

Tomorrow's Life

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Life

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ARTS BEAUTY TIME OUT DIVERSIONS ON AIR

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Local artists seeking more creative pastures are moving to Beijing, writes Janice Leung

Capital gains

Local artists Chow Chun-fai (far left) and Lam Tung-pang. Photo: Oliver Tsang

Beijing's modern art market is booming but that isn't its main appeal for rising contemporary artists Lam Tung-pang and Chow Chun-fai. The two painters have set up a studio in the capital, attracted by its considerably cheaper rents and what they view as a more vibrant and creative environment.

respectively, the studio has the added appeal of high ceilings. Lam, who specialises in atmospheric paintings of everyday scenes, hopes the extra space will allow him to be more uninhibited in creating larger works. "It's very difficult to create large-scale pieces in Hong Kong due to the lack of space, and I can't really display my large paintings in my Fo Tan studio," he says.

studio will enable him to balance various aspects of his life including his family life, creative work and part-time teaching commitments. "I can go to Beijing for the weekend and then come back to Hong Kong to teach during the week without it costing too much money and time," Chow says. "I wouldn't be able to do that if I was based in the west."

to their creations. Beijingers are more open to different forms of art, Lam says. "It's sad to see an artist spending a few years to develop a work just for a month-long exhibition in Hong Kong. When it's displayed for the second time, local audiences are bored already."

community, Kwok was sent to Denmark to represent China in April, and is now busy preparing for the opening of his new art space in Yihao International Artbase area. The lively atmosphere has also enticed Beijing artist Pan Xinglei to return from New York, where he settled in 2000 after a seven-year stay in Hong Kong.

"When you're told that there's a legal studio space available in Beijing, you need to act fast or else you'll have to wait for another chance." In June, the pair signed a three-year lease for a 1,200-sq-ft studio near the 798 Art District for 28,000 yuan a year. It's far better value: not only is it a third bigger than the Fo Tan spaces Chow and Lam rent each month for HK\$6,300 and HK\$3,800

"I don't mean Hong Kong is short of good art, but large-scale works are less common; that's a problem. I wonder if a studio's size affects an artist's... way of seeing and thinking, and thus the output." By working in Beijing, they're also hoping to escape the twin duties of curating and writing promotional materials for their exhibitions in Hong Kong. "I need a place where I can concentrate on creative work and I realised I couldn't [do that] in Hong Kong," says Lam. "Even if we stay in Beijing for just two months a year, the 28,000 yuan annual rent is not really a large amount to share." Chow agrees. Having the Beijing

More importantly, the two artists are hoping the energy and diversity of Beijing's art scene will stimulate their imaginations and influence their technique. "Hong Kong's art scene is growing, but I don't see much change in the next few years," says Chow. Beijing is full of artists, Lam says, and there are a lot more art shows there than in other large mainland cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou. "This makes the scene dynamic and creates opportunities for our works to be shown elsewhere," he says. Significantly, the pair - whose work has been on display at Osage's Beijing gallery - are already finding that Beijing art lovers are receptive

I need a place where I can concentrate and I realised couldn't [do that] in Hong Kong Lam Tung-pang, artist

His creative interest has recently changed from performance art to large-scale installations that play with the Chinese language, he says. And as New York lacks the Chinese-speaking audience for him to interact with, Beijing is the place to be. "Most of the best Chinese artists are clustered in Beijing, which makes the capital a ground for healthy competition among artists, and a centre of attention for contemporary Chinese art," says Pan, who in 1996 famously poured red paint over the Queen Victoria statue in Victoria Park. "Besides, property prices in Hong Kong are too high for me." Meanwhile, Chow and Lam hope having a base in Beijing will help them see Hong Kong from a new perspective. "It's all about borrowing other people's perspectives to look at ourselves and the city that makes this Hong Kong-Beijing exchange fruitful to us," says Lam. "In Beijing I can develop a more global perspective in terms of art. Hong Kong is international in other fields such as business, but not art." Hong Kong artists can also help expand the mainland contemporary art scene, that has been mostly associated with emblems of communism such as the Cultural Revolution and portraits of Mao Zedong, he says. "I think Taiwanese and Hong Kong artists can make valuable contributions here."



The Yihao International Artbase area (left), where Kwok Mang-ho (right) is opening a studio. Photo: Dick Fung



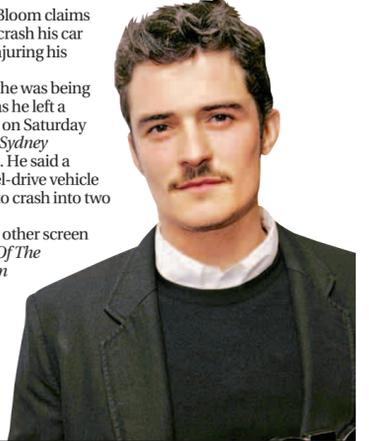
Kwok Mang-ho (right) is opening a studio. Photo: Dick Fung

People

Photos: AP/AFP

Bloom blames paparazzi for crash

Hollywood star Orlando Bloom claims paparazzi caused him to crash his car on a Los Angeles street, injuring his two passengers. Bloom, 30, told police he was being chased by the paparazzi as he left a nightclub around 2.15am on Saturday in his Toyota Matrix. The Sydney Morning Herald reported. He said a paparazzo in a four-wheel-drive vehicle cut him off, causing him to crash into two parked cars. Bloom (right) - whose other screen credits include *The Lord Of The Rings* trilogy and *Kingdom of Heaven* - spent the night under observation at Cedars-Sinai hospital. A police officer said no alcohol was involved and Bloom wasn't speeding.



Affleck happy behind the camera

Fresh from his directorial debut, Ben Affleck says he's found his calling. "In the beginning, part of wanting to be a director was a natural extension of acting," he said of *Gone Baby Gone*. "But now this feels like what I am, or what I want to be. It's so satisfying and exhilarating. In fact, the central preoccupation of my life right now is trying to find another movie to direct." Affleck co-wrote the script and directed *Gone Baby Gone*, a crime thriller set and filmed in Boston about the search for an abducted four-year-old girl. He included as many locals as he could in the film, people plucked off the street or discovered in bars, even for speaking roles. One woman was cast as a beer-drinking smart mouth



after approaching him and saying, "I should be in your movie." "I wanted something raw and authentic, even a little scuffed up," said Affleck (above), who grew up in the area. "People go to the movies to see something they can't get otherwise, and I thought this was a chance to take you... [to] the Boston you never see in the movies." AP

Crowning moment for corgis

Actress Helen Mirren won accolades for her portrayal of Queen Elizabeth in *The Queen*. Now it's time for the corgis to share the limelight. Anna, Poppy, Megan, Alice and Oliver are up for a Fido in the Historical Hound category for their role in the movie at the London Film Festival starting tomorrow. The Fidos are the brainchild of journalist Toby Rose, who annually awards the Palme Dog at the Cannes Film Festival to the finest canine

performance on screen. "I loved those corgis because they were funny," Britain's *Sunday's Observer* quoted Mirren as saying. "I can understand why the queen has them. Forget winning an Oscar, I'd be more proud of an award for dog handling." But the corgis face tough competition from a collie mix who appears in *Control*, Anton Corbijn's film about the life of Joy Division singer Ian Curtis. Reuters

Grant in drunken foray with students



Hugh Grant is no stranger to controversy. The English actor had to face down a scandal in 1995 after being arrested for lewd conduct on Hollywood's Sunset Boulevard with sex worker Divine Brown. Now he's suffered the embarrassment of a drunken foray into a student dorm being posted on the internet, according to news.com.au. Grant, 47, is shown being mobbed by female students more than half his age from Scotland's St Andrews University. The shots were posted on the social network site Facebook by Cecilia Hoffman, one of the women he spent the evening with. Britain's *Daily Mail* newspaper reported that Grant (left) met the students at a bar and returned with them to a student house, remarking with his trademark ironic humour: "Who lives in this hovel?"

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