

"A Laugh at the World: James Wong" Exhibition Leaflet

James Wong, who was born Wong Jum-sum, was a renowned cultural figure in Hong Kong. Since the 1950s, he had been active in a variety of cultural and performing arts media. He excelled in composing lyrics and music, writing columns, making films, creating advertisements and performing on stage. His life coincided with several important stages in the development of Hong Kong after the war, and had a significant impact on the formation of and changes in Hong Kong's popular culture.

From a diverse range of his music flavour like western classical music, European and American pop music, Indian music and modern avant-garde music, James Wong took an eclectic approach in adopting the various musical styles, while passing on traditional Chinese opera culture. His works are characterised by a thorough understanding and mastery of the various art forms. He interpreted traditional cultural contents with a modern touch, blending them well with Hong Kong society, cultural changes and his unique personal style, and tried to "present the vicissitudes of life to the audience through words, images and sounds."

James Wong faced with competition and setbacks in the music industry in the path of his creative career. He overcame trials, impediments and tests with resilience and perseverance, developing a remarkable style in his performing arts career. The public love James Wong's works, but he was not satisfied with many of them and considered them failures. He considered many of the works were crudely produced, and even concluded that out of over 1,000 songs he had written, less than half of them would be considered acceptable.

Through the titles of four songs created by James Wong, the exhibition will narrate his cross-discipline creative journey, illustrate how he contributed to the heyday of Hong Kong's popular culture and depict his unfulfilled cultural practice.

Exhibition Floor Plan

1. Encounter "Below the Lion Rock"
2. "Ask me" - How I came to be
3. Journey across the "Breadth and Depth of Mountains and Waters"
 - 3.1 Hong Kong style works appeal to everyone
 - 3.2 Footprints in the cinematic world
 - 3.3 Roaming the sandy plains, flowing in the rivers and lakes
 - 3.4 Joining hands in times of trouble below the Lion Rock
 - 3.5 Literary and vulgar - crossing boundaries
4. "It's him, you and me"

Exhibit Highlights

1. "Voco" orthotonic harmonica designed and produced by Leung Yat-chiu
1970s

Leung Yat-chiu was always James Wong's greatest enlightenment teacher. They met in junior secondary school, and James began to learn the harmonica with him. Soon Mr Leung was taking him to radio stations and music studios, where he became engaged in broadcasting and music composition thereafter.

Collection of the Hong Kong Museum of History

2. Campaign Poster of the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong
1970s

The Family Planning Association of Hong Kong launched a publicity campaign on birth control entitled "Two is Enough". James Wong wrote the music and lyrics of the advertising song sung by Sandra Lang. This tune went on to become an iconic TV advertising song which many Hong Kong people grew up with.

Courtesy of the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong

3. Trophy for "Best Composition" award in the 1986 Jade Solid Gold Best Ten Music Awards, given to Joseph Koo for The Love Then
1986

The Love Then is the theme song of the film A Better Tomorrow. It was composed by Joseph Koo with lyrics by James Wong, and sung by Leslie Cheung.

Courtesy of Joseph Koo's Family

4. Cover of vinyl record of Let's Rock
1975

In 1975, Wu Sau Yee and James Wong jointly directed the uplifting Cantonese youth comedy Let's Rock, starring The Wynners. James was also the screenwriter and songwriter, as well as actor for the film.

Collection of the Hong Kong Museum of History

5. James Wong's autograph and self-portrait for True Friendship Concert
May 1998

Collection of the Hong Kong Museum of History

6. Painting of Joseph Koo and James Wong
Painted by Joseph Koo
c. 2010s

James Wong said, "Everyone thinks Joseph is a person of few words, but when he is with his close friends, he can absolutely talk non-stop and he is also very humorous." Joseph Koo was very fond of this painting, which was based on a photograph of the pair laughing heartily.

Courtesy of Joseph Koo's Family

7. Stage Costume worn by Roman Tam in Liuyi's letter
1984

James Wong said, "The effort and energy Roman Tam has invested in producing stage plays are unsurpassed even today." When Roman Tam passed away, he wrote the eulogy: "My dear Roman, even if your powerful singing over the years is not preserved in music albums, the music lovers will always remember your wonderful songs and rich emotions. Whether in autumn or spring, in joy or

sadness, you will be in their hearts."

Donated by Ms Tam Ming-yuk
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8. Platinum record awarded to Roman Tam's A Good Song for You, 1980

Roman Tam's album A Good Song for You, includes the theme song for the TV drama series Below the Lion Rock composed by Joseph Koo with lyrics by James Wong, won the Platinum Record award in 1980.

Donated by Ms Tam Ming-yuk
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9. Film poster for A Chinese Ghost Story
1980s

In 1987, James Wong wrote the soundtrack - music and lyrics - for the film. In the insert song Dawn, Please Don't Come, there is a line "Don't let the daylight separate us". James said, "I used a blue note in the musical phrase. This type of note is common in jazz music, which I listened to a lot when I was a teenager. The note naturally came to me and brought with it the pleasure of having a someone who understands."

Collection of the Hong Kong Heritage Museum

10. TV programme poster for Celebrity Talk Show
1990s

Produced between 1989 to 1990, this was a late-night adult talk show hosted by James Wong, Ni Kuang and Chua Lam. It was an open platform for free discussion on a wide variety of topics. Prominent artists and celebrities were also invited to the show to share their deepest thoughts.

Collection of the Hong Kong Museum of History

11. Introductory leaflet: "James Wong, A Master of Cantopop Lyrics, CASH Hall of Fame Award
2000"
20 October 2000

In 2000, James Wong was given the CASH Hall of Fame Award by the Composers and Authors Society of Hong Kong.

Donated by Composers and Authors Society of Hong Kong Ltd.
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12. Lyric manuscript of Liuyi's letter
1984

Major musical Liuyi's letter, produced by Roman Tam with Joseph Koo as music director, James Wong as scriptwriter and lyricist, and Eddie Lau as stylist and costume designer. Cantonese opera and pop music elements were added to the performance to create a new style of musical.

Donated by Ms Tam Ming-yuk
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Presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department
Organised by the Hong Kong Heritage Museum

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Saturday, Sunday & public holidays: 10am-7pm

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