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By Patrick Lo, Wei-En Hsu, Stephanie Wu, J. Travis and Dickson Chiu, Nova Science Publishers, xxxvi, 329 pp.

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ARTICLE HISTORY

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This publication is in part a follow-on from the 2017 anthology concerning Asian Collections and Archives. As with other key works by Patrick Lo, it focuses on interviews with key people in the field, in this case 21 of Hong Kong's most important cultural figures, with a 22nd contribution from Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts, London (a partner with Hong Kong University in an MA in Arts and Cultural Enterprise). The result is a rich picture of what is going on there, and how the future is envisioned. The publication is described at various times as a 'primer', a 'compendium' and a 'reference tool'; it is all these things and more, providing a series of case studies based on real-life experiences that will resonate internationally as well as nationally and be of particular value to leaders and managers in the field. Not surprisingly COVID-19 and its effect on people and institutions features, and it is a tribute to all those involved not only that they coped so well during the pandemic, but also that they were willing and able to share their experiences for the book. The publication is especially timely, given the renewed discussions about the value of the arts and how best to evaluate what is often too intangible to be measured in standard metrics. What is clear from this book is the inextricable link between culture and community, economy, and society across a whole range of ecosystems and how those connections and areas might best be developed in the future, both in general and with reference to particular activities, subjects, and themes.

As with other books of this kind produced by Patrick Lo and his colleagues, a key element in their success is the choice of contributors and the editors' abilities in drawing out the interviewees experiences to best effect, combining the individuality and authenticity of individual chapters with a skilfully summarised thematic narrative. This provides the reader (or perhaps one should say 'user') with a state-of-the-art,

hands-on *practical* summation of the field from people at the leading edge. The backgrounds range across performing arts, museums, government, academia, other institutions and archives, and cultural criticism. There is a mix of 'Hong-Kongers' and expatriates from a range of countries. The organizations represented range from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council to the Chopin Society of Hong Kong, the University Press to the Arts Festival, the Maritime Museum to the Asia Art Archive and more. A small number of the interviews originally appeared previously as journal articles.

Special mention must be made of the excellent introduction to the work: it is concise yet comprehensive, drawing together the key strands of the interviews and underpinning the analysis with apposite reference to relevant literature. The interview transcripts themselves follow a standard pattern, with the interviewee allowed to speak naturally in their own words through flexible and responsive questioning based on sensitive responses to the person's replies. Reading the transcripts feels like being in the interview room.

A strong emphasis is – rightly – placed on the individual's own career path; this in itself must be a source of inspiration for others. The second half of most of the interviews, as one would expect, focuses more on the particular organization, its context and environment, its challenges, and achievements, not least during the past 18 months, but also more broadly. The back stories of the institutions represented in the book make fascinating reading, as summarised in the conclusion to the work. This element of *Creating a Global Cultural City* makes the title worth reading!

But Lo's work is much more than a history of culture in Hong Kong, as already noted in this review. It is the choice of interviews, the methodology used and the imaginative way in which the transcripts are presented, introduced, analysed, and summarised that makes the book such a valuable addition to the literature – and a splendid read into the bargain, whether the user is 'dipping in' or reading from cover-to-cover. The excellent colour illustrations (whether pictures of the interviewees, their organizations, artefacts, related cultural activities or other relevant material) do much to enhance the work. I personally would have preferred a more detailed index, but this is a small point, especially given the excellent concluding section and the analytical material more broadly. I recommend *Creating a Global Cultural City* to all involved in the arts and, indeed, more broadly, for there is much in this title that is of central relevance to leaders and managers across all sectors.

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