

## **19th ifva Awards - Interactive Media Category Jury Meeting Transcript**

Jury Members: Bryan Chung (Chung), Henry Ma (Ma), Jane Prophet (Prophet), Eve Tam (Tam), Jason Chiu (Chiu)

**ifva** representatives: Teresa Kwong (Kwong), Kattie Fan (Fan), Wa Choi (Choi)

Kwong: **ifva** is a platform to promote and nurture the next current of creative talents, both in Hong Kong and Asia. The **ifva** Awards is an annual event. At the moment we have five categories. The IM category is one of them and is the youngest, and is now in its 9<sup>th</sup> year. At the moment, this category is only open for Hong Kong residents. The artists in this category would have experimented with the possibilities of interactive media. At the same time, these are all independent works, which means they are not commissioned by a commercial firm. For the awards, we highlight a work's independent spirit and also creativity.

I need to give you more information about the awards themselves. For this category, there will be three awards. The Gold Award winner will be entitled to a \$50,000 cash prize, one trophy, and he or she can also take a festival visit, either to Ars Electronica in Austria or transmediale in Berlin. We will support the air ticket, hotel stay and festival pass. The Silver Award winner will get a \$30,000 cash prize and one trophy. Lastly there is a Special Mention, the winner of which will get a certificate. The reason we have Special Mention is because of suggestions given by previous jury members. Some works' overall standards may not be as good as Gold or Silver Awards, but still there are some aspects that jury members would like to highlight and give encouragement. If there are no further questions we can start our discussion.

Chiu: Just now when I looked at the exhibits, some works have artists there to explain the works while others don't. How do we, as jurors, adjust for this evaluation? Should we only take into account what is communicated by the work itself?

Prophet: I personally think a work must stand or fall on its own, because you have public dissemination where the artist is not there at all times, then that's the way the public receives the work. I think the work should function without that narrative, and if the work needs a narrative, the narrative should have been put there on paper or in some other way.

Ma: Did you invite all the artists to stand by and explain their works to the jurors?

Choi: It was the opening, so all the participants will attend this opening.

Kwong: It's not compulsory.

Ma: They don't know the jurors will be there?

Choi: They don't know the jurors would be there at that moment.

Kwong: In the first edition we had the artists explain their works to the jurors, but jury members feel that the works would stand up on their own, so we cancelled the meet the artist session.

Chung: I agree that the works should explain themselves. In the past we invited the artists to be there in case we have some questions about the work, to provide additional information about the works.

Kwong: Just now Henry asked if the artists receive subsidies for their work. We don't. We just offer them space, and they have to pay for the set-up themselves. They only get 5 days for the set-up.

Tam: Before we start, are we going to discuss the criteria, or do we assess according to what you have set down here?

Kwong: Basically, this is our guideline, but maybe jury members will have their own set of extra elements to consider.

Prophet: How do you normally do this? Do you go through each piece?

Kwong: We can start talking about the works themselves. The first is ***A dream on September 18.***

Prophet: I think if there was not somebody in the room explaining what people have to do, the interactive interface is not intuitive. The whole gallery rhetoric is "do not touch the work", so nobody wanted to touch it while I was in there. Finally people tried to do it but couldn't, and then two people managed to do it under instruction. I thought it's an interesting project. It worked better than I expected it to, for I

remembered thinking, "Wow, this is going to be hard." Once you got over that hurdle, it worked quite well, but it wasn't intuitive.

Ma: Yes, I totally agree. Even the set-up I feel a bit dangerous. The concrete is attached to an alley for lifting up. I see the structure moving in a very unstable way. I feel the whole set up is not totally fit, at this moment, at least, so improvement should be made.

Chiu: I totally agree. I don't have anything to add. The experience is unique. I sort of didn't know what to do, then I do it, and I don't know what to feel afterwards. If that is the objective, then it is one thing, but I looked at the artist statement, and it's not what they intended for us.

Prophet: When I was reading the artist statement, I thought I was missing one of the pieces, because from this description, I didn't know that it was that piece. There's quite a bit of mismatch.

Chung: To me I enjoyed the sensational elements of the work—the audio and visual, but it lacks the narrative that allows us to perform according to the instructions. Also the reward, after the heavy exercise with the wall, was the smoke and color images. So what else in context about the dream?

Tam: In general, I agree. I like to add that given the tablet is so heavy, it's not quite assessable to the audience.

Ma: Especially if you're talking about interactive media, we wish the audience would participate in that kind of interaction, especially if I have to move by myself, I have to stand in front of that concrete. The visual effect is on the other side so you can't see what happens behind you. If you turn your head to see the effect, you cannot hold the concrete well.

Prophet: The positive thing about it is the work is very three dimensional. You go in and you see something that's almost two dimensional, and then if you interact with it, or, if you're lazy like me, watch other people do it, then suddenly you get this whole 3-D experience.

Chiu: If there are minor adjustments made, you can get very different results.

Kwong: Anything to add? If not, the second work is *and other wish*.

Prophet: I think it really failed to achieve its goals. It's ambitious in the way it connected or disconnected between two different levels—we saw that in the proposal. When we looked at the proposal, we felt this is going to work if it's really well-finished. And it's not really well-finished. The idea is a lovely idea, but I think the simpler the idea, the better the finish has to be. And it's just isn't there.

Ma: I have expectations about it, for it is a project that tries to capture the wishes of people. But the installation does not really perform, especially I feel a bit worried about people climbing up the stairs. I really tried, I almost hit my head. The second issue is, the original design of this work is different. The audience on the upper floor should make a wish while the audience on the lower floor listen to the wishes. The piece should be connected between these 2 floors. The present setting cannot show the relationship at all. (The present setting: The audiences on the upper floor listen to the wishes while the audiences make a wish on the lower floor. Two pieces of the installation are attached from the ceiling). And I can't hear my voice clearly when I tried to listen back to the recording.

Chiu: Do you mean there's supposed to be audio recording?

Prophet: It's real time.

Ma: If it's real time, then it's a disaster, because you can't hear yourself.

Tam: You hear the wishes of the others, not yourself.

Chiu: You hear yourself mumbling.

Prophet: I didn't get that at all.

Ma: The audio system does not work well.

Tam: In any case, I think it's a very poetic idea, but the actual installation is not very poetic. It comes down to a very simple and not very new idea at the end.

Prophet: For me, the concept makes sense is just seeing somebody up the ladder with their heads in the clouds. But putting your head in the cloud is not a very

satisfying experience.

Chiu: Why did they change? Because of the given environment? Why did they change from the proposal to the installation?

Fan: Usually we allow a certain amount of change from the proposal to the final work. For this particular work, she decides to use this set-up because of the system used to send the signal back to the two floors, she thinks the setting now is more feasible for her to set up the concept. This is her idea. We allow the visual presentation to be amended, but the original idea should be still presented.

Chung: For me, it cannot live up to the expectation set up in the proposal. What I guess it lacks is some sort of physicality of something that carries the wishes. Now she's just using the voice or speaking to emptiness in order make a wish. A physical form would be easier for us to relate making wish and getting wish in different locations.

Prophet: Conceptually it's problematic. I saw the top one, then I went downstairs and I thought, "That's the wrong way round." With some minor adjustments, it could fundamentally change the work.

Kwong: The next one is ***d'AR uck***.

Chiu: I think it's a great idea, I don't know why it uses the duck. It could be a lot more imaginative and it could capture a lot more imagination of the consumers. There are merits in this work because it's a stand-alone without someone to explain, and it's very easy to understand because the set up itself shows you both the video clip and the results, and you can download and send to yourself. One of the important things about interactive media work is taking advantage of interactive media and letting users experience it. So downloading on your smart phone allows people to experience it, and it's not confined to a physical space. It's simple, easy to understand, and appeals to a lot of people. These are its good points. The only drawback is that it confines itself to the duck, which I think is unnecessary. It could start with the duck and change to something else. With the short production time, the execution of the work is quite smooth.

Ma: Not everybody can go to the harbor and take a close look at the duck, so after the duck is gone, you still get a chance to see it, so that's why he used it. The

installation cannot simulate the experience of using the app.

Prophet: When I used it, I thought there was quite tight control of the camera. Why isn't the camera pointing at a live basin of water, but instead the camera is just pointing at the stairs. I like the duck in the bubble, spinning it.

Ma: You don't have any marker on the sea, so the only location reference is the GPS. The camera uses GPS sensor.

Chiu: Perhaps it's using level detection, technology, meaning if you put a pond in front of the camera, it would still work.

Ma: The video shows the duck can be viewed three-dimensional even you are on the moving ferry, so it must use the location based technique, which is GPS.

Chung: It is difficult to judge this piece with its gallery presentation. From the video, it's pretty smooth and fun to use because of the simplicity of the interaction. It doesn't need to have instructions and guidelines in order to work with it.

Tam: As an app, it functions well, but I don't see anything that can click with me. It's very flat, in a way. The way that visitors could interact with the work, there is not much room for imagination for the user. It's just an app; I don't think it's an artwork.

Chiu: My earlier suggestion was to allow users to choose between different objects. They have attempted to deal with it by allowing the duck to have a conversation by allowing the user to type in a message. In the execution it's not included. The planning and the execution itself have taken away that room for imagination.

Kwong: The next one is ***Idea of Amplitude***.

Chiu: Is the work meant for people with hearing impairment? That part I didn't really understand.

Ma: The original idea is that deaf people cannot hear music, and the author wants to use vibrations to visualize all those notes to encourage people to share music. You compose something and share it with deaf people.

Chiu: For those who do not have hearing impairment, will they enjoy it as much? It's actually just vibrations. The vibrations' level is based on different music notes. I have experienced and enjoyed it.

Tam: The thing I like about this work is that it is just as meaningful to people who are normal as people who have hearing difficulties. Apart from enjoying the piece, it is also functional: it can actually help disabled people learn about music and play with music. But I have some problems with the visual expression or presentation, especially the symbols they use for notes. That part I do not quite like, but in general the idea is ok.

Prophet: I don't read music, so I wouldn't know if the notes were wrong.

Ma: When you talk about music, it has different elements like pitch, note, loudness and the duration of the note. But in this set up there's only volume. On the visual side it only shows certain symbols. The device gives you 5 buttons, but some of the buttons are actually the same. So there's a lot of room for improvement.

Chiu: It fell short as a way to convey music, but it is some sort of a way to communicate music notes.

Chung: To me it's a little bit misleading in the visualization. I take it as some sort of musical score, only to find that it's not. Also there are some concerns about the symbols. I was confused about the use of the different symbols in relations to the loudness. What I anticipate is more challenging in the sense that whether this device could convert our existing MP3 music into different forms of vibrations so that deaf people can feel the rhythm and changes in the intensity of vibrations. It is not a very common practice for non-musicians to compose a sequence as opposed to downloading an MP3.

Prophet: The expression is about composing. You can play something and perceive something. It is the interesting point of this work.

Kwong: The next work is *Integrated Branching City*.

Prophet: The work is more interesting than the proposal, the way they did it was very appealing. I watched somebody else using the system, and wondered what his level of concentration was. I found it quite responsive. I tried to attend to it and

slow it all down, and it seemed to work, and then I tried being a bit agitated and distracted saw what happened. I was quite impressed with it. I haven't used EEG myself as an input, so I don't know whether I was imagining how successful it was.

Ma: I purposely looked at the transitions, it recorded all my brainwave and turned it into a work. They recorded a lot of brain wave patterns. Could they utilize them for some other purposes and make them become an artwork or not? There is room for them to improve. The set-up achieves what they wish to do in the proposal.

Chiu: I was hoping they would not use EEG of disease patients, but rather use it on something totally opposite, something really happy. When I experienced it, I found it a little hard to concentrate, because the images changes so rapidly, and there were so many people around at the exhibition, so I didn't know whether the EEG is working.

Prophet: I thought that if you calmed down, I got the images to almost stop. Maybe for me, I cannot recognize the people in the images (news clips). I didn't get distracted by it so much.

Ma: The artists just want to show us some images and stimulate the audiences. And I have agreed what Jason mentioned. In the 1<sup>st</sup> round meeting, we have a chat on the use of the EEG data. It may not be appropriate to use the EEG pattern of the patients with mental illness. In this setting, you do not have this kind of feeling.

Chung: I think they have dropped this idea out for the presentation. And they didn't use the patients' data. One thing I'd like to see is more in context about the images (news clips) they're showing, and how the piece of work using those materials in relations to our own attention, and now the brain wave information are arbitrarily put together.

Tam: I think it's part of the idea. The artist is saying that we live in a city like this with all these political issues that are so agitating, and which might interrupt your peace of mind, so how can you concentrate? That is the context. To me the idea makes sense and the work is quite complete.

Kwong: The next work is *Iris*.



Prophet: I really like how retro this seemed, and like the whole black and white presentation. When I was a kid and I had to get measured up for shoes, you have this thing where you put your feet in, and you looked down through something really similar and you saw the outline of your toes. I thought it is really lovely but I couldn't work out if or how it was responding to my hands. I love the look and feel of it, but I can make no sense of it. As far as I was concerned it could have been completely arbitrary.

Ma: I have tried to use some certain hand gesture, such as rock, paper, and scissors. And the machine replied me with the hand gesture of "give me five". However, half of the responses seem no relation to my hand gesture. It sometimes generates the same responses even I have put different gestures. It looks random. I don't know whether it is interactive or not.

Chiu: I have the same question in the back of my mind. It would be much better if there were two modes, one is rule based in which it recognizes the shape and respond, and the other is to learn as it goes, which would be quite confusing. A lot of people would not have the patience to wait, they would just continuously move. I've seen another person experiencing it, and it freezes for over a minute. But I agree that the work is attractive. It makes you want to do it.

Chung: For me, the current TV set is an attractive way to invite me to interact with the piece. It would be better if it has a flat surface for display rather than two vertical monitors stacked together. I find it confusing because I did not understand the rules. I tried to guess by purposely freezing some of my actions and trying to anticipate what kind of response. I failed to make any sense out of those interactions. I would like to see if the hands has some sort of character or personality which invite me to interact with them, rather than waiting for my input.

Tam: There is a lot of inadequacy in the presentation and concept, but I like it because I like its human touch. Among all the works, it is one that arouses my curiosity. Looking at the work, you can feel that it is trying to communicate with the hands. Although it might have failed in some aspects, I appreciate the idea itself. I also like the black and white old TV monitors.

Kwong: Let's go to ***Once There was an Artwork***.

Prophet: I'm really interested to see what people who didn't read about it thought. I have

gone through the finalist selection, so I don't know what audiences view this work without knowing the concept.

Chiu: It's the kind of work that without someone explaining, you would not have gone beyond the first step. There are too many steps and sequences. Every step is thoughtful, but it's hard to really unlock it. But once explained, you go "aha!" It's quite thoughtful and tried to be interactive.

Tam: One of the ideas of the work is to connect and disconnect, to locate and dislocate. The details could be more direct; to me they seem gimmicky and unnecessary, in a way. I like the idea but I'm not sure.

Chung: I would like this to be a performance involving the two artists on hijacking the venues. At this point it seems that they want to fulfill the interactive art criteria to create this piece of work, but it seems they are not satisfied with it. They would like to have more socially engaged practices within their whole piece of work, but that part may not be very satisfactorily delivered at this time.

Prophet: I really like the original idea. I thought, wow, it's a gallery piece. They made this white cube version of the work, which I wasn't expecting. But when I was watching it, I felt that if I didn't know what this was about, I wouldn't know by visiting it, and the richness of their intentions was lost. They made it look like it belonged to a white cube gallery, instead of being socially engaged art. Maybe they were being too careful about the venue, and doing what they thought were expected of a white cube space. It should have worked really well, but in terms of delivering the content, it just didn't happen.

Kwong: We go to ***The Mechanics of Shadows, Selva Days***.

Prophet: Has this piece been made before?

Chung: At Oil Street in North Point. It's already been shown before.

Prophet: Out of all the pieces, it's the lowest risk for the artist, because he made and already exhibited it, and if we want to reward people for creating work that is new to them and taking a risk, then this work isn't doing that. But as a finished piece I thought it was sweet, I loved it. It would stand up to be shown in a lot of venues internationally, it would hold its own. From the point of view of what works, this

piece hits all the targets, but at the same time, it didn't come to us at the beginning as an unresolved thing, whereas every other piece, the artists developed it since they made their proposal.

Chiu: Is there a requirement for the piece not being exhibited anywhere before the show?

Kwong: No.

Chiu: So after short-listing and before the final show, it could have been exhibited. So my point is that it reduces the risk for the artist, but we should not unfairly punish him.

Ma: Previously I raised the issue of whether this piece really has an interactive element. I listened closely to all the LPs, it's not playing the LPs directly. It's a piece of pre-recorded sound with certain mechanical movements generating certain shadows on the wall.

Prophet: I thought it was playing the sound directly from the records.

Chiu: I asked him directly, and he lifted up the needle and the music stopped. But I also saw on one occasion where the needle was not on a playable section, so I think there must be some sort of fall-back

Tam: It is a very fine piece but I don't see any interactivity.

Chung: It doesn't have any interactivity directly with the audience, but interaction among the codes and recoding agents, it's the artificial intelligence codes interacting among themselves within the system.

Kwong: The next one is ***Touch me (not)***.

Prophet: It worked, it did what is expected, I wish he hadn't put those pebbles around it and turned it from a more conceptual artwork into a gardening thing. I wish he'd just put the plants there and not prettify it, because it ended up not being conceptual nor decorative. It responded much faster than I expected, I thought it'd take 20 minutes for it to change back, but it was faster.

Ma: Maybe he has to change all the plants within a day, because they may all be dead.

Chung: I do not like the way of presentation, to put them all together. He proposed to make a “touch screen” with those plants. I would like him to separate the pots in a more discrete sense to relate to the pixels.

Ma: It should be mounted on a wall. It would give a totally different sensation.

Kwong: The last one is **Wake**.

Prophet: For me this was a complete fail, because there is no sense of interactivity, and no sense of what the original proposal was about. As an object, it's interesting for a minute. He had another version of it that worked, so he had a choice to show the other version, and in my opinion it would have been better to show the earlier version that you could have interacted with.

Ma: If they changed it into another project, are we going to accept them or not? That's a philosophical issue.

Prophet: For me, it depends on the connection between his application and the actual piece. It allows certain amounts of changes. This piece is not the work shown in the application in fact.

Chung: I can't judge anything from this art work.

Chiu: I agreed with Bryan.

Kwong: Now that we have discussed all the works, each of you can nominate 3 works that you like most.

[Voting]

[1<sup>st</sup> round voting: Juror had 3 votes to select their favourite works]

<b>Integrated Branching City</b>	4
<b>Iris</b>	5
<b>The Mechanics of Shadows, Selva Days</b>	4
<b>Idea of Amplitude</b>	2
<b>A dream on September 18</b>	0
<b>and other wish</b>	0
<b>d' AR uck</b>	0
<b>Once There was an Artwork</b>	0
<b>Touch me (not)</b>	0
<b>Wake</b>	0

[2<sup>nd</sup> round voting – Jurors nominated works for the Gold Award]

<b>Integrated Branching City</b>	2
<b>Iris</b>	1
<b>The Mechanics of Shadows, Selva Days</b>	2

[3<sup>rd</sup> round voting – Jurors voted again for the Gold Award]

<b>Integrated Branching City</b>	2
<b>The Mechanics of Shadows, Selva Days</b>	3

### Interactive Media Category Award Winners

#### Gold Award

**The Mechanics of Shadows, Selva Days** / Cedric Maridet

#### Silver Award

**Integrated Branching City** / Fung Wing-lam, Ngai Po-yiu, Kwok Wan-ting, Choi Ka-man

#### Special Mention

**Iris** / Cheuk Sze-wing Chloe, Wong Chi-chuen Kenny