Focus

Going Dutch

By Michael Gibb

Where would you usually find plates of poffertjes, slices of osseworst, a tribute to Anne Frank, lacy pointed bonnets, tulips and a celebration of football?

In the Netherlands, of course. But last month CityU went Dutch when the Covered Terrace was transformed into Global Zone, celebrating the food, culture and society of the Netherlands. The Holland Cultural Festival was part of CityU’s ongoing drive to internationalise campus and introduce students to an assorted range of cultural experiences. Similar international cultural events are planned for the future.

“The festival was a great success,” said Ms Annie Sing of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHASS), which was the main organiser of the event. “More people came than we imagined, and those of us who weren’t so familiar with Holland before have learned a great deal.”

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Ms Grace Ho Shiu-pai, also of CHASS, agreed. “After helping to organise this event, I would very much like to visit the Netherlands,” she said.

Both Ms Sing and Ms Ho admitted that organising such a large-scale event was a challenge. “We started from scratch,” they said. But they had a very clear objective: to raise Holland’s profile on campus while a delegation from Maastricht University was at CityU to sign an agreement on student and academic exchanges and research activities.

“We wanted to create something fun, educational and tasteful,” said Ms Ho. To that end, the large team organising the event brought in members of the CityU Philharmonic Orchestra to play traditional Dutch folk songs and spent hours scouring shops and websites for Dutch souvenirs, culinary dishes and cultural information that could be used to create booths.

The food was a hit. “We really wanted participants to experience the country via its cuisine,” Ms Sing said.

That’s why they contacted Mr Pieter Onderwater, chef and patron of the well-established Dutch restaurant Orange Tree in Central. His food stall on the Terrace kept up a steady supply of coin-sized pancakes called *poffertjes* and a Dutch sausage called *osseworst*, made from raw beef.

Praise for the organising team’s efforts came from all quarters including the Consulate General of the Netherlands. Mr Robert Schuddeboom, Consul-General of the Netherlands, said the snappy information boards at the Terrace reflected a great deal about Holland’s culture and history, capturing the liberal and tolerant nature of Dutch society.

“We are a small country so we always integrate well and accept others,” he said.

The Festival ended with a well-attended cultural night at the Student Residence. One of the highlights was the screening of a thought-provoking documentary called *Loving (the) Dutch* by the director Ms Qin Wenjie and presented by Ms Bregtje Van Der Haak, Visiting Associate Professor in the School of Creative Media.

The event was also honoured with the presence of representatives of Dutch companies in Hong Kong: Mr Wiebo Vaartjes, Chairman of Philip Electronics HK Ltd; Mr Chan Yu-wing, Business Manager, ABN-AMRO Private Banking; and Ms Ayfer Kargin, Director, AyferK Fashion House Ltd.
To an outsider, he seems more like a bohemian artist than a serious academic, yet Mr Julian Lee Chi-chiu is well known in the School of Creative Media as an associate professor of photography and digital imaging, and the course leader for the bachelor’s degree in animation arts and digital imaging.

And, more significantly at the moment, he is known beyond the School as the author of “Suspending Torso – Photography and Digital Screen Work” at CityU Gallery.

The exhibition consists of a series of black-and-white photos of nude males taken by Mr Lee over the past decade along with his recent new-media work, intended to highlight—besides the aesthetics of nudity—how concepts and techniques of high-tech and old-time mediums are employed to breed a new art form or genre.

This new form is termed “multi-panel temporal framing”, as Mr Lee told Linkage before the show opened, describing his most representative work, a series of panels portraying a nude man apparently running in and out of a glass mirror.

“It is a cross between photography and animation,” Mr Lee explained. “Each panel gives a separate picture, and together they show the man’s movements in temporal sequence.”

Mr Lee drew inspiration from the work of Eadweard Muybridge, the 19th-century English photographer whom he admires immensely and who demonstrated the camera’s power of capturing motion. Within the technical limits of the pre-movie era, Muybridge managed to produce serialised “stop motion” photos presenting human and animal motion in movie sequences. Muybridge took numerous photos of nudes, Mr Lee said, for the benefit of apprentice artists too poor to hire models.

“I took his idea and did things he never did. That is, I played games with the original creator, and created my new version,” Mr Lee said, with perceptible pride and pleasure. So, using today’s advanced photography, he formulated the idea of a new, digital multi-media art genre.

Mr Lee earned a master’s degree in photography at the Royal College of Art in London in 1991. He worked in London as a photographer and video artist until 1997 and then returned to Hong Kong to work as a film writer and director. Now teaching at CityU, he continues his quest for excellence with new ideas such as “interactive digital imaging” and “immersive photography”.

His work so far “can be seen as at once a culmination, a denouement and, more importantly, a new beginning”, commented the art critic Norman Ford.

To Mr Lee, experimenting and innovating in new breeds of art will remain his academic pursuit as well as a lifelong hobby.
Growing together

By Ellen Chan

Long-serving staff members were honoured at a ceremony in October for their many years of dedicated service. Altogether more than 400 people received a Long Service Award at a ceremony hosted by the Human Resources Office. Among the awardees, 45 had notched up 25 years, 195 had served 20 years and the remaining had accumulated 15 or 10 years.

Chair Professor Joseph Lai Ki-leuk of the Department of Physics and Materials Science, looking back on his 25-year career in teaching and research at CityU, said he was amazed at how time passed so quickly. “What happened in the past few years seems just like yesterday,” he said.

CityU has undergone many transformations over the past quarter of a century, with departments merging and separating over time, Professor Lai said. When he first joined the University it was still City Polytechnic of Hong Kong, and he started in the Department of Mathematics before transferring to the newly created Department of Applied Science.

The organic development of the University structure has given Professor Lai plenty of opportunities to meet, work and befriend colleagues, he said, adding that while modifications have been commonplace in some areas, certain aspects of CityU life remained unchanged.

“One hotly discussed topic has been the relationship between teaching and research, and I think this discussion will carry on forever,” he said. “The other thing that persists is the high quality of faculty. I strongly believe they will bring a better and brighter future to CityU.”

Mrs Siu Wong Siu-yin, a senior technical officer in the Campus Development and Facilities Office responsible for audio and visual equipment in classrooms and lecture halls, said the biggest change at CityU during her 20-year career here has been the technological revolution. One step ahead, CityU has acquired a range of cutting-edge equipment over the years.

“I have had the chance to learn a lot about new equipment and how to support various users,” Mrs Wong said.

When Ms Koo Yuk-ling, reprographic technician in City University of HK Press, joined CityU 15 years ago, computers were not commonplace. At that time, she was in charge of the operation of the printing workshop, including typesetting and developing film in the darkroom. With the development of technology, her job nature has changed and now she is responsible for coordinating the work flow between different work processes.

At the ceremony to mark the efforts of long-serving staff, Professor Way Kuo, University President, said the relentless hard work and dedication of the whole team was the reason CityU was the leader in certain fields.

“CityU is a team full of energy. Every colleague is a member of this team, and we will make concerted efforts to contribute more to CityU and society,” Professor Kuo said.

1 Professor Kuo (left) presents a souvenir to Professor Lai.
2 Mrs Siu (left) and Mrs Bonny Ip have both worked at CityU for 20 years.
3 Ms Koo (third from the right) and her colleagues from CityU Press.
A workshop for senior faculty and administrative staff held at the end of September provided an interactive forum on ethical and responsible management.

The day-long session was attended by academic/administrative heads, associate heads of academic units, deans and associate deans and above.

In his opening remarks, Professor Way Kuo, University President, stressed the need for better communication between senior management and the rest of the University as a key measure for improving overall management practice at the University.

“We are trying to make our operations more transparent and efficient and reduce the paperwork to make sure messages don’t get lost or distorted. One of the ways to enhance communication is to hold workshops like this one,” he said.

There were four sessions during the day-long event. The topic of the first session was the University Code of Conduct, which is currently undergoing consultation. Introducing the relevance and need for such a code, Mr Herman Hu Shao-ming, Council member and Chairman of the Human Resources Committee, emphasised the importance of a sense of shared ownership within a corporation. “Everyone should have a chance to contribute,” he said, pointing out that the CityU community shared a common aim “to improve the CityU brand for ourselves and our students”.

Professor Arthur Ellis, Provost, said a code was vital to enhancing and protecting a university’s reputation. “We are a public institution and we have a trust with the community that supports us,” he said.

The code, he said, is a transparent, fair and agreed upon guide for what to do in any event. “Someone once said, ‘sunshine is the best disinfectant,’” he added, saying the code will act as a road map as the University becomes increasingly internationalised and diverse over the next few years.

Professor Matthew Lee Kwok-on, Director of the Communications and Public Relations Office, echoed Professor Ellis’s words. “We need a framework to regulate our behaviour in accordance with our diversity. We all come from different backgrounds and it is important to remain sensitive to a set of common core values,” he said.

The other three sessions during the day focused on a policy for outside practice, which has been approved by Council and is undergoing refinement; grievance procedures, now at the consultation stage; and procedures for decisions of personnel issues, which have been in operation for one year.

This was the second management workshop organised for senior management members in 2010. The first in April covered six management issues ranging from conflict of interest to university governance and the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2010–2015. Similar workshops are planned for the future.
Whole Person Development (WPD), an education philosophy introduced to City University of Hong Kong (CityU) by Student Development Services in 1998, has been readily applauded by both professors and students alike.

Since its introduction, with CityU’s typical efficiency and enthusiasm, WPD activities have proliferated on campus. As the saying goes, “a hundred flowers blossom, and a thousand birds sing”.

So, after an exciting decade of experimentation, it is now the right time for reflection and consolidation before moving on “just-in-time” to the new 4-year curriculum which will be fully implemented in 2012.

All WPD efforts have emphasised diversity and balance around seven key components: the spiritual, social, career, physical, aesthetic, intellectual and emotional. But is breadth the only real truth behind the philosophy that we have been promoting to our students? What next after exploring the conceptual construct of the seven domains?

After all, it is the qualitative transformation of the individual that is most important. We hold to the creed that better self-understanding will open up more choices in life. So what we are looking for is the impact on the student as a person and their future life, not the number of hours students devote to a particular area.

The rise of “managerialism” in higher education has resulted in the formulation of the so-called ideal student profile to which every activity—academic or otherwise, extra-curricular or co-curricular—should be aligned. This emphasis on conformity to a single standard does not fit comfortably with the origins of the word “educate”, which means “to bring out” in Latin. In other words, to educate means to bring out the best from the student.

It almost never happened.

“I love the theatre and I almost went to drama school at the age of 17,” said Mr Stephen Bolton, one of six Associate Heads in the English Language Centre. “I auditioned for and enrolled in drama school—but withdrew after a day!”

Instead, Mr Bolton opted for a more traditional academic path, gaining a BA in Philosophy from the University of Toronto and an MPhil in Renaissance Studies from the University of London.

But the acting bug never quite went away.

“I got the chance to rejoin the stage in 2001 not long after I came to Hong Kong,” said Mr Bolton, now a leading light in the local community theatre scene. He is the former chairman of the Hong Kong Players, the longest running community theatre group in Hong Kong, and now acts as the group’s communications director. According to Mr Bolton, community theatre in Hong Kong is thriving. There are several skilled designers, costume makers, enthusiastic performers, and most important of all, an English-speaking audience keen to see high quality drama on stage.

As a teacher, director and actor, Mr Bolton has co-written plays for kids and adults alike, and applies drama to his teaching duties at CityU. “A teacher is sometimes a performer, and theatre work can make you more observant. When you teach, you are aware of students’ attention and energy levels. You then adjust yourself to maximise their engagement. This is just like when you are acting in front of an audience. It is interactive and there’s energy flow back and forth,” he said.

In particular, Mr Bolton applies drama-related games such as ice-breakers for new classes and uses drama techniques to help coach his students before presentations, advising them on language, posture and gesture. He is particularly aware of a student’s volume and pace of delivery when presenting or debating.

Mr Bolton, a finalist in the CityU Teaching Excellence Award in 2010, has authored and co-authored several publications on the learning of English through drama, including a drama resource pack published by the Education Bureau for the elective part of the new secondary school English language curriculum.
However, the challenge now, after an initial comprehensive exploration, is to help the students formulate their own idea of a "whole", "complete", "ideal", "holistic" and "perfect" person. When a student knows what kind of person he or she would like to be, and the life she or he would like to lead, the rest will follow organically.

After all, whole person development is life-long! Who is in charge? The students themselves, of course.

In 1998, CityU introduced the ideas of holistic development. Both students and teachers have given full support since then. From the start, CityU has implemented these concepts enthusiastically and efficiently, with various activities flourished throughout the campus. Over the last ten years, the results are impressive. Now it is time to look back and review the experiences in preparation for the new curriculum to be fully implemented in 2012.

CityU's whole person education activities still focus on promoting the idea of seven elements: "morals, intellect, body, social, beauty, affairs, emotion". Yet, we ask ourselves if the essence of promoting education only means to extend the meaning of education? After we have laid the conceptual framework behind these seven elements, what is the next step? After all, personal transformation is the most important. We believe that through education, students can better understand themselves and expand the choices in their lives. Therefore, we are not concerned with how many hours a student spends on an activity, but how the activity influences their personal growth and future lives.

The recent popular 'business management style' in higher education has led to the concept of the 'ideal student' to be one who excels in all areas: academic, extra-curricular, co-curricular, etc. By adhering to a standard, we are in fact against the true meaning of education: the Latin word "educare" means "to bring out". That is to say, education should help students "bring out" the best in themselves.

According to all the above considerations, it is our responsibility to help students establish their own holistic education concept, which means understanding what is "complete", "ideal", "ideal" development, "completed" or "perfection". As long as students know what kind of people they want to become and what kind of life they want to lead, the rest will follow organically.

After all, whole person education is a life-long project. Who is in charge? It is the students themselves!