The 15th ifva Interactive Media Category Jury Meeting Transcript

Jurors in Attendance: Jamsen Law (LAW), Bryan Chung (CHUNG), Linda Lai (LAI), May Fung
(FUNG), Endy Fung (ENDY)
Organizer Representatives: Teresa Kwong (KWONG), Kattie Fan (FAN)

LAI: Is Best Concept the same as Best Proposal?

KWONG: According to our regulations, Best Concept refers to woks that are still in proposal
            stage and have not been completed. However we are quite flexible. If jury members
            decide a certain work has a good concept and deserves this award, we will also
            consider it. This award does not involve cash prizes.

            Page 2 of your agenda talks about the number of awards. This is just a
            recommended list of awards set by the organization, but you can make alternate
            arrangements. We have one Gold Award, the winner of which will receive $30,000
            in prize money, a trophy and prizes. One Silver Award, the winner of which will get
            $20,000 in prize money and a trophy. The will also be three Special Mentions, who
            will each receive a certificate. There will also be a Best Concept winner, who will get
            a trophy. We are quite flexible with the awards, and in the past we have had no Gold
            Award winner, or two Gold but no Silver, etc. In cases like this the prize money will
            be equally distributed among the remaining winners. As for the prizes we will try to
            negotiate with the sponsor for additional items, but if this is not possible the jury
            should decide which winner should get the prize. For example a few years ago in
            the Asian New Force Category we had two Grand Prize winners from Japan and
            Indonesia, respectively, who shared the prize money equally, but the jury awarded
            the prize (a video camera), to the Indonesian filmmaker.

            If there are no further questions we can begin our discussion. I suggest going
            through all the works first, and then voting for award winners.

FUNG: Or should we do it the other way round, and each rank the finalist first? But if other
            categories do it this way I don't mind.

ENDY: Last year we discussed the general direction of the competition and established an
            overall benchmark.

LAI: We could discuss the entries one by one, and then rank them according to our

preference. I think it's better if we discussed the works first.

LAW: Does the competition want to honor independence or inter-activity?

ENDY: Works those are more artistic or more popular?

LAI: Or works that are more sustainable in terms of user experience? These factors influence how they are ranked.

FUNG: We should discuss the criteria used to judge the works.

LAI: For me how long a work can immerse its users is an important criterion, and it is important that I be able to play around with it for a period of time.

FUNG: I stress a work's interactivity, which is fundamental. Some works are like films, whose interactivity is only on a mental level.

LAI: Do you mean that interactivity for you must always be limited to that between humans and machines?

FUNG: It should at least have that element. I also agree that sustainability is an important consideration. If the experience only lasts a short time and does not take you onto a different level, then it's no good.

LAW: Even if I did not consider the interface, some works May Fung seem easy to handle at first, but if the instructions are unclear, it doesn't work. For example, I did not expect that in **SOUNDgraf**, you have to figure out whether to turn the controller towards the screen or the projector, and people could easily become confused.

FUNG: I'm not very intelligent about these things, yet I managed to get it right with **SOUNDgraf**. But what got me confused was the work about barcodes. If getting people confused is the creator's intention, he should at least state that up front.

CHUNG: This point is probably more important than whether a work is user-friendly. As for whether a work involves interactivity between human and machine, I tend to be more flexible. I can accept that a work involves interactivity among humans but does not involve machines, or just have interactivity among machines. The competition has set out guidelines concerning content, form, structure and

technique. On top of that we can add interactivity. Sustainability can be seen as part of content or technique.

KWONG: This competition stresses independent spirit and creativity. For example in the Open Category, some works may be technically accomplished, but we usually prefer works that are not as good technically but may be more innovative in terms of its form. The same thinking should guide this category as well. Some works we have seen in the past were very skilled, but they are similar to products that are already available in the commercial world. We tend not to endorse such works. Whereas the competition wants to recognize works that are innovative in its concept or interactivity.

ENDY: Perhaps some works are not as advanced in terms of how they present the interactive experience…

LAI: User experience is an important consideration. Mainstream applications are often very simple, with instant input and output. Of course there are different understandings of what is mainstream, one of which is how the software is designed. Another point to consider is the complexity of the interactivity. All these elements make up the interactive experience. Sometimes the experience just involves very simple input and output and the end result is enjoyable. Other times the interactivity is complex, but the experience is superficial. The point you raised about independent spirit is important. We should consider that in addition to the complexity and sustainability of user experience (including its technical aspect), how the works define interactivity, and the creativity of the interface.

KWONG: We can now discuss the works one by one. The first one is **Mushroom on the Cassette Tape**.

ENDY: From my perspective this is the most stable work. That is, it expresses what the creator wants to express. However the message is not very profound. Aside from being pretty it doesn't provide me with a very memorable experience, nor are there any surprises.

FUNG: The work is a simple one that turns memories into something else. It's an interesting work. You collect memories on one end, and release them on the other. It is reciprocal, and the relationship between the two is not simplistic, but varies in intensity. I think the work could have gone further, but perhaps I am too greedy.

ENDY: I find the experience too simplistic.

LAW: When I got close I was fooled by the cassette tape. When I pressed the button I naturally began to make loud noises. Actually what it wants the user to do is just to press the button. The rest has nothing to do with him. I can't help but wonder why it's like that.

LAI: I would reiterate what you said just now in terms of a learning curve. The learning curve of this work is very short, but it's there. I know if I press for a short period, the output will be weaker. This is a simple work. The other point is his own description. If he didn't say this I wouldn't have challenged him. But he says the purpose of the work is to re-interpretation an outdated medium. If this is so the cassette tape should serve a function, but now it is just a decoration. For example, he could have done away with the cassette tape and used a button instead. However I appreciate the work's simple and neat interface.

CHUNG: I like it a lot. I like its use of material—the cassette tape, which combines well with the images. It relatively successfully merges the virtual with the real, although I expected a little more. Whether or not the material serves an actual function is not important for me, but I feel there could be more connection and greater complexity. The second point has to do with the design. Does it really need two tables?   Could it not be done on the same table, like having two buttons on one table?   The way it is set up now leads you to expect there to be interaction between two people, like if one person is pressing a button on one side, does it change what the other is seeing on the other?   If it is just a single person's interaction then the experience could be more personal, like memories. I like works that contain different elements.

ENDY: What is the relationship between pressing the button and the output? I tried pressing for a long time, and what comes out are long and thin. When I repeated this the results were different.

LAI: I think it's random. I expect the work to be more organic.

KWONG: The next work is *Table-Obscura II: Intimacy*, the one with two tables.

ENDY: I have something to declare. The one with the phone is done by someone who works in my company. I could be absent when we discuss this.

LAI: I know all of the entrants except for one. Most of them are former students. One is a

former colleague.

Fung: If you knew all of them you would be more fair!

ENDY: The work differs a great deal from the time when I saw the presentation. The last
          time I felt it expressed the humorous side of inter-sex relationships and the sense of
          a couple's disconnection. This time I only saw a person wearing a skirt on the other
          end, and there is no message or story. The experience is far different from what I
          expected, and did not achieve what it intended to at the beginning.

LAI: From the spot where you can see the legs, can you hear sounds?

FUNG: Yes, you can hear it on both sides?

LAI: I thought you could only hear on one side and see on the other.

FUNG: I quite like this work. I saw it once at his grad show. The feeling when I saw the
          person on the other side was strange because what you see is under the table. It
          felt very sensuous and intimate. The dialogue sounded like what couples normally
          say to each other, but underneath the table is a different story. One flaw is that on
          the side without the images there is not much to see.

LAI: I think there is water.

FUNG: Is that intentional?

FAN: Yes, during the installation the artist requested that.

CHUNG: I saw it the first time when I was grading it at school. At that time the work was not
          as refined and the rooms were smaller, but the feeling of intimacy was greater. Also
          the last tie the table cloth had floral patterns…

FAN: This time it is wallpaper.

CHUNG: The last time there was a window in front of the two people, but this time there were
          not so many elements, and the feeling of intimacy is less. I was expecting some
          pre-recorded sounds of people chatting, which will help create a certain mood, but
          there wasn't.

LAI: I saw it at the grad show too, and the first impression was good. At first I didn't know the two rooms were inter-connected. I sat down in one of the rooms. It felt interesting but I didn't know what was going to happen. Then suddenly I saw someone's legs, which belonged to the person sitting across from me. She happened to be a girl wearing a skirt. Then gradually I started hearing the sound of people talking. The whole experience was very good.

LAW: I like the whole set, and this type of setting has lots of possibilities. The structure could contain a lot more, but it didn't. When I went in I thought the work had the same storytelling technique as videos. Also the sound is too loud, which really affects the overall feeling of the piece. It would be better if there were more interaction between the two people, but now as soon as you trigger the sound you are just a passive audience. When I first saw the legs I was surprised, but there was no further interaction, and the work does not take the intimacy onto another level. I feel it wasted what could have been a good opportunity to explore something more profound

LAI: Technically the work is very polished. At least every element works. But it is too efficient; you get the output too quickly after the input.

FUNG: This feeling was not as strong the first time. It had a strange sort of attraction that caused you to go back and forth between the two rooms.

LAI: That's how I felt the first time too.

KWONG: The next work is *5-stars﹐ Identity*.

LAW: Even though this work just involves watching, it differs a great deal from the proposal. You expect the content to change, but it didn't.

LAI: Even though I accept that the work is just for watching, I expected that there'd be more interaction between machines. I don't know how to judge this work. It's quite simply broken. How can you judge a work that's broken? This year there are several works like that, like the robot one, and the one with the barcode.

FAN: It's hard to say if it's broken. When you came he was still trying to fix it. I can only say that when I saw it the first time and when the work was first submitted, there were images and sounds, and the sound was repeated in an endless loop. He

came to fix it and when he left, these elements were not there. I don't know if that was done on purpose or if it was broken. The artist who did the robot is out of town. Some components came loose during transportation, and we had to communicate with him by long distance call to see how it could be reassembled. The video part is definitely broken. *5-stars′ Identity* is not broken.

FUNG: All five screens were playing, and there was continuous sound as well as text. Every time it did a translation there was a sound.

LAI: Is it because there was nothing for it to grab just now?

FUNG: When I watched it just now it worked.

LAI: I like this work because it involves interaction between machines. In terms of the amount of work involved, it surely is no less than the first and second ones. The proposal is the most layered and has the best concept among all the works.

FUNG: It involves translation, and the fact that the final step is simplified Chinese characters comments on the state of Chinese web content, which is often delayed or incomplete.

LAI: People usually assume that interactivity has to be between humans and machines. This work opens up other possibilities.

CHUNG: Interactivity could also be among a group. But why should the media be cell phones?

FUNG: Cell phones are a big market in China. Even poor people want to buy a locally made cell phone.

LAI: The proposal does not mention what information will be selected.

LAW: It simply says "websites of news and blogs".

KWONG: The fourth work is *A Map of Our Own—Kwun Tong Culture and Histories*.
LAW: It records much information. The concept is an exciting one, but I didn't get this feeling when looking at the website. Using a collective to gather data about Kwun Tong is an interesting concept, but this group of people does not represent anything

very unique. The website is like the ones that use blog reader software to combine things together. It is just a bunch of records, just like reading a news site.

LAI: It is a website, so I expect there to be more input and wider distribution. However right now the input is very limited, and only the collective can input information. As a collective site, we should not only discuss its output but also the input. Now one side is clearly stronger than the other. It is also an archive, and we can use relevant standards to judge it, such as the arrangement of information, whether the retrieval of information is easy, the quality of the storage structure, etc. I want to be more sympathetic to this work because it is a relatively new archive with less than two years' history.

LAW: Also, not everyone can input information.

ENDY: This is the Archilles' heel of such Web 2.0 sites, which is that you could not deal with all the information you are not sure will be useful. The project is very ambitious in its scale and aspirations. But faced with this problem, it has to be selective about who can input information. Yet how representative is the collective?   The other issue is the design of the site. The user experience is weak, and everything from the graphics to the arrangement of content is weak. However, its intentions are good.

FUNG: All archives are done by a limited number of people, who are often people with similar mindsets. You cannot have the entire population of Kwun Tong taking part.

LAI: But its design doesn't even allow interested parties to post information.

LAW: I don't mind that its access is limited, but what does the collective represent?   The creators need to be self reflexive and make this clear to the public.

FUNG: When I visited the site just now I felt it has depth. I can find what I wanted to see. For example, there is a section on events, another on buildings, and there is a part containing voice recordings. On the whole the website offers different kinds of experience. I find it a very condensed work; the question is how much time you have to browse around. I don't think it needs to state its mission explicitly, rather, you can sense it after experiencing it.

LAI: This is not the problem that Jamsen raised. He acknowledges that there are experts behind any archive, but since it does not let everyone input information, the work could become more distinctive if you can state the ideology of that collective.

FUNG: What do you mean when you say self reflexive?

LAW: For example, many post-80s and other groups are doing Kwun Tong projects. What distinguishes this one? How is this different from the stuff I see on YouTube?

FUNG: The images and categorization are different, and the types of stories you see are different. Perhaps because I know Anson, I know that she has always explored the relationship between sounds and images. This is the main difference between this and YouTube. Also I think this goes deeper.

LAW: I know that it is different from YouTube. That's why I want it to tell me what that difference is.

FUNG: Does it have to be so obvious?

LAI: Self-reflexivity is always a good practice, even if you are running an archive. Especially if you see archives as a democratic form of the museum experience that appeared with the rise of new media…

FUNG: Is it that you think it's stance on Kwun Tong is not critical enough?

LAI: Not necessarily…

CHUNG: When I see this, all I see is the result. I hope to see the discussions and arguments among the members of this collective. Perhaps because the archive is still young, you don't see much input from users. But this type of interactivity is what Web 2.0 emphasizes.

FUNG: I tried posting my comments, but didn't succeed.

LAI: This work is different from the others because its intention is community generation, so you cannot separate it from the medium's capabilities…

FUNG: This work reminds me of another by Jessey Tsang a few years ago…

LAI: That was not a Web 2.0 work, but a self sufficient one, and it didn't require interference from the outside. This work is not a regular website; it requires user response.

ENDY: I don't think it is its intention to have a particular point of view. I have expectations about the map. Because it uses Google Map, it cannot record the names of buildings from the 1970s.

FUNG: There is no focus when you open up the web page. You need time to get adjusted to the layout. The user experience is relatively weak.

LAW: It calls itself "A map of our own Kwun Tong."   If psycho-geography is such an important component of the work, then the whole experience should not be like this.

LAI: If so, the personal perspective is all the more important.

LAW: That's right. I'm not saying you have to state the vision and mission, but to let people know who "you" are: when were you born, what is your connection to Kwun Tong, etc. This information is important.

LAI: It is a still developing website. Right now it is still in the process of collecting personal stories, experiences and photos, etc. We can judge whether it has the potential to link up these materials. For example, perhaps it is trying to look for the past in the stories and the maps.

LAW: The design of the web page is important. I feel the website is just informational, and do not feel that by entering the website I am entering their world.

KWONG: The next work is *Video Vending Machine*.

LAI: You have to put $3 in every time. Lucky I don't have to pay for it!

FUNG: I thought we could pick the segment we want, but couldn't. What we actually get is just a pixel.

LAW: It's not just a pixel from the film, but there is also text, like a promotional flyer.

ENDY: Is it randomly generated?

FUNG: Yes.

LAI: The interface looks good, but does it work all the time.

FAN: It worked well just now.

LAW: This reminds me of the work from last year that involved stealing time. My question
            is once I picked the movie I want, what does the pixel represent? When I participate
            in this work, the process I enjoy most is probably the selection.

ENDY: Its description says it wants to spark our thinking about consumption habits. This
            description sounds more complicated than the actual work.

CHUNG: The work does not feel relevant to me personally. Let's say I like a segment in a film.
            I understand the point about consumption, yet it doesn't seem to have anything to
            do with me. I'm not sure what impact the scenario it created is on me.

LAI: Its design is pretty, but the various elements are disconnected. There is a good
            looking machine, an interface experience, a choice involving movies, but these
            elements do not link up.

LAW: If it randomly selects clips from YouTube it would have been more interesting. Now I
            choose the film I like, wait 60 seconds, during which I watch an unrelated trailer that
            does not conjure up any feelings about the film I picked, and the whole experience
            is kind of strange.

FUNG: When I experienced the work just now, I felt like I was in a shopping mall. Many
            people were gathered around this work excitedly, because it is easy to understand.

KWONG: *Stories of a Cell Phone*.

LAW: As a video work, I don't know what to make of it, because each of the stories is
            short and not particularly related. What sort experience am I supposed to have?

LAI: It is like being punished. The set-up of the work is good but it requires a good script.
            Now the content is too banal, and is simply things that regular couples say to one
            another. They don't work in this piece, because it requires that the story be better
            designed. Now, every time it stops, I don't get the urge to follow the story. This work

needs the sort of dramatic tension that conventional dramas offer, or else contain something completely experimental, like the color changing drastically at a certain point. Now it's too banal.

CHUNG: I tried a segment just now and it worked. Telephone not only serves as an interactive device, but plays a role within the story as well. For example one character talks with another on the phone, then drops the phone into the toilet. That was surprising. But I did not call again, and don't know how the story develops.

FUNG: Why did you not make more calls?

CHUNG: Because it's troublesome. I have seen works that allows the audience to choose different strands of the storyline

ENDY: All the story lines have to do with telephones, but only one of them is okay, the others are not good.

LAI: I experienced some technical problems, and only played once.

LAW: That logo appeared for a long time.

KWONG: *ATB-02*.

ENDY: The work has great potential. I had high hopes when I approached it, but was disappointed.

FUNG: This is the most unattractive work among the finalists, because you have certain expectations of it. You know that it is cute and is meant to attract children.

LAI: I quite like the way it looks, but the two pairs of eyes, one above and one below, are a bit of a waste.

CHUNG: Its descriptive text says it is meant to be installed in a public place and to be enjoyed by kids, but it breaks down so easily. I am not sure if the interactivity works. I only heard sounds. The whole thing is just like a small musical synthesizer.

LAW: I like its rawness. But if the artist wants to put it in a park for kids to enjoy, the interface should be more fun. Now there are just a few buttons.

FUNG: Also kids can't play with it by themselves, but have to be lifted up by adults. Perhaps the artist deliberately wants to foster closer relationship between parents and their children.

LAW: The buttons shouldn't be designed this way. For example, there could be wires I can pull out or something.

KWONG: The next one is *SOUNDgraf*.

LAW: The work differs a lot from the descriptive text!   It basically does what it says, but the amount of variations is far less than I expected. Now here is just one type of stroke, and only the color changes.

FUNG: And the texture. I tried it without the sound, and the image that came out was quite flat. When there was sound, a checkered pattern appeared.

LAI: The descriptive text sounds really good. It says people's shadows can be cast on the screen.

FUNG: Do the rules of the competition state that there cannot be live performances?

FAN: No, but the artist notified us really late.

KWONG: A few years ago, because the descriptive texts were unclear, some jury members requested that artists be present at the judging. Later they decided the works should be self explanatory.

LAI: I don't want the artists to be present either.

ENDY: You should be able to tell from the work itself what their creators are trying to express.

LAI: Compared with *Mushrooms on the Cassette Tape*, this work has a lot of things happening. I had a lot of fun with it because I can scream and talk to myself.

CHUNG: It is quite a complete work.

LAI: Whereas with *Mushrooms*, you May Fung not realize that you have to put the tape

on the other side.

ENDY: Doesn't it give you instructions on the recording side?

CHUNG: I don't understand why **SOUNDgraf** involves two objects instead of just one.

LAW: I'm a bit disappointed that you have to finish one piece of sound before going to another. If I changed things in the middle, it does not change along with me, but I have to wait till the whole section is finished. This seems to me to be a technical flaw.

KWONG: **Rub.ID#food**.

CHUNG: If the artist had used everyday items like the clothes I'm wearing to get the barcodes it would be more interesting. Now it just seems like an exhibition.

ENDY: Do barcodes really represent personal identity?

LAI: My original comment was that the sound was too monotonous. But now there is no sound.

KWONG: Now we can give grades to each work, or each person could nominate an award-worthy work, or you can directly nominate the Gold Award winner.

LAI: I want to drop a bomb. I don't think there should be a Gold Award winner.

FUNG: I agree. The competition has been around for many years. We should not stay at the level of simply offering encouragement, but rather awards should go to works of excellence.

LAW: I agree.
KWONG: Then you can nominate Silver Award winners.

FUNG: What shall we do with the prize money?   If two Silver Award winner were to split the money, wouldn't they each get more than they should? Why don't we have three Silver Award winners. I think **Table-Obscura**, **Video Vending Machine** and **Map of Our Own Kwun Tong** should be considered.

LAI: I choose *5-stars Identity* and *Cell Phone*.

ENDY: I choose *Table-Obscura*, *Map of Our Own Kwun Tong* and *Cell Phone*.

LAW: Me too. I choose *Table-Obscura*, *Map of Our Own Kwun Tong* and *Cell Phone*.

CHUNG: My choices are *Mushroom*, *Table-Obscura* and *Video Vending Machine*.

KWONG: *Table-Obscura* gets the most votes, followed by *Map of Our Own Kwun Tong* and *Cell Phone*. Should these three share the Silver Award?

LAI: I don't object.

FUNG: Neither do I.

KWONG: The prize money can be evenly split, but there is only one set of software, plus a drawing board.

FUNG: The artist who did *Table-Obscura* is a student. Perhaps she needs the software more.

KWONG: Then there is Special Mention.

FUNG: Other works that received votes including *Video Vending Machine*, *Mushrooms* and *5-stars Identity* should get Special Mention. Is that okay?

KWONG: To sum up, in this year's ifva Interactive Media Category, there are three Silver Award Winners, *Table-Obscura*, *Map of Our Own Kwun Tong* and *Cell Phone*. Also *Mushroom*, *Video Vending Machine* and *5-stars Identity* get Special Mention. Please keep the results confidential until the announcement, and I invite you to come to the award presentation ceremony to act as presenters.

LAI: I could go on stage to make some general comments about the works. Do you have any comments you would like to include?

KWONG: We mentioned that there are great discrepancies between the proposals and the actual works.

FUNG: Does that mean we should only look at the works in the future?

LAI: Actually they are not proposals, they are descriptive texts that accompany the works.

FUNG: How do we solve this problem, or just let it be?

KWONG: The other point you had mentioned is a work's sustainability.

Interactive Media Category

Gold Award

Nil

Silver Award

Table-Obscura.II : Intimacy

Wing-shan LEE

Silver Award

A Map of Our Own-Kwun Tong Culture and Histories

Anson MAK, Yammie CHAN, Yuenya, saSa, imjoy, Yvette HUI,

ar On, Stanley NG, Joshua CHEUNG, Chung-fai WONG,

Ronald LEUNG, youthfotologue, Nicole KT YU

Silver Award

Stories of a Cell Phone

Millie Yuet-yung CHIU

Special Mention

Mushroom on the Cassette Tape

Lawrence Ming-tat LAU

Special Mention

5-stars' identity

Winnie SOON

Special Mention

Video Vending Machine

Naomi CHAN