

(SRG) Strategic Research Grant (City University of Hong Kong)

Project Title:

A Virtual Walk through the Urban Space of Hong Kong 1929-1936: visual ethnography for a lost history of space

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Abstract:

This is a history project grounded in original **archival research**, whereby principles of visual ethnography inform the treatment of audio-visual and textual data to stretch their limits for **narrative construction**. It recreates the sight-and-sound and **texture of daily life** in HK in 1929-36. It is a time of relative peace and calm, often called the golden age of leisure, but marked by the HK-British administration's pacification tactics to reinforce **colonial government control**.

"Deliverables" include: (1) study of HK's macro film culture in 1934; (2) annotated anthologies of writings from 1929-36 with discourse analysis on arts, cinema, negotiation of local HK identity, competing notions of colonial citizenship, humanness and Chinese-ness; and (3) an annotated album of photographs and print ads from the period. The three components form one book, now officially scheduled to go through manuscript production and peer review, initiated by the HKU Press, projected to come out late 2009.

Project Objectives:

- (1) to create the first space-oriented history project on the texture of everyday life and governmentality in pre-war Hong Kong (1929-36);
- (2) to create a cluster of works in multiple formats, from writing, video work, photo annotation, to on-line archive, to illustrate the impact of the materiality of inscription technologies on knowledge production; Prototypes of historical material in different medium treatment will be produced for initial sample study.
- (3) to put interdisciplinarity into the practice of history-writing reflexively and critically;
- (4) to arouse public concern for HK's cultural heritage and history of urban growth via an art exhibition platform where the findings of the research will be organized innovatively and accessibly. This would be in the form of a book manuscript for academic publishing.

"There are THREE key research activities central to this project as part of a long-term research: collecting, archiving, and narrativity."

(Linda C.H. LAI)

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