

The 16th ifva Interactive Media Category Jury Meeting Transcript

Jurors in Attendance: Bryan Chung (CHUNG), Ryusuke Ito (ITO), Jamsen Law (LAW), Scott Hessels (SCOTT), Winnie Fu (FU)

Organizer Representatives: Teresa Kwong (KWONG), Kattie Fan (FAN)

CHUNG: For me, some of the works exceed the quality mentioned in the proposal, but some of them have discrepancy from what they'd written down in the documentation. In the first round we went through all the submissions, which is in the form of documentation. Some of them will have DVD, which are video recordings of their former exhibitions. Some of them will just have a proposal, which is their ideas and implementation plans. Actually the works selected are completed over the last month. We went through the materials and isolated some of those that had no chance to be selected. Then we discussed on individual works, and the three of us gave comments on individual entries and voted the 10 finalists to be included in the exhibition you had just seen.

KWONG: In addition to the 10 finalists, they also gave best concept award, which is not in the finalist, but they found that the concept needs encouragement.

SCOTT: Can I know the criteria you used? Were there categories, or was it just whether you liked it or didn't like it? How did you decide?

CHUNG: In the first round of selection we each had our own evaluation methods. Basically I stick to independent spirit, content, creativity and the use of media and technology. I don't have a weighting scheme that weighs each of those categories more or less. The grade I use for comparison is the overall sum of all entries.

SCOTT: I would have done the same thing. How do you define independent spirit?

CHUNG: Most often it's the form of the work—a lot of them have similarity with commercial advertising or software technology. For example the tape recorder work has less similarity with commercial work in using interactive media.

SCOTT: So it's the freshness of using new media.

LAW: Or to use it differently. Something personal can be a part of it.

SCOTT: But it's how fresh they use the tools?

CHUNG: How far away from the corporate use of those media.

SCOTT: Another criterion is technical skills or polish?

CHUNG: It is the way they use technology, whether it is professional. In previous years we encounter works that break down quite often.

SCOTT: Some of these didn't work for me either. So under "technology" is how well does it function? What else do you use for criteria?

CHUNG: I also use the criteria of content, which I don't know if it is the right term, because some works are more playful without delivering any content. Some of the works have social or cultural content built in.

FU: I would use the term "concept", like how original the idea and how it is executed, and whether it is creative in the sense that it is not seen in other works before or copied from other artists. In the past there have been works that are not so completed. We also count the degree of completeness, whether it is presented in complete form.

SCOTT: Would that fall under technology? Or is that another category, the presentation of the work?

FU: It could be put together with technology, but myself, because of ifva's title, I always count interactivity as more significant than others.

SCOTT: Is interactivity a separate concept, or does it fall under content?

CHUNG: I consider them separately.

SCOTT: So independent spirit, which is the freshness of the idea; technology, which is how well they use the media; concept, which is the thought behind it and finally interactivity, which is the quality of the interaction. Are there more?

FU: Jansen, you sometimes put more weight on the aesthetics or poetry of the work?

LAW: Some works show us how to make use of technology and make it interesting. Some artists use the work as a tool to express some feeling. I try to make a balance between the use of technology and how to use the visual element to express their feelings.

SCOTT: Is that different from concept?

LAW: Not really, but if a work has this quality I would bring it up in the discussion.

SCOTT: Each of us understand the word "concept" differently, that's why there are five of us. Do the four categories cover what we need to know? You mentioned earlier that some works do not deliver what they promised? Do we consider that?

CHUNG: I think in this case you can forget that.

KWONG: Because they have certain information that you don't have from the proposals.

ITO: It's difficult to judge, because some works may not be good enough for prizes, but we can find in them qualities that have potential, and we should encourage that also. Sometimes we are attracted by the artist him/herself with their character, not just the work.

LAW: If the overall work is not good enough we'll try to encourage such works with special mentions. Let's select our top five works and discuss them.

SCOTT: It is unfortunate that we cannot measure the body of work. Some artists may have 20 pieces while others only one, but we have no way of knowing, which is too bad. We do the best we can by judging what's in the gallery.

FU: Shall we give an overall score first?

KWONG: It's up to you. Other jury panels go through the works one by one and reach a common ground. Then they go to the second round and vote for the top 5. Then they will talk about the award winners. That's the usual practice.

LAW: I think the first round we can select ten and see how much we overlap. Then we start discussing the works.

- FU: Shall we give marks for each, or line them up according to our preferences?
- LAW: Giving marks is difficult. Maybe we can select the top 5 and talk about them?
- SCOTT: My top ones are **Blackout, 10Hz, Sycamore (dancing poetry) , on the street, Device Playing - Cassette Recorder**. To be honest those are the only ones I like.
- CHUNG: Mine are **Device Playing - Cassette Recorder, Sycamore, 10Hz, Blackout** and **Surveil_land**.
- LAW: Repeat as Bryan.
- FU: **Device Playing - Cassette Recorder, Sycamore, 10Hz, Blackout** and **Body Hack**.
- ITO: **Surveil_land, 10Hz, Sycamore, Device Playing - Cassette Recorder**. Only four.
- KWONG: Shall we cross out **Delight, Peacemax tree, Do you dare?** and **Where's the Chicken?** We have six works left.
- SCOTT: Some only have one vote.
- FU: I voted for **Body Hack** because it is among the most interactive of the ten. Maybe because I saw Eric's other works of the same theme and I appreciate the artist's continual exploration of the same concept.
- SCOTT: I also know Eric's work, but I don't think this is a very good piece. I never saw anyone successfully work the system. I saw a lot of people try to get it to work and line themselves up. The interaction is not very clear: you don't know what you're supposed to do. I understand what you're saying and I like Eric's work a lot. I appreciate the idea of putting yourself in classic cinema, but I don't think it's very successful. We all voted for the **Cassette Recorder** but I couldn't get it to work—I couldn't record my voice and hear it back. It didn't successfully work 100%. Also **Surveil_land** didn't work for me.
- FU: I agree that there were quite a lot of similar works to **Surveil_land** from the same author before. There's not a lot of add-on. The fabrication is also more primitive than his previous works. As a result this piece's interactivity was impaired.

SCOTT: I agree.

FU: In that case **Body Hack**, **Surveil_land** and even **Cassette Recorder** can go?

SCOTT: But we all voted for **Cassette Recorder**, even though it didn't work. You'd think we'd be more angry! It's such a cool object and I love the feel of it. I wish it'd work, because it would have been amazing.

FU: I liked it because it's very physical. I like the feeling of walking around, like a grinding machine. By comparison **10Hz** is more stagnant.

SCOTT: But I still loved it. People like to watch the people that were in it, so there are interior/exterior elements to it. You have to stay in it at least a minute to feel the effect, but once you did you really get the sensation. I also like its inspiration, which is sunlight coming through trees while you're in a car, that flicker, which is really beautiful start.

FU: I travel a lot on trains, so I immediately sync with his visual intention.

SCOTT: I thought it's one of the freshest pieces. I've never seen tuning forks used in a sculpture. I've never seen anything quite like it. We did not all agree on **Blackout**, but I thought was a really beautiful installation, I like how you walk into this curtain of bulbs. When I was sitting in it, because I'm so big, the other person has his back against me. Every time you typed the same letter the light bulb went off, you kind of smiled because you both typed the same letter at that moment, which is kind of sweet. I'm not sure what it meant, but I really like the feeling it gave, I thought it was very beautiful.

ITO: Many works use light bulbs. Is it a trend in Hong Kong?

LAW: If it's a trend, it's a trend of a school.

SCOTT: It's inexpensive and easy to work with. I don't mind that.

ITO: In my generation, fluorescent light was just started to use, and nowadays kids grow up with fluorescent lights. I wonder if there is any meaning, or a natural kind of taste to use tungsten light bulbs.

CHUNG: It's also nostalgic to use light bulbs instead of LED bulbs.

SCOTT: Does the poetry that **Sycamore** generate have a meaning? Or just nonsense?

FU: You choose from an archive of Chinese characters that keeps appearing randomly, so there are hundreds of characters from which you can form into lines. Chinese poetry is usually in the form of seven or five characters a sentence. The maximum number of characters you can choose is 9, which lined up as a sentence along the floor. In terms of the poetics of the work, I like this even more than **Blackout**. It's quite simple, but it's fun to play with. And it works quite well.

LAW: I like the typography.

SCOTT: It's beautiful to look at, plus I like black and white imagery of it. It's cinematic and graphic at the same time.

LAW: It's interesting to capture the words on the ground.

SCOTT: Of all the works, it's the only one that's localized and specific to Hong Kong. I don't understand it, but I like the fact that the artist goes into the environment and works with it.

CHUNG: It's related to the social and cultural context of Hong Kong at this point in time. We have urban renewal, and those places and streets are being demolished. They are collecting texts or characters that are going to be demolished and removed.

SCOTT: It has some of the best poetry—not just literally, but also conceptually.

FU: If you play with it for a long time, you will have a lot of linkage to the words of that area, because the texts are taken from that area, like street names and the like.

KWONG: Are you ready to talk about the Gold Award?

SCOTT: It's between those three, **10 Hz**, **Cassette Recorder** and **Sycamore**. If we are including technology as one of our criteria, the technology of **Sycamore** is definitely the simplest of the three. So I would say either **10 Hz** or **Cassette Recorder**. And for me because **Cassette Recorder** didn't work, **10 Hz** wins because it worked. It's an interesting experience, and nicely presented. I loved the **Device Playing -**

Cassette Recorder, but I could only hear, I could not record.

FU: For me, **Body Hack** worked when I visited it.

LAW: It works, but for me I was not willing to follow those gestures and play with it. I don't know the reason why I had to do this and play with it.

CHUNG: The incentive for me to play was not good enough. There isn't any narrative for me to follow. My two favorites are **10Hz** and **Sycamore**. I still need to decide which is better.

ITO: **Cassette Recorder** is good-looking. I like the work, but the concept is like **Tape-bow violin** by Laurie Anderson, so it's not very new. The experience with **10Hz** was really good. **Body Hack** is not working yet, but it has potential. The idea is like karaoke with body movement. After watching a gangster movie, audiences like to impersonate a gangster's walk when coming out of the theatre. His idea of impersonating the movement from cinema is a really good idea. I don't think it deserves first or second place, but it has potential.

FU: My favorites are **10Hz** and **Sycamore**.

SCOTT: I would have no problem with **10Hz** and **Sycamore** being gold and silver. I think **10Hz** has more effort put into it than **Sycamore**, but **Sycamore** is a very successful poetic experience.

ITO: What do you think of the exterior of **10Hz**? It's just form boards.

SCOTT: It's not the prettiest piece. In **Blackout**, the chairs and keyboards were gorgeous. In terms of presentation it's the best.

ITO: For **10Hz** he didn't need to cover the mechanical things. It would have been more shocking. The experience we could get would have been more surprising and more meditative, if it had mechanical, scary looking in contrast.

FU: For me it's a fight between these two, between best use of technology and content. Content-wise I appreciate a work that has such social significance and has more context with society. In terms of creativity **10Hz** wins out.

SCOTT: Sounds like you are voting for **10Hz**. Is it worthy of a gold award? Does it compare well with past Gold Award winners?

LAW: We can suggest a Gold Award winner each and see if everyone agrees with it.

KWONG: You don't have to compare with last year of previous years.

SCOTT: We all loved **Sycamore**, but recognize that it's not technically as good as **10Hz**.

CHUNG: In the proposal, **Sycamore** suggested the use of the body as a way to select the text, rather than the mouse. I talked to the artists, and they told me that the ceiling height is not enough to do sensitive tracking of the body, so they resorted to using the mouse.

SCOTT: That's the most unfortunate aspect of the work, that the interface was so typical. That didn't work with the other components of the piece. Visually it was beautiful.

LAW: The proposal for **10Hz** was different. It's walking into a room with a projection outside.

SCOTT: Do we agree that gold award goes to **10Hz**, and silver to **Sycamore**?

(All the jury members nod in agreement.)

KWONG: You can choose a maximum of three special mentions, and please state which area you would like to emphasize.

SCOTT: I vote for **Blackout** and **Cassette Recorder**.

FU: I agree.

KWONG: So only 2 special mentions this year. Can you talk more about why you are giving special mentions to these two?

SCOTT: I like the interaction in **Blackout**, I liked the feeling I got when I typed the same letter as someone else; I liked having my back against other people. It's very cinematic, with the split screen and the couple writing love letters. I loved how you walked into it, when you push these light bulbs aside. The aesthetic was beautiful, if

a little too Apple computer. It worked, and I saw a lot of people playing with it.

ITO: The reason I like **Cassette Recorder** is the movement of going on and going back with the sound, and you record the sound by moving a heavy stuff, almost like a torture!

CHUNG: I like the way she split the table—on one end there are legs, but the other end is suspended, it looks like it could easily fall down but actually it's quite solid. I like the intimacy it creates with two people, but they can't see each other, but they feel each other's movement when they are typing.

Interactive Media Category

Gold Award

10Hz

WONG Chi-chuen

Silver Award

Sycamore (dancing poetry), on the street

WONG Yu-hin, LAM Chi-fai

Special Award

Device Playing - Cassette Recorder

Michelle@Dimension+

Special Award

blackout

YUEN Sau-ying

Best Concept

PMV [Personalized Music Video]

Millie CHIU