



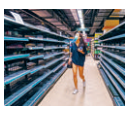
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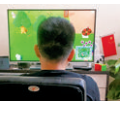
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Edited by Pete Spurrier

No substitute for passion

Three finalists in the Student of the Year Visual Artist Award tell **Kelly Fung** that genuine passion and confidence will lead any artist in the right direction

You might think that the job of a visual artist is simply to produce artwork that is pleasing to the eye. Yet three shortlisted candidates for the Student of the Year Visual Artist Award say they aim for more – they want to reflect the true face of their beloved city, Hong Kong, and improve the lives of the wider global community.

Twelve outstanding young artists were interviewed by the judges on March 23, hoping to prove themselves worthy of the award. *Young Post* spoke to three of the finalists about their artistic journeys.

For these students, visual arts are not just a form of non-verbal communication that conveys emotions and opinions, but also an effective medium to promote new ideas.

“The aesthetics of an artwork can resonate with your heart and inspire you to think,” says 17-year-old Ada Wu from True Light Girls’ College, who has been making art for as long as she can remember. When asked which piece she is most proud of, she answers – with great

enthusiasm – that it is a hand-painted Cantonese porcelain plate. It was a turning point in her journey of self-discovery.

“Cantonese porcelain is an example of Hong Kong’s intangible cultural heritage. It contains the city’s history,” she says. Yet what she first learned in her early art education was completely different. Ada studied various Western-based art forms from several international masters, but these skills did not give her the satisfaction that she expected.

“I was never satisfied and I felt lost when I started reflecting upon who I was and what was in my art,” she says.

Such feelings vanished when she discovered her passion for Cantonese porcelain, and at the same time, found a new sense of belonging and a new direction. “I acquired my own Hong Kong identity in the art of Hong Kong,” says Ada. “It gave me determination that I am a Hong Kong artist and I will develop our own art with our unique identity.”

Such aspirations are shared by Yoyo Shum



Making porcelain was a turning point on Ada’s journey. Courtesy of Ada Wu

Hoi-yiu, 17, from Ho Dao College, who aims to address Hong Kong social issues and living conditions through her visual art. To help raise awareness of marginalised people, she made a charcoal drawing entitled *The Dreamer under the Bridge* that depicts the everyday struggles of homeless people who make a living by collecting cardboard.

not solely to make a product, but to provoke thinking. Samuel hopes to become a design technologist. He says loves having the chance to improve the lives of those around him, whether in a social, environmental or economic context.

“A career in design is so appealing because it would allow me to produce design solutions that can enhance the livelihoods of not only those around me, but the global community,” he says.

While these artists are constantly stretching beyond their comfort zones to create art which makes an impact, they believe the essential qualities of an artist include an open mind. Ada and Yoyo say an openness to critics’ opinions and new practices are vital to making improvements in the design process. For Samuel, the ability to understand other people’s situations while recognising your own biases and fallacious thinking is crucial.

The young artists share the same advice for teens who are confused about their future – a genuine passion and confidence will lead you in the right direction.

Ada believes that it’s important to filter out other people’s plans for you, especially if everyone is telling you it’s not possible to make a living out of art. “Don’t give up taking art as a



Samuel’s artwork (above) is designed to find solutions; Yo Yo’s charcoal drawing (right) depicts the struggles of the homeless. Photos: Courtesy of Samuel Scroggie and Yoyo Shum



Don’t give up taking art as a career, because no one knows for sure. If you are really passionate about art, you will be able to make something of it

“I wish to give people another perspective of life in Hong Kong in my work,” she says.

While artists are often seen as magically talented people who can create work out of thin air, these students explained that this is a misconception. Good work requires planning and drafting behind it, and the finished item is not just “an outburst of creativity”.

Sixteen-year-old Samuel Scroggie from West Island School, says the purpose of art is

career, because no one knows for sure,” she says. “If you are really passionate about art, you will be able to make something of it.”

Samuel says the key to success is being brutally honest with yourself, and that interest and confidence cannot be faked. “Passion can’t be forced. Forcing interest will never be a viable substitute for genuine passion, and this will be reflected in the direction your life will take,” he says.