

Teachers bring out creativity in students

When Hong Kong Art School moved into its new campus last year, it knew it had something good. What was once a disused primary school for fishermen's children in Shau Kei Wan has been transformed into a perfect environment to bring out the creative talents of students.

Natural light is abundant and there is enough space for the school to host exhibitions of its work. More importantly for the young and artistic, there is a common room and open rooftop, used for airing films, working on communal projects and throwing the occasional barbecue party.

But where the school really excels is in inspiring students to step out of their comfort zones and turn their hands to new and different art forms that draw out all their creative skills.

As acting academic head, Wylie Chan shows off some of his students' art across the school. He explains that the creative process begins in the selection of students. "The key word is passion. When we interview prospective students, we aren't looking for rote answers – we're looking for openness, sincerity and honesty, which are the real qualities of an artist."

He says that applicants need not necessarily be amazing artists. Many get places by simply proving their passion for art, be that with a formal portfolio, or by showing work they have done in their own time at home. One such student, who joined the higher diploma programme in applied art last year after completing her A-levels, is Bok Wai-yi.

"My portfolio consisted of some posters and handicrafts I had created in my leisure time," she says. "I had



Hong Kong Art School's acting academic head Wylie Chan (left) with students Yui Wai-tak (centre) and Bok Wai-yi, who are studying for a higher diploma in applied art. Photo: Edmond So

Passion, sincerity and honesty are the qualities that Hong Kong Art School wants to see in its recruits, writes **Maurice Bendrix**

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strong support from my parents, who were happy that I wanted to study something that was also my hobby, and that I could get into a career that I enjoy."

For Bok, one of the highlights of the programme has been the teachers, who encourage students to explore their own styles and develop personally. After she graduates from the programme, she hopes to

continue her studies in the field of design. Friend and fellow student Yui Wai-tak wants to be a "thinker rather than simply a worker" when she starts her career. She says her ideal career would be in either interior or fashion design.

"It's a very relaxed environment at the school, and the teachers really help us to develop our concepts and our minds," she says. "Even if students decide not to pursue a career in art after they graduate, the creative skills we learn here can be applied to many other different types of jobs."

The school, which is a division of the Hong Kong Arts Centre, puts great emphasis on local culture and the local community, with many projects aimed at bringing art outside the school environment.

Its philosophy is to "enhance the overall cultural ecology of society by projecting a distinctive aura of academic and artistic integrity that stems from a genuine passion for art and a belief in the cultivation of humanistic values, aesthetic experiences and individuality".

It offers a range of programmes from foundation diplomas to higher diplomas, and bachelor's and master's degrees, with its focus being on four core academic areas: fine art, applied art, media art and drama education.

Form Seven leavers, with little art experience, may need to take the foundation level diploma, which takes one year to complete, before moving on to the two-year higher diploma. Many programmes can be studied part time. The fee for a foundation course, such as the diploma in visual art, is HK\$39,000, while higher diplomas, such as those in applied art, cost HK\$81,000.

Open days

Hong Kong Art School will hold two open days on July 17 and 18. Interested students are advised to go along and get a feel for the school and its programmes. More information on the open days, application forms and backgrounds to all of the school's programmes can be found at www.hkas.edu.hk