited to return to SCM, which gave him a broader understanding of creative work—what it can be, where it can happen, and the numerous possibilities within various spaces. "I am grateful and feel fortunate that this map has helped me in navigating and moving across multiple fields," he says.

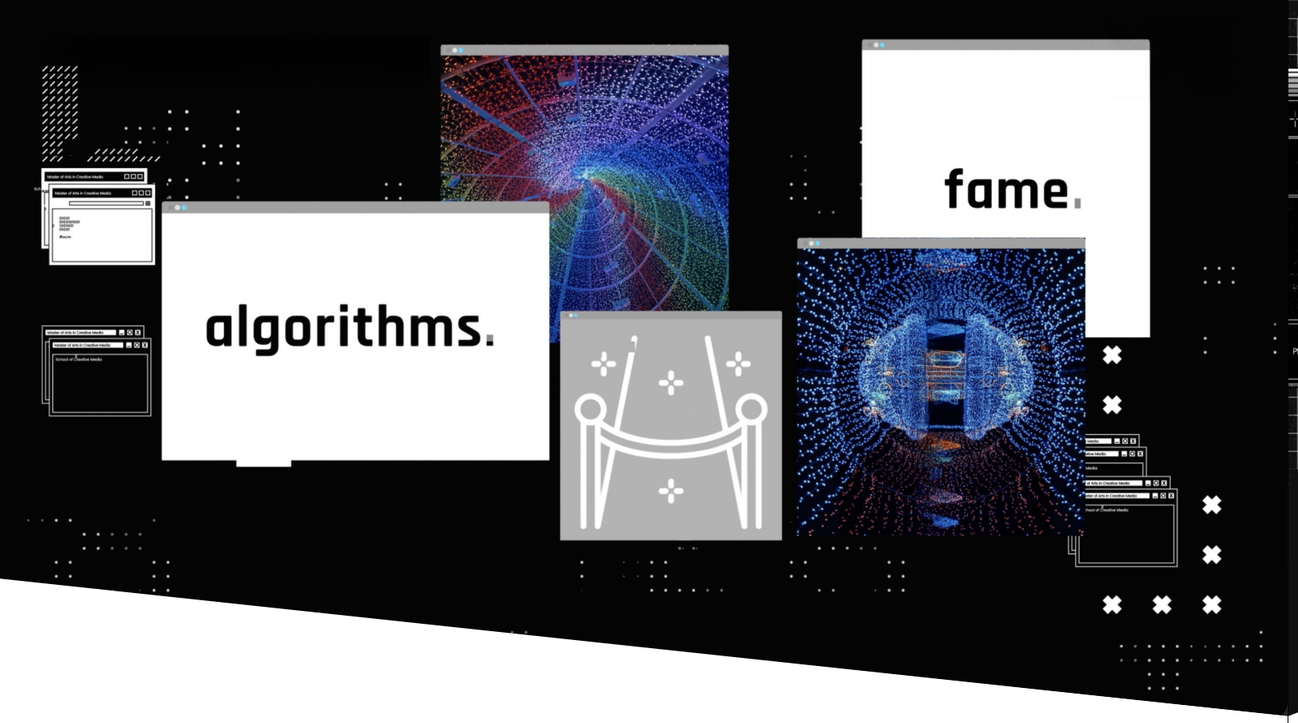
Lau Hochi (throwing felted points and arrows to create directions).



Distant Object #2 (2016), a sustainable system of illusion and entertainment production. The system extracts labor and organic movement from the user through the interface and the responsive landscape. The optical illusion object translates the user's movement into an anonymous performance for the audience.

Emergency Exit (2021), the video installation goes back and forth between fictional doors and the space behind it. The doors take the form of an emergency exit with absurd associative sets of signage.

Exhibition view of *Minimal Senses* at Current Plans (2025) – the exhibition encourages the journey inward—hibernating from the noise of fragmented stories to question where conserved energy flows.



The “Influencer Studies” stream examines alternative artist pedagogy, integrating aesthetic forms from emergent questions about data, algorithms, fame, and intersectionality.

Highlighting the curriculum’s exploration of global and regional social media cultures, with a special emphasis on the Sinosphere and platform-specific knowledge.

INFLUENCERS OF THE FUTURE

The Master of Arts in Creative Media (MACM) equips the next generation of cultural innovators to shape and respond to contemporary creative practices. The programme comprises three streams, including the newly introduced Influencer Studies Stream. This stream critiques contemporary influencer practices, examining how culture is increasingly shaped by social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. It explores artist-driven pedagogical approaches, integrating diverse artistic practices with up-to-date discussions of data, algorithms, fame, and intersectionality.

The curriculum provides a global and regional view of social media cultures, with a particular focus on the Sinosphere and platform-specific dynamics. The Influencer Studies Stream equips students for careers in social media and the wider creative industries through an unconventional framework grounded in philosophy, aesthetics, critical theory, and cultural studies. The programme is led by Associate Professor Damien Charrieras, with Assistant Professor Dino Ge Zhang serving as Deputy Programme Leader.

Although influencers are often dismissed as superficial, Prof. Zhang argues that understanding the historical evolution of online content is essential for cultivating a diverse and inclusive digital future. Influencers have become integral to daily life, shaping the aspirations of younger generations. SCM courses explore contemporary influencer practices through a multifaceted approach that integrates historical context, cultural theory, political economy, and the unique dynamics of different social media platforms.

This approach sets the programme apart from many university offerings emphasizing marketing, business models, social media, and content production. Rather than promoting a narrowly defined entrepreneurial mindset focused on branding, view counts, and advertiser appeal, the programme centers on critical thinking. “We are not saying money does not matter,” says Prof. Zhang, “but we need to understand how things work on different platforms from a wider socio-economic perspective.” The aim is to foster thoughtful engagement with the socio-cultural implications of influencing.

The global creator economy is worth approximately US$250 billion, with Goldman Sachs projecting that it could double by 2027. In Hong Kong, the Youngster Social Media Behaviour Survey reported that young people spend an average of 2.5 hours daily on social media, particularly video-centric platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Influencers on these platforms have become key sources of information about new trends and cultural developments. Consumers, especially younger demographics, are seeking a sense of agency and moving away from traditional entertainment. Understanding these shifts in media consumption and audience behavior is central to the MACM’s approach to studying contemporary influencer culture.

MACM student Can Hu highlights the programme’s depth and focus on contemporary cultural symbols, such as Internet celebrities. “While many other programmes teach how to create content or execute marketing, this programme asks why society has evolved this way and how to leverage the Internet and various platforms to craft more effective content or promotional strategies,” she explains. This timely knowledge of the digital era, she adds, will significantly further her aspirations in film studies, screenwriting, or film promotion.

Hu also wishes to pursue a PhD in film and popular culture studies and is considering a career as a screenwriter or producer. The analytical and critical skills conferred by the MACM will provide a solid foundation. “They will enable me to do more than tell a story in papers or films—they will help me craft narratives that are thoughtful, resonate with audiences, and are capable of prompting reflection. That, I think, is the true value of cultural practitioners,” Hu concludes.

Ailin Li, another MACM student, previously worked as an IP operations assistant at a multi-channel network agency. She was drawn to the programme for its examination of influencer culture as an evolving cultural phenomenon, not merely a business model. “This programme invites me to reassess and rethink my long-term career trajectory,” she says. After the first semester, Ailin reports a growing critical awareness of influencer culture. In the second semester, she aims to broaden her perspective by exploring new theoretical frameworks and analytical approaches to examine influencer culture with greater nuance and structural insight.

Looking ahead, Ailin foresees continuing her career in fields related to social media and digital culture. She believes that the MACM will equip her to approach content creation and emerging online trends with objectivity and critical awareness, empowering her to make more informed and responsible decisions in the creative industries.

The Influencer Studies Stream signals a broader shift in higher education: toward rigorous engagement with how culture, technology, and power intersect across digital platforms. By grounding analysis in history, theory, and diverse aesthetics, the programme prepares graduates to navigate the evolving creator economy with discernment, ethical awareness, and creative resilience. As students like Hu and Ailin transition from classroom reflection to industry impact, they exemplify a new generation of cultural practitioners who not only produce content but also ask meaningful questions, shape public discourse, and fashion a more informed and socially responsible digital landscape.

(From left): Influencer Stream Leader Prof. Dino Zhang, Meme Scholar Dr. İdil Galip, and YouTuber Brendan (aka gumdoughduck.tv) engaged in an insightful discussion on contemporary social media platforms, memes, and Hong Kong culture.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE SCM STUDENT EVENT TEAM: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

The SCM Student Event Team (SCMSET), informally known as the Student Event Team (SET), is a dedicated student association within the School of Creative Media (SCM) at CityUHK. It operates as one branch of the university's Student Chapter scheme.

This year marked another exciting milestone for the SET, as it welcomed a new cohort of core team members to lead its operations. Committed to the guiding goal of "Making SCM Students' Lives Better," the team will continue to identify challenges, solve problems, and enhance the overall experience of SCM students.

Since its establishment in 2022, the SET has grown into a vital platform for developing leadership skills among students. Far more than just an event-organizing group, it serves as an incubator for future leaders, community builders, and engaged citizens at our university.

The SET's mission is to equip students with the skills needed to thrive in today's increasingly complex global environment. Through diverse engagement opportunities, the team organizes a wide range of events tailored to the varied interests of the student body.

In 2025, for example, a "Portfolio Shelf" was installed in the lobby of the Run Run Shaw Creative Media Centre, giving students a platform to proudly display their personal portfolios. Visitors, faculty members, and SCM fellows now have the chance to view the display and appreciate each contributor's creativity and talent.

In addition, the SET has established and actively manages an Instagram account, and its committees produce a wealth of high-quality and engaging digital content, including interviews with SCM students and teachers. These initiatives strengthen the sense of community at the SCM and actively support students' personal and professional development.

Among the SET's most impactful events are company visits, which offer valuable insights into industry practices and workplace dynamics, connecting academic learning with the professional world. The Orientation Week Programme welcomes new students, helping them navigate university resources and build networks from day one.

Highly acclaimed photography exhibitions over the last three years have given SET members hands-on experience of leading large-scale professional events. Through these events, they have gained real-world skills in curation, cultural management, exhibition design and production, event management, and more.

A game booth organized by SET at the CityUHK Orientation Exposition featured prizes designed by the team themselves and drew large crowds of students to participate.

SET co-organized a film screening of *Another World* 《世外》, a distinguished animated feature directed by BACM alumnus Tommy Ng Kai-chung, showcasing the visionary work of our talented graduate.

Art Blast, a drawing competition co-organized by SET and the Comic, Animation, and Doujinshi Society, was open to all talented students at the University.

An Art Jam event.

Other standout initiatives include the Recycle Campaign, which educated students on sustainability and fostered environmental responsibility; study workshops that provided tailored academic support, software training, creative skill-building, and effective study strategies; and the 2D Painting/ Fanwork Animation Competition, which showcased artistic talent, technical expertise, collaboration, and innovation across the university.

During challenging times in 2022 and 2023, the SET adapted creatively by organizing Virtual Graduation Ceremonies, ensuring that students could still celebrate their achievements despite COVID-19 restrictions. A series of social events, including BBQ parties, Christmas celebrations, and Halloween gatherings, further strengthened social bonds and enriched campus life.

The SET's success is supported by funding from Student Development Services and the School, along with generous sponsorship from external organizations. This backing has allowed the team to expand its reach and elevate the quality and impact of its events. Through community service, social activities, and its own media platform, the SET organizes events year-round, engaging over 200 SCM students and securing more than HK$100,000 in funding to date.

The team's contributions have been widely recognized. Last year, for example, core committee members received the SCM Student Leadership Awards in honor of their outstanding dedication and meaningful impact on the university community. This accolade highlights the team's hard work in promoting student engagement and leadership.

As the SCMSET continues to champion student leadership and community involvement, we warmly invite all students to get involved. By participating in SET initiatives, you will not only enrich your own university experience but also help cultivate a vibrant culture of engagement and collaboration. Together, we can shape the future of leadership at CityUHK.

SET hosted a range of festive Christmas activities at CMC, featuring a Secret Angel programme that encouraged interactions and strengthened bonds among fellow SCM students.

The Unseen Realm — a captivating cameraless photography exhibition featuring student works from Prof. Elke Reinhuber's "Alternative Processes in Photography" class.

Abby Yuen (aka DJ Just Bee) performed at SCM's 25th Anniversary Party Celebration.

JUST BEE: A DECADE OF INNOVATION IN SOUND, VISION, AND DANCEFLOOR CULTURE

SCM alumna Abby Yuen (Just Bee) has pursued a remarkable musical journey that will inspire many. After completing high school in 2013, she spent a gap year working as a waiter before enrolling in an accounting and finance programme at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). Realizing that the programme was not a good fit, she left HKU at the end of 2014. Later, she was diagnosed with ADHD, a discovery that helped her understand her strengths and creative drive. Recognizing her natural inclination toward music, she immersed herself in the city's dance music scene and soon discovered her talent for DJing. In 2019, Abby returned to university to study new media at SCM, a move that broadened her artistic horizons. Here, she took courses in sound art and explored the field in innovative ways beyond traditional DJing. A decade after first stepping behind the decks, this formidable talent had firmly established herself as one of Hong Kong's most influential and significant DJs, as well as building a community called "Girls Chat," where women come together to discuss important topics.

Beginning as an instinctive pull toward sound, Abby's musical journey has led her to some of the most prominent festival stages and club nights across Asia and beyond, including an unforgettable performance atop the Great Wall of China. She has played more than 250 shows in 15 cities. Once rooted in bone-rattling bass music, her style has broadened into a vibrant mix of house bangers, gritty techno, and punchy club remixes.

As a member of the award-winning drum-and-bass collective Unchained early in her career, Abby's formative years sharpened her instincts and deepened her appetite for experimentation, and she steadily rose to the forefront of Hong Kong's underground scene. Along the way, she earned coveted supporting slots for A-list artists, including Ben UFO, Fabio, Madam X, DJ Zinc, and Nicole Moudaber. Her growing popularity soon propelled her across borders, taking her to stages in the UK, mainland China, Thailand, Malaysia, South Korea, India, and Vietnam. Along the way, she delivered standout sets at some of the region's most respected clubs, including 𠮷 (Mihn) Club and OIL, and made high-profile appearances at major festivals such as Clockenflap and Hypefest.

Abby's sets unfold like conversations, each track chosen to mirror her mood and how she sees the world. Her sincerity behind the decks, combined with her expansive and adventurous taste, has made her a favorite not only on the club and festival circuit but also with prominent organizations and luxury brands. She has performed for M+, Vogue, Hublot, LUSH, Hong Kong International Airport, FWD Insurance, and the Love 21 Foundation. "I am inspired by the fact that we are a group of individuals who found ourselves together on the same dancefloor," she says. "It's fueled by love, a desire for human connection and just taking a break from everyday routine life, which can be tough."

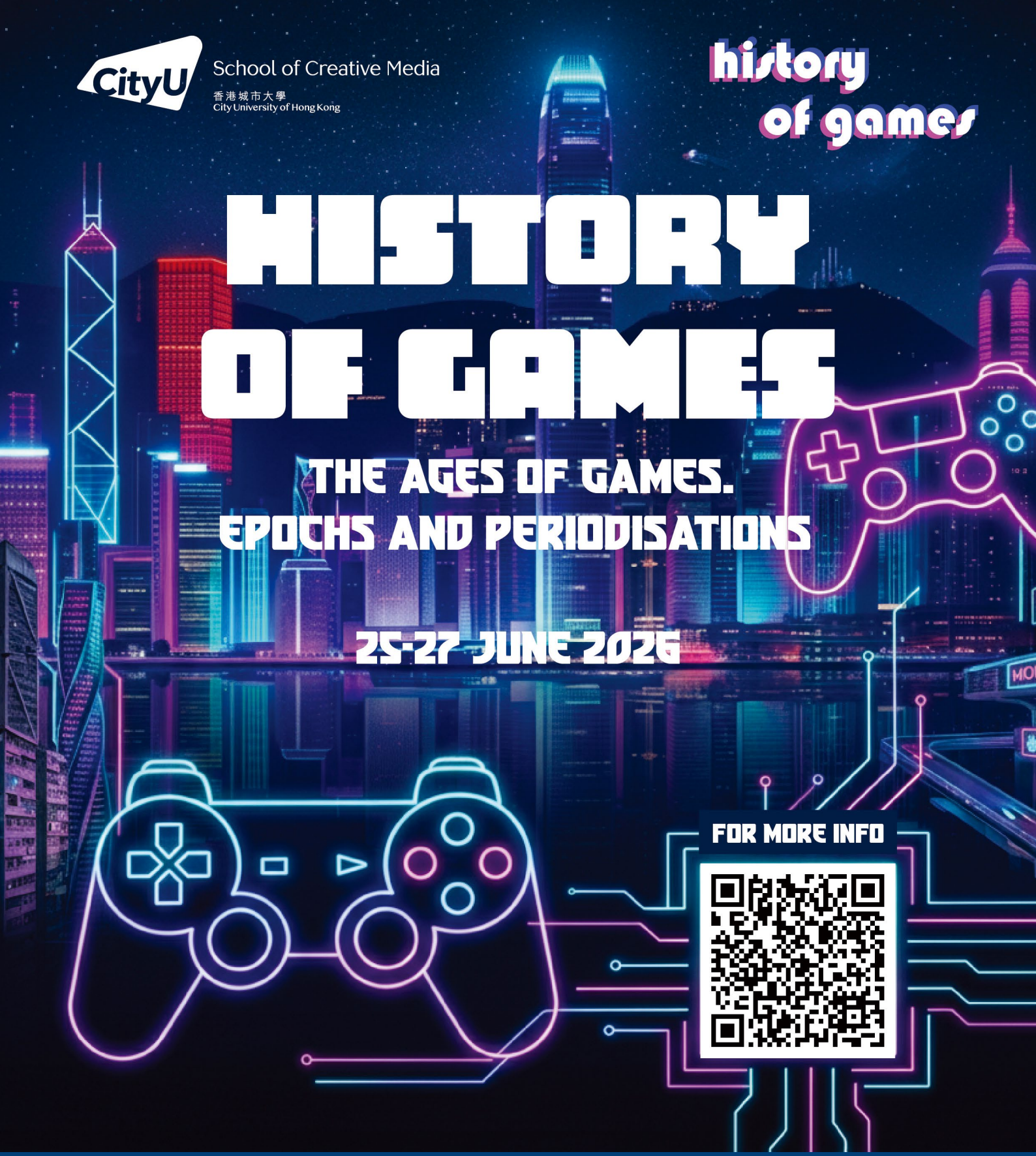
Abby performed at M+ at Night event.

Among her innumerable achievements, Abby most cherishes her performance at Hong Kong's M+ Museum. "I loved playing to a big crowd of Hongkongers," she says. "I also incorporated Cantopop into my set, which was super fun and allowed me to connect with the crowd even more. We made the ground shake that night!" Abby is now gearing up to unveil her latest work—an intimate, experimental collection set to be released on Yeti Out's Silk Road Sounds label.

Abby's time at SCM played a significant role in her musical development: "Navigating a creative career can feel like way-finding in the dark. My academic background taught me to be more methodical, and I have come to realize that imposing limitations on myself can be beneficial for my work. The artist's brain can be all over the place, so thinking in frameworks helps a lot!" she notes. "During my studies, learning about the minimalist music movement broadened my musical palette and deepened the way I listen to anything. I'm thinking of Eliane Radigue's drone music, which I really connect with, and the Deep Listening concepts by Pauline Oliveros. It made me a more intentional DJ/artist (and person!) because in order to make better choices, whether artistic or in life, we need to listen to ourselves more deeply."

As a mentor and advocate for women in the DJ community, Abby is confident in the younger generation, noting that they are far more informed about issues such as consent and harassment. In her view, it is the older event organizers and partygoers who now need to learn from them and follow their lead. "My advice is to only compare your current self to your past self, rather than to other people! Also, be patient and truly trust the process," she says.

Girls Chat Talk – a Hong Kong-based, women-only community event series hosted by DJ/producer Just Bee. It aims to create a safe space for women to connect, share experiences, and support one another.



SCM RESEARCH ISSUE 16 [2026]

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DESIGNER NNNNNNN LIMITED
PRINTER CITY UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG PRESS