

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

The world is a fast-paced, fast-changing place, with the growing convergence of arts and technology (arts tech) becoming an observable global trend that is disrupting cultural ecosystems worldwide. Economies around the world such as the UK, South Korea, and Taiwan, have all laid out innovative policies in recent years that actively call to action, collaborations and convergences between the two realms.

As a new genre and norm of the future, arts tech can affect, influence, and even revolutionise how people perceive and respond to arts and culture in Hong Kong. The democratisation of technological possibilities has manifested immense opportunities for the arts and creative sectors—new possibilities for artists and the industry, as well as a greater edge for Hong Kong’s position on the global stage—making arts tech a ‘blue ocean’ area waiting to be captured. With value innovation at the crux of what arts tech represents, it is indeed timely and necessary for Hong Kong to seize this window of opportunity to devise farsighted visions and policy plans to push the agenda forward.

### POLICY GAP 1

#### **Lack of cultural blueprint that commits to arts and technology convergence**

There is currently no blueprint or vision in place for the development of digital culture and arts tech convergence in Hong Kong. Without a dedicated and overarching strategic plan, efforts by the industry can only be scattered and piecemeal at best, with little support and coherence from the private sector. This is not only detrimental to the long-term sustainability and viability of the arts and cultural ecosystem, but also to the cross-sector synergies that arts tech could bring.

## RECOMMENDATION 1

### **Devise a cultural blueprint on arts tech that brings cultural and technology sectors to work together, with commitments encompassing funding, infrastructure, and network and capacity building**

We recommend The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (the Government) devise a policy blueprint for the development of digital culture and arts tech, as a top-down commitment and a call to action for the arts and technology sectors to work together. As arts tech straddles across the arts, creative, as well as technology sectors, it naturally warrants the involvement of different government bureaux, namely the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB), as well as the Innovation and Technology Bureau (ITB). We recommend the Government appoints a leading bureau that champions this movement, to drive and devise a dedicated blueprint with farsighted goals that commit to ensuring sustainable strategies for arts tech collaborations. Specifically, the blueprint should cover the important policy arenas of funding, infrastructure, and network and capacity building.

## POLICY GAP 2

### **Lack of funding incentive that encourages collaborations between creative and technology organisations**

There is currently no funding dedicated to arts tech in Hong Kong with the mandate of promoting collaboration between arts and technology organisations. While we are able to map out several sources of funding scattered under separate bureaux that accept projects with arts tech elements, none of them are dedicated to supporting the convergence of arts tech or arts tech crossover projects. The absence of such dedicated funding means there is little incentive for arts and technology organisations to partner or work together.

## RECOMMENDATION 2A

### **Broaden the scopes of funding under the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) to include projects that inspire innovation and bear creative value**

For the short term, we recommend the ITF diversifies the nature of its supported projects. For instance, the ITF's Technology Voucher Programme (TVP) currently supports projects that use technology to improve 'productivity' or 'business processes' only. We recommend the funding guidelines be broadened, to also include and encourage applications of creative and innovative project and service nature.

## RECOMMENDATION 2B

### **A dedicated arts tech funding for Hong Kong**

Drawing from references of dedicated arts tech funding currently offered in the UK, Taiwan, and South Korea, we recommend, for the longer term the Government establishes a new funding with cross-bureau involvement that is dedicated to supporting cross-sector collaborations between the arts and technology sectors. The funding shall be led by one championing bureau that facilitates collaboration and involvement among other related bureaux, including the HAB, the CEDB, and the ITB. It is also important for the funding to be made eligible to cross-sector applications, covering front-of-house, back-of-house, as well as research and development (R&D) projects. With arts tech a new and untapped genre with much potential for upscaling, we recommend specifically the proposed funding covers both fully-subsidised grants and part-financed schemes to cater to applicants of different levels, who may be in pursuit of projects with different purposes and goals.

### **POLICY GAP 3**

#### **Lack of infrastructure for creative innovation research and testing**

Testing spaces and venues for research, prototyping, and experimentation are needed in order to foster a robust foundation for the flourishing of arts tech in Hong Kong. The current predicament is that such infrastructure is not in place: the ambit of creative culture is not entertained amongst the current five main government-appointed R&D centres in Hong Kong. We have identified two most comparable contenders on arts tech research in Hong Kong—City University of Hong Kong’s School of Creative Media (SCM), and Hong Kong Baptist University’s Creative Media and Practice Research Cluster (CMP). While both champion interdisciplinarity, the former is a school of its own whereas the latter is a cross-departmental research cluster of the university. Both are university-affiliated, which naturally portend to certain limitations, and thus accentuate the discrepancy between what our arts tech infrastructures can offer in Hong Kong and our international counterparts.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3**

#### **Set up creative innovation research infrastructure for testing and experimenting new ideas and hybrids**

We recommend the establishment of a creative innovation research infrastructure in Hong Kong, with five key components that cover the aspects of: 1. Research and Development, 2. Industry Application Channel, 3. Creativity & Innovation Driver, 4. Incubation / Scaling Up, 5. Public Involvement. The existing arts tech infrastructures in Hong Kong, such as those in universities, may be strengthened to cater to more holistic needs of the industry; related institutions may also consider allocating spaces for testing and experimenting within their venues, such as the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) or public museums.

#### **POLICY GAP 4**

##### **Obvious information gap exists between creative and technology sectors**

There is currently no platform that bridges creative professionals with technologists in Hong Kong. While we are able to map out a number of sector-specific directories, most are inactive and unconnected with each other, and only extend their coverage to a limited number of organisations and industries. As a result, information exchanges between arts and technology sectors are limited, bare, and ineffective.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4**

##### **Fund a digital culture platform that creates a network of expertise, and sharing of best practices**

We recommend a leading bureau funds and sets up a digital culture platform that bears functions of a dynamic and holistic network of information and expertise between the creative and technology sectors. We recommend the platform also offers capacity building initiatives that help raise the sectors' digital maturity. Specifically, the leading bureau shall invite an intermediary to build and run the platform, but take oversight of its utilisation, overall effectiveness, and long-term development, and set farsighted KPIs to maintain regular presence while keeping the platform active and continuous.

## CONCLUSION

The four recommendations set out in this report address the four major policy gaps of blueprint, funding, infrastructure, and network—all of which are detrimental to the development of arts tech, and the aspiration of keeping our cultural ecosystem relevant to the times.

As Hong Kong's first policy recommendation paper that calls to action for the creative and technology sectors to work together, we hope the recommendations in this report can kick-start a conversation across all related parties and government bureaux, so that we can be part of a collective effort that recognises the importance of staying relevant, of innovating arts, and the myriad of new possibilities and opportunities that arts tech could bring, both for the industry and our city at large.