

22nd ifva Awards Media Category Jury Meeting Transcript

Jury Members : Chung Wai Ching, Bryan (Chung), Ying Kwok (Kwok),
Ng Tsz-Kwan (Ng), Kristina Maurer (Maurer), Sarah Lee (Lee)

ifva representative : Kattie Fan (Fan), Emily Ng (Emily)

Fan: Today, we have to decide the four awards, including the Gold, Silver, Special Mention and Best Local Work. Are there any questions?

Kwok: Are the artists involved in the set-up?

Fan: We decide the location for them, and then they have to do the set-up themselves. Some of them may hire a contractor to help, but as competition organizer we could not provide too much assistance. We provide basic assistance such as Wi-Fi access and basic technical issues. Despite the gallery limitations, we tried best to present their work in the best way. They all know that the actual artwork will be the material for jury assessment. Some entrants submit requests like they want a room or an enclosed space. For example, one of the artists, Hui Wai-keung, requested a dark room, but now the work is projected and you listen with a headset. This is a decision that we discussed with him. After weighting the pros and cons, he decided to use this method of presentation.

Kwok: Another question about the sound. With the Lisa Park work, she doesn't have a set of speakers, so the sound is purely coming from the laptop. Is that her intention?

Fan: Correct. That is her intention.

Maurer: She didn't ask for speakers?

Fan: When she arrived, she asked for the speakers, I borrowed one for her, and then on the next day she decided she did not need it. For the performance later, she decided to link the computer to the TV projector with an HDMI cable.

Maurer: I have a question about the piece with the violin. Is it supposed to be a performance?

Fan: It's an installation for the exhibition here. If we are ready, I suggest we go through the works one by one, it is a way to give your comments and advice about the artworks. After that, we can nominate the award-winners. The first work is *Re-Dürer*.

Maurer: I missed the sound. What does the sound actually do?

Kwok: It's the sound from the game and the artist's voice.

Chung: There is an inter-textual reference to the art-form, but I cannot make much sense of what the artist intended to do. Apparently some parts are unfinished, and some are texture matted

on realistic surface, and the one on the left hand side is distorted in some form perspective. I try to imagine if it is related to the motion that's in the fighting scene in the centre of the screen. It is not very direct and easy to comprehend. About the use of machinima, I'm not sure if it's a perfect way of using machinima or the use of game engine to create this form of things. I imagine I can do it in video or maybe just narration without a lot of visual reference. I find it not so easy to go back to those paintings and sculpture in relations to those characters. I consider it something not 100% finished, there may be something that can be used to create a more coherent work.

Kwok: Does anybody know what the engraving is about?

Maurer: I don't know either. I was wondering what is the relation between the engravings and the actual game. Is there any relation between the game he picked and the engravings, or is it a random decision? In theory it is very interesting to use these old masters' paintings and connect them to new technology, but as you said, there is some sort of factor missing to show what he was intending to present. I wonder if it is related to the return to the sublime, that is he doesn't think it is necessary to have a reason to relate these things, that it is floating above the level of reason, perhaps?

Lee: There is an assumption that viewers know of Durer's well-known engravings, and it requires some sort of explanation, perhaps. Maybe it seems unfinished, but perhaps there is some intention behind the work in relating the scratchy nature of engraving and trying to relate that to video art.

Chung: In my article in the catalogue, I mentioned that I know of artists who use game medium engine to recreate old paintings, which they do in a photo-realistic way, with characters from the original paintings moving around or doing strange postures. In such works there is a tighter relations between the medium they chose and the representations we see. For this work, I understand the engravings, but I do not know how they come up in a piece of work. I like the wire frame and the mix between the more finished texture map and the something unfinished as the wire frame model. But I am not 100% sure how the three elements come together.

Kwok: It seems like a very ambitious work that brings in many different elements and references. When I come across the work, the first thing I notice is Joseph's voice, but I cannot make out why it's his voice lecture and what it means in the video game's world, so I totally forgot about the lecture. There are many elements and references, but I cannot see the logic behind it. Feel like its ambitious and visually impressive, but in terms of overall impression, it just stays on the surface.

Lee: When you listen to the sound, it's all fighting and visual swearing. It's quite emotional, but I guess that's the balance with the three engravings.

- Fan: Let's move to *When a Circle Meets the Sky*.
- Chung: Is the image quality intentional?
- Maurer: There are some elements where I'm not sure if she did some post-production work on it, if she wanted a certain look or is it the video quality?
- Emily: The left one is the old version, it's produced in 2012 and that the best quality it is. The right one was produced last year, and the two are a series.
- Kwok: The one with the snowy scene, the sound is very minimal. Is that intentional?
- Emily: The sound level was adjusted by the representative of the artist.
- Chung: For me, this work was quite straight-forward and easy to understand. I'm not sure if it's the best way to present this idea. When I was there, I wondered if I should be standing or sitting in a chair. The sitting position would be better, especially for those moving references, and if I had a chair I can rotate together with the images, and it'd be much more immersive. I don't know if the artist had thought more about the way to present rather than a traditional two-panel display.
- Lee: I think it'd be better presented as a multi-screen, multi-channel presentation, because I think with the nature of this object filming 360 degrees, I feel it has to have that element as a presentation.
- Maurer: She chose the location herself, where she films?
- Emily: Yes.
- Maurer: And then she lets the camera do its thing and leaves it alone there?
- Emily: Yes.
- Maurer: How long did she leave the camera there?
- Emily: We don't know.
- Kwok: Having the two screens as a pair doesn't do more to the work itself. The one with the snowy scene, we can just about to hear the sound, and I also have a question about the intention. As Bryan said, if the artist wants to make it more immersive or push it further is to consider how viewers look at it. The sound is important to the work, and hearing the sound from natural landscape would have been quite a powerful element in the work. I feel a bit disappointed that it is not included.

- Ng: When I look at it, my impression is that it's like early video art. I won't say I don't like this work, I just have no specific feeling about it. When I look at the artist's statement, she really wants to talk about the isolation of nature. That would be a little different from what I think. I think in this work she did a lot of interruption of nature, and not really conveying a feeling of isolation.
- Maurer: I feel exactly the same way when I looked at the statement and seeing what it actually looks like in the exhibition, because there is so much agency involved in choosing this place and bringing the camera there, and then installing it, that I'm not sure if the whole relationship she mentions about no human interaction or human presence. It doesn't really work because she's obviously the person who chose the spot where camera is. It feels very purposeful rather than giving your agency to the weather. There is not much that can happen other than the thing being turned by the wind. I'm not sure if she's creating the piece she's talking about in the artist's statement.
- Lee: She intentionally chose opposite elements, a desert and a mountain, but the differences between them are not that extreme. That has to do with the quality of the sound.
- Maurer: She could have chosen a city or some sort of industrial landscape.
- Kwok: If she had chosen a city or something like that, it would make sense that she has two. Now she has two natural landscapes which is hard to read. I don't see the point of having two screens.
- Maurer: I find it kind of strange that if you are going to all the effort to find a desert and some sort of arctic landscape, why not mention it at all? It gives no context as to why those locations were chosen.
- Fan: This artist is the only one absent in setting up the work, I just want to check if it's our decision to use headphones, due to the spatial limitations?
- Emily: We asked if it's okay for her, and she agreed.
- Maurer: My main concern is not so much the set-up. You always have some limitations if you have an open exhibition space. My concern is about where it was filmed.
- Ng: Did she express any concerns about the set up?
- Emily: She made some requests. One is that it be set up in a big room with a high ceiling, but our gallery does not have a high ceiling. So she came up with the TV setting.
- Ng: If it was a huge projection, it'd be different.
- Kwok: It's about not pushing the work enough, or going into the details. There are so many

suggestions that can take the work further.

Fan: The next work is *Glimpses*.

Maurer: I don't have very strong feelings about this. There are a lot of poetic works in the exhibitions, such as *Ghost in the Sellotape* and *Floating Paper*, for me that's in the same area of expression. Within those works this is the weaker one.

Kwok: The installation in that work is very important in terms of visual aesthetics, but having the bulky structure and the tiny window does not quite work for me.

Chung: Is it the artist's decision to build that bulky structure?

Emily: It is the artist's decision.

Fan: We assigned that particular corner for this work.

Chung: That particular block is quite awkward, it takes away from the simplicity of that window. The second thing is that it is working with lights and there is almost no reference to an exterior environment, it is composed of one single window pane. We can't make ourselves an imagination of something somewhere in which there is sunlight. So I find it not very satisfactory.

Lee: It has some potential with time-relating elements, with time-lapse filming, but the idea could be pushed further.

Maurer: The way the architecture is presented, you feel like you are looking inside the box, and it takes away from the idea that you are looking behind the window because you are seeing the box and the window going inside the structure, so it would have worked better if you had it on a wall where you can create an idea that you are looking through the wall. Here you do know what's behind it because it's built into this constricting architectural thing.

Lee: It would have been more interesting if it was created by streaming sunlight through the window projecting onto the wall, but way she presents it is the opposite.

Ng: That kind of work we see quite a lot. I understand the artist's intention, may be the moment when she is in a quiet studio seeing the sunlight coming into the room, she is moved and wants to convert the sensation into a film. But that kind of feeling is very fragile and difficult to grab. It is now presented straightforwardly making it hard for the audience to experience. It can't be translated so directly, she might have to push the idea forward to convey the original message.

Kwok: If she chose a different location in the space, for example on the 4th floor where you see a little bit of light, that might have given her work more weight. But now it's presented in a

room with no reference to light, so it appears weak in this environment.

Fan: We didn't have much interference for this artwork. Most of the decision is made by the artist. The next work is *Floating Paper*.

Ng: In the ifva promotion video, this work was very attractive to me. When I looked at the real work, it's nice, but it's a little bit clumsy. In a way it's quite poetic.

Fan: We encountered some problems yesterday with the sewerage system breakdown on the 6th floor. It somehow affected the humidity of the whole gallery, and the artwork was affected too. The weight of the paper was a bit different when the humidity was high. In the last few days it was perfectly ok. Every artwork has technical issues. This one may not have all the luck to let you see the most poetic part.

Lee: I think it's a very poetic piece about everyday objects, and also forces of nature. There are some technical issues, but I think it's a teething problem of the set up. It's a nice piece.

Kwok: I agree.

Chung: There are issues when they try to fix the paper coming out. Other than that I enjoyed looking at the piece. The video is much better than the work. Also the location connecting the 4th and 5th floor may be a problem.

Ng: You guys suggested that?

Fan: Yes. We are lucky to have such a space, because other gallery may not have such height. The next work is *ak7 shou3*.

Ng: Does anybody have a clue why it is called *ak7 shou3*?

Chung: Hand shake.

Kwok: Is there a performance coming along with that work?

Emily: No.

Maurer: I was wondering about when she says in her statement "every decision from the artist influences the interaction." I wonder what she means by that. Does she mean the set-up? Is there some leeway about how to set it up so that it sounds different?

Chung: From observation of those machines, I guess there is a possibility of performance. Along the shaft of the violin there is a variable resistor that when touched at certain points, it can change something. I wonder if she intends for there to be a performance.

- Kwok: I want to try and explore it, but it's so fragile that I am afraid to.
- Maurer: The artist's statement takes away from the installation because people are still playing instruments for leisure.
- Ng: It's kind of a weird statement.
- Maurer: The piece would have been much stronger without reading the statement. I think about it as more like a sculpture, but she tries to give meaning to it that doesn't quite work.
- Fan: The next one is *Abstract Violence*.
- Kwok: This work is one that compromises a lot due to spatial limitations.
- Emily: The first plan was to build an extra wall and have some sculptures put in front of the videos. But to build at an extra wall, that would have to be at the cost to finalists. After finding out the costs, the artist decided to change the setting. He then wanted to find a room with big walls facing each other but we don't have such a room. So we came up with a third version, and that's the version you see.
- Kwok: What happened to the sculptures?
- Emily: The artist thinks it doesn't work, so he took them away.
- Ng: The sculptures are the found objects on-the-spot?
- Emily: They are found objects that he 3D scanned and printed.
- Chung: Is the artist happy with the lighting conditions?
- Emily: He set up the whole work and the lighting.
- Lee: An incredible amount of work went into this piece, but I found it quite hard to engage with it, perhaps due to the presentation. I found it hard to get into the narrative.
- Maurer: I wonder if we were to give the piece the dimensions it would need, then we can see where he is going with it. I wonder why he is 3D scanning and printing the objects and not taking the actual objects.
- Ng: I'd imagine if I were doing it, I would print the objects really big, and I would choose very small objects. I'd be interested to know what he found.
- Maurer: I'm not sure if we are seeing the footage of him driving through Syria. I really want to like this work, because it would be a great opportunity to award a piece that deals with these

issues, but it doesn't quite work.

Chung: The appearance seems to de-contextualize the situation in Syria.

Kwok: One thing I would not do is place the two videos next to each other. That kind of pairing format is really problematic.

Lee: There is a potentially a very cinematic quality to the work but it doesn't come through.

Kwok: If there were two suspended boards with two projections or two TVs back to back, it would be already very different.

Emily: We had suggested two TVs, but he didn't like it.

Maurer: I guess he wants to project it on a wall.

Fan: The next work is *C6H12O6 + O2*.

Ng: The monitor is showing real time generated visuals?

Emily: The plants generate energy to make some sound. The sound wave showing on the monitors are not real time, they are pre-recorded. The middle one is a documentary of the work which is not real time too.

Ng: I don't have a problem with bio-art, but a problem with it is staying only at the scientific demonstration level, how it brings up to the level of being an art piece.

Maurer: You see very often with bio-art that the installation is kind of perfunctory, and it is about what's happening with the demonstration and not about the presentation of it. How she presents it is like a demo video, it doesn't add to the installation. I kind of like what she's trying to do with it, in terms of thinking about the process and what it can do for bio fertilizers and bio-fuel and things like that. I am drawn to artists who take this tinkering approach to working with bio materials. I like it, but I agree that the presentation, compared to other pieces, loses a bit of what it could be. It'd be better if there are some manifestations of the stuff she mentions in her text.

Chung: If the screen showing the sound wave was not so big but on a smaller screen placed next to the plant, it'd be better.

Kwok: It's a bit misleading to have the three screens placed next to each other, but they don't actually have any relations.

Emily: The next work is *Ghost in the Sellotape*.

- Lee: I think this work is very ethereal and beautiful, the way he brings everyday objects together.
- Maurer: I like how he arranged it in the space, the three pieces together works really nicely.
- Kwok: He put a lot of effort in arranging the three objects, because the one on the far right is shooting across the room. It invites the audience in. I like that he took the extra step in considering how to position the different works in that space.
- Ng: It's a nice experience seeing the work, because when you go inside, you don't know what's going on. Then you see the sellotape moving around a little bit. There are many different layers to it.
- Maurer: The sound is very nice as well.
- Chung: The only thing I can suggest is the length of the tape, and providing variety in the length. In this case, most of them in the projection area are quite short. If you can have a big roll of tape and see the tape movement, it can be more impressive.
- Fan: *Portable Art Vending Machine.*
- Ng: When I see the art work, it's quite nice, but when I see the statement...
- Lee: It's missing the video showing the machine in context. The pieces he finished are in India, in Mumbai, and he doesn't show the process. Part of the joy is the engagement with the people. The title is a little bit misleading, because vending implies exchange, but that's not coming through.
- Maurer: The pieces he created are put up on the wall, and is that the prices he put up on the wall?
- Ng: I think it is how many coins it takes, but maybe that's my imagination. I'm not sure.
- Maurer: So it's the amount of coins it takes to finish the drawing.
- Kwok: When I look at it, I have a big question in my mind: when it starts and finishes, and how does the artist decide that's enough money collected to finish the work, because they all look a bit unfinished. Or is it determined by time, and if so I can accept that the works are unfinished, but I can't find the answer from the work itself.
- Ng: That's an interesting point, because usually when we decide how much something is worth we use man-hours. But what if you apply that to artworks?
- Chung: I don't know how the machine gets those images.
- Maurer: I have the same question.

- Kwok: If it is about donation and getting people to interact with it, I should have a pre-set target. Like if I get enough donations, this is the product that will come out, and if I don't get enough, the picture will be unfinished. There has to be some structure to help us understand how to measure the donation. With just one more step, it'd be more complete.
- Ng: If I were to do it, I would draw from top to bottom so that you know at what stage it is.
- Fan: The last work is *Heartmonic (heart + harmonic)*.
- Chung: I understand the heartbeat rate is changing the pitch and tempo. The most interesting thing for me is not the conversion between the heartbeat and the music, it's the social interaction of the performers.
- Kwok: It depends on the instrument being chosen. Perhaps I picked the cello, and even though I jumped and got my heartbeat over 100, there's not much difference.
- Lee: It'd work better as a group performance.
- Maurer: If you are just alone and jumping up and down, not much happens, but if you got a group interacting this could work really nicely. The *Portable Art Vending Machine* and this are supposed to be participatory, and this one does it much better in involving participants in the creation of the art-piece. The installation is not as strong as the performance with the actual people in it.
- Kwok: The video she made is quite interesting.
- Ng: I found the video quite fake. It's difficult to use heartbeat to manipulate the music, and to make nice music is almost impossible. It's more like a performance than real interaction.
- Fan: We can move on to nomination of the awards. We have the Gold, Silver, Special Mention and Best Local Work. Are there any Gold Award nominees?
- Kwok: *Ghost in the Sellotape*.
- Lee: For me, too, it's the most complete work in the execution and impact on the audience.
- Maurer: Also the material he used and the way he built the contraptions, it definitely works best.
- Fan: Everyone agrees? So the Gold award is done. Let's move to Silver Award. The winner is entitled to \$30,000 cash prize. The next one is Special Mention, the winner will receive a certificate. The Best Local Work only applies to Hong Kong finalists, the winner will get a 6 day, 5 night trip to Ars Electronica or Transmediale.

- Maurer: I would propose the bio-art piece, *C6H12O6 + O2*, mainly because with the other pieces, I have quite a few problems with the artists' statements. With this work, I feel she's at least gone through a process of developing this piece, and thinking about where this art-piece could take her. She seems more focused in her methods.
- Ng: How about we start with works we won't consider?
- Maurer: I would say the violin piece.
- Ng: I like the elements she used, but the statement has serious problems.
- Maurer: We can take *Floating Paper* out because he already got the Gold Award.
- Kwok: Another one I would take out is *Abstract Violence*. I like the subject, but it really doesn't work.
- Chung: Also *Glimpses*.
- Lee: I think *Re-Dürer* may be worth Special Mention, for its complexity.
- Kwok: If we look at what we have left, we can go by the order of preference.
- Lee: I agree that *C6H12O6 + O2* has a lot of thought going into the set-up and the theory behind it, although the artistic aspect is not as strong as the scientific aspect. This piece has a lot of potential.
- Fan: So there are four works we have eliminated: *Glimpses*, *Abstract Violence*, *ak7 shou3* and *Floating Paper*. Agreed? Then *Re-Dürer* is considered for Special Mention, *C6H12O6 + O2* possibly for Silver.
- Maurer: *Re-Dürer* can be Best Local.
- Ng/Kwok/Lee: Agree.
- Chung: I also consider which work has the potential to continue to be developed further. Some works are quite finished and then it's stopped. *Re-Dürer* is a work that can be improved, and another one is *C6H12O6 + O2*. I am hesitant to give the Silver to *C6H12O6 + O2* because the craft is not quite satisfactory. *Re-Dürer* is quite ok in terms of craftsmanship, at least well-packaged and well planned. The circle one is quite finished and there is not much room to go beyond it.
- Kwok: I would like to nominate *Portable Art Vending Machine* for Special Mention. It's because the artist has spent a lot of effort to make the sculptural form and considering a very timely subject matter about art eco-system and the art market. Also it's a well-made sculpture.

- Lee: *Floating Paper* could be a Special Mention.
- Fan: The same artist has won the Gold Award, but we should decide by the art-work. The artist also spent a lot of effort setting up both works.
- Kwok: I like the suggestion to give *Floating Paper* a Special Mention because that is another well-done work.
- Fan: If everyone agrees, then we can focus on the Silver.
- Ng: It should be *C6H12O6 + O2*.
- Maurer: For me it's also *C6H12O6 + O2*. It would be nice to have a female artist in there.
- Ng: That's a good consideration.
- Maurer: If we can find a piece we can stand behind, it would be nice to have a woman artist in there as well.
- Kwok: They all have something to improve in terms of execution, but if we look at the subject matter, I think *C6H12O6 + O2* is the most interesting.
- Chung: For me, *Re-Dürer* is quite difficult to accept in terms of craftsmanship, even though I understand the idea and the research process behind it.
- Maurer: For me, *Re-Dürer* is too inaccessible for a Silver Award, so I have some reservations. In the end we should settle by majority vote.
- Kwok: Are there only two candidates left for Silver, *Re-Dürer* and *C6H12O6 + O2*?
- Maurer: We also have *Heartmonic (heart + harmonic)* and *Portable Art Vending Machine*. If it is between *Re-Dürer* and *C6H12O6 + O2*, I am not sure if I find the execution of the former better than the latter.
- Kwok: If *Re-Dürer* has already received Best Local, I would vote *C6H12O6 + O2* for Silver because of its subject matter.
- Maurer: If we consider *Re-Dürer* for Silver, we should give Best Local to another work, because otherwise we would have two artists getting four awards, which would be disappointing.
- Fan: In theory, the highest ranking local work should get the Best Local award. That means if a local work got Silver, it is also entitled to Best Local. This is the original idea for this award. This is the third year we have Asian entrants, and Best Local is sort of a protection for local

artists in case all the awards go to Asian entrants. Maybe in the future we will rethink this structure.

Maurer: Does anybody want to see *Heartmonic (heart + harmonic)* or *Portable Art Vending Machine* in the first three?

Fan: So we have two scenarios. The first is *Re-Dürer* getting Silver, in which case it is also entitled to the Best Local Work. The second scenario is that Silver goes to *C6H12O6 + O2* and then Best Local Work will be *Re-Dürer*. The third scenario is *Re-Dürer* gets Silver and another work gets Best Local.

Lee: *C6H12O6 + O2* has a global message that is inspirational to artists, and *Re-Dürer* is not as accessible as an art piece.

Ng: For me the topic of *C6H12O6 + O2* is an important one. With *Re-Dürer* it is not very clear in the artist's statement what is the relationship between those engravings and the presentation. But my first impression of *Re-Dürer* was I quite liked it.

Chung: With regards to bio-art, at the School of Creative Art a few years ago, they had this exhibition that had something similar. But as a competition it'd be good to have an artist from Indonesia because most of the time we have only Japanese artists, and sometimes Korean and Mainland Chinese, and not too many from South East Asia. For *Re-Dürer* I can see how he can use the prize to make the work a bit more polished and resolving those complexities in a more legible way. For *C6H12O6 + O2* I'm not sure what the next step would be. I guess it would be more research on how to engage with the community in terms of using those bio-materials. I'm not sure it would be fed back immediately to a new piece of artwork. That's why I'm leaning toward *Re-Dürer* at this point.

Maurer: I want to explain why I favor *C6H12O6 + O2*. I have less of a problem with the presentation because of the institution I'm coming from. We have a hybrid art category where we present a lot of these kinds of installations. And also at the festival we present in a way that you won't perceive as being very artistic or polished. I do agree that there have been better works doing similar things and going further with the idea and doing it in a much more sophisticated way, but within these 10 works I would still vote for *C6H12O6 + O2*.

Lee: I am behind *Re-Dürer*, but I can see the merits of *C6H12O6 + O2* as well.

Fan: Let's do a vote.

(Chung and Kwok vote for *Re-Dürer*, Lee, Maurer and Ng vote for *C6H12O6 + O2*.)

Fan: So the Gold Award goes to *Ghost in the Sellotape*, Silver Award goes to *C6H12O6 + O2*, Special Mention is *Floating Paper*, and Best Local Work is *Re-Dürer*.

Media Art Category

Gold Award

Ghost in the Sellotape

Junya Kataoka / Japan

Silver Award / Best Concept

C6H12O6 + O2

Irene Agrivina / Indonesia

Special Mention

Floating Paper

Junya Kataoka / Japan

Best Local Work

Re-Dürer

Hui Wai-keung / Hong Kong