

*Para/Site 1996-2008*



# 如何化解一個又一個矛盾—— *Para/Site*的管理原則

文晶瑩

身為藝術家，籌辦*Para / Site*都是只靠一鼓熱誠和執著，管理之道要慢慢摸索。十二年過後，總結了一些經驗，相信可以和一些有興趣籌辦藝術組織的藝術家分享。

## 為何要組織藝術空間？

我想，籌辦藝術組織，第一個要先問的問題是：一個藝術家樂得逍遙，為何要組織藝術空間，服從一些整體的決定？

一個組織在籌集資源方面有優勢，發表演論時會更有力，亦更易聚合互不認識的藝術家和觀眾，對推動藝術無疑是有幫助的。我加入*Para/Site*，在推動藝術方面，得到同工們的支持，大家相當包容和互相尊重，從不覺得獨立性受損。在創作方面，更得到精神上的支持。*Para/Site*曾給我娘家的感覺。若遇到志同道合的人，自然便會一起做一些事情，也不怎樣需要問為何。

## 為何要資助藝術？

另一個我們常面對的問題，就是最基本藝術空間的生存，籌集資源的問題，人們常會問，為何要資助藝術？在香港這個高度商業化、注重實利的社會，人們常會用這個問題來質疑資助藝術的理據。為何不拿錢去賑濟窮人？藝術家不過是為了一己的歡娛而創作，為何要資助他們？面對這些問題，一些香港藝術家立場不夠堅穩，甚至懷疑藝術的價值，自信心不足。可能我們已中「毒」太深，凡事講求實

效實利。 在一些大城市如倫敦、紐約和三藩市，藝術的價值是毋容質疑的。藝術何價根本是不需問的問題。

但面對懷疑藝術價值的人，我們還是要理直氣壯的告訴他們藝術的價值，為藝術爭取合理的資源，一般支援藝術的理據在於：

1. 藝術能鍛鍊個人自我表達，獨立思考的能力，加上創意，有助建立知識型的社會。那鼓勵表達的特質更有治療情緒的作用。藝術有時是現實的反省和批判，並且提倡尊重不同的價值系統。一個社會若重視藝術，往往能改善人民素質，令社會更開放，更具競爭力。
2. 藝術追求自我的特質，有助建立個人甚至是社群的身份。在藝術創作的過程，有時往往可以保存，更新，延續，發展傳統文化。重視藝術，可加強市民對自己身處的地方的歸屬感和優越感，對外可以以自己的文化與外國作文化交流，並贏取國際聲譽。
3. 藝術可以美化環境，提供有益身心的活動，改善一個地方的生活素質。
4. 藝術更可以帶動旅遊，為社會帶來經濟收益。西班牙的Bilbao，英國的愛丁堡都是一些出色的例子。

以上是一些對藝術較普遍的理解，具體落到Para/Site，我們當前要做的就是補充現有文化藝術生態環境的不足，例如以前的裝置藝術場地不足，藝術家之間缺乏回應到現在推廣策展文化。

### 文化機構應由政府管？

西九文化區一輪討論後，亦有一種說法出現，就是文化機構應由政府管，不應由商人管。這種說法既

有理亦有問題。文化事業雖然是蝕本的行業，但正如香港也大量資助教育和醫療，文化一般是不能用商業模式運作。由政府直接做，有政治干預藝術、思想之嫌。官僚運作，亦有缺乏靈活性的問題。現代的藝術管理哲學大都認同用距離政策(Arm's Length Policy)去管理文化，將中央的部分權力分放給民間，即是現在香港藝術發展局和各藝術團體關係的管理模式。由民間組辦文化機構的模式是不可取替的，例如Para/Site可在數星期內靈活地調撥資源，辦回應沙士、14K的展覽，政府機構便很難有這種靈活性。

### 面對棘手問題

由藝術家主導的藝術空間，藝術信念較堅定，去到一些有爭議性的位置，便可以見到藝術家主導的空間對藝術的堅持和承擔，不是技術官僚可以做到的。十二年以來，Para/Site也遇過了不少棘手問題，考驗我們對藝術的信念。

初時我們穿牆鑿地，水淹展場，裸體示眾，已足以叫人口瞪目呆，此等在藝術範疇只是小兒科之事，只是香港的正規展場，一向重管理，很少容許此等事情發生，大家才會大驚小怪。及後有兩件衝擊Para/Site的事件，我們才需要有更多討論來建立共識。

### 兒童色情照片？

第一件是2001年的《建構的真實——北京觀念攝影》，展品中有兩張5、6歲兒童的全裸照，和我們合辦展覽的另一機構決定不展覽照片。我們首先考慮展出作品會否違反法律，違法的事情，我們不會做（當然亦有例外的情況，如法例不合理，公民抗命等）。今次情況，管有兒童色情照片已經是犯法。但該照片是否色情？確有相權的餘地。就算是色情照片，藝術作品有免責辯護的權利，展出應該不會違法。

我們亦討論了作品的藝術價值，這件作品的藝術價值是可以相權的，結論是我們需要理解展出作品的理據，但不是由我們決定展出與否。因為該照片是我們邀請的策展人揀選的。為尊重我們的策展人，我們是不能審查他所選的作品。但作為一個展出場地，我們需要面向觀眾，亦不可以逃避責任，甚麼也不理。最後我們諮詢了策展人，選擇了低調地在展場樹立了警告字眼。令觀眾在看之前有心理預備。若有觀眾提出疑問，我們在場的職員亦可講解挑選作品的原因。最後展覽順利舉行，也沒有收到甚麼投訴。

### 挑戰主辦者的權威

第二次Para/Site備受沖擊的是2004年的《〔打開規則〕集體延續創作藝術展：「這（個）那（個）」》展覽，展覽是開放的，觀眾可以展出自己的作品。羅文樂在Para/Site的玻璃門口放了器具，寫上字句，叫人「打爛佢」。結果真的有人打爛我們的門，一地玻璃碎。當時的職員相當猶疑，不知應否介入作品，曾一度不理玻璃碎，保持作品的原狀。但最後也作了正常的反應，掃掉地上的玻璃。

我們一班董事，事後才知道整件事情，並檢討了這件事情的處理方法。作品無疑是為了挑戰主辦者的權威。我們持開放態度，接受挑戰，一定不會拿掉作品。我們當然不想展覽空間遭到破壞，亦要顧及觀眾參觀時的安全。不過，不似兒童裸體照事件，我們覺得不用採取低調、盡量不干預的態度。作品明顯是一件開放的作品，歡迎觀眾參與。作為場地管理者，同時亦是觀眾，可以用有創意的手法回應作品。一些同工便提議可以在「打爛佢」前加上「不要」二字，又或者加上要賠償的字眼。創意的回應手法可由職員自己決定，並不需要定下甚麼守則。

這件作品叫我們思考作為場地管理者的角色，被動抑或主動？雖然引致少許不便，但相當有意思。

Para/Site就是一個叫人成長的地方，曾德平時常以踢街波作比喻，大家像在落場踢波一樣，有空位便自動上，去打好一場波。大家可以就著自己的興趣去參與Para/Site的各個環節，去達成大家對藝術的冀望，就是這份尊重個體的自主性的精神，使Para/Site有更強的凝聚力，參與的人可以不計報酬去完成各個項目，這亦是我們能支持下去的原因。

### 自律VS軍紀

但一個機構是否可以單靠熱誠而持續下來去？據現實和經驗來說是不穩定的。許多同工或職員都是因為熱誠耗盡，太累而離開的。所以我們仍需具領導才能、明白組織的理念的全職策展人去統籌Para/Site的發展，這樣子，我們在管理方面能暢順些。管理分四個功能，頭一兩項較易實行，三、四較難。四個功能分別是：

1. 計劃：想出新點子；
2. 組織：組織資源分配工作，將計劃變成行動；
3. 領導：分配各人去做需要做的事；
4. 控制：品質檢定，監察工作的進度和結果，看是否有偏離原先所定的目標。

而自由放任、自主自決的模式，很容易變成出主意的人多，實際做的人少。所以我們一般是由提出主意的人一手包辦工作，若是有興趣才做，很難叫人去做某些趣味性不濃的工作。但我們一般都很自動自覺去做某些事情，因為意念大都是一起討論出來，大家也明白需要做甚麼，而品質檢定方面，大家憑著對大家的信任，也很少管，品質方面一直都沒出甚麼問題，通常都是比預期好，問題有時只出在不能如期去完成某些事情。

另一個曾起爭議的就是管理模式，一位董事成員認為應以軍人的管理模式去管理Para/Site，使Para/Site更專業，其他董事則認為不行，大家都是以拍膊頭的形式去做事，怎能好像軍人般呼呼喝喝。其實兩種模式可以在不同的事務上靈活運用。Etzioni(1961)稱運用權力的方法分三種：

1. 高壓式的(Coercive power)，用懲罰的方式去令對方做事。
2. 用報酬(Remunorative power)，包括金錢、邊際利潤、閒餘時間、福利等。
3. 用象徵意義(Normative power)來推動人工作，包括得到尊重和優越感。

第三種方法對於Para/Site這類慈善文化機構來說會比較常用。Para/Site依靠資助生存，很難用財力去推動人工作，唯有用一些抽象的理念，自由自主的工作模式去吸引人工作，但遇到一些必須遵守的守則時，亦需表明若不遵守會有懲罰性後果。相信幫過Para/Site的同工，大都是因為認同組織的信念、目的和工作模式，幾乎沒有是因為金錢的。

### 開放地制度化

另一個時常會被問到的問題就是建制化的問題，有些人會概括地說依靠政府資助的機構，都會被建制化，缺乏稜角。無疑我們申請藝術發展局一年資助時會考慮到藝術發展局的要求，但因為我們部分經費是自行籌集的，所以享有一定自由度。而我們亦常就政府政策發表立場書，不減我們作為壓力團體的角色。Para/Site參與雙年展之時，亦有公開發表不滿藝術發展局的文章。而建制化、封閉等問題，我覺得我們是需要小心，且不斷檢討反省，避免可能會出現的問題。而我們之間亦有同工辦不拿政府錢的文化機構，去獲取更大的自由度，這亦是可行的。我想一個社會應容納不同形式的機構，不一定某一類一定比另一類更好。

有同工說「Para/Site」的名字好像有點不好聽，曾提議改名，但Para/Site恰好道出我們的處境，在香港做藝術工作是邊緣，難獨大，只能寄生在不同的地方去尋找空間生存，亦就著現有的處境去不斷改變去修補現有制度的不是。相信保一份自覺，Para/Site還會繼續下去。

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作者為香港城市大學創意媒體學院一級導師。

## *How we solved one dilemma after another – Para/Site's management principles*

*Phoebe MAN Ching Ying*

As an artist myself, I have mostly relied on my own passion and persistence in managing Para/Site, while picking up management skills bit by bit along the way. Now that twelve years has passed, I have accumulated some experience to share with those who are also interested in operating an art organization.

### ***Why should we set up an art organization?***

I think, before setting up an art organization, the first question to ask is: why do you want to be in a group where collective decisions have to be followed, while you can be a free artist and do whatever you want?

Art groups often enjoy more advantages when it comes to fundraising. Their opinions are also easier to be heard, and they can bring together artists and audiences who don't know each other. All these factors are favorable for the development of art. At Para/Site, my co-workers support my art promotion work on a basis of mutual acceptance and respect, and never have I felt that my individuality is affected. I also receive spiritual support for my creative process. Para/Site gave me a feeling of home. When you find someone who shares your dream, without asking why, you will be working together.

### ***Why should we support art?***

Another question that often comes up is about the funding and survival of a basic art space. People often question the need of sponsoring art. In a highly commercialized society like Hong Kong, people would ask: why not give the money to the poor? Why sponsor the artists, who just work for their own entertainment. When facing these questions, some Hong Kong artists lose their ground and start to doubt the value of art. We have probably become too obsessed with materialistic pursuits and too pragmatic. In some major cities such as London and San Francisco, the value of art is not disputable. People just don't ask questions about that.

To obtain reasonable resources for art, we have to make it clear the value of art to those who are still doubting. Here's why art should be supported:

1. Art lets people express themselves and enhances independent thinking and creativity, which helps build up a knowledge-based society. It is also therapeutic because it encourages expression of feelings. Sometimes art is a reflection or criticism of reality, and calls for the respect of different value systems. A society that values art is one that has high quality people, and is open and competitive.
2. Because art is about searching for individuality, it helps to develop a sense of uniqueness as an individual and as a society. In the process of creating art, the traditional culture is preserved, renewed, carried on, and developed. If the society put emphasis on art and culture, it can increase the sense of belonging of the citizens. To have a better idea of our own culture, we would not be speechless when having exchange with other cities.
3. Art provides for a place a more attractive appearance, healthy activities and better quality of living.
4. Art attracts tourists to bring in more economic revenue. Bilbao, Spain and Edinburg, Scotland make great examples of this.

The above apply to art in general. Specifically for Para/Site, its top priority is to fill the shortage of the Hong Kong art ecology. For instance, there was previously a lack of venues for installation art, absence of interaction between artists, and for now, a need for curatorial practice.

### ***Cultural organizations should be managed by the Government?***

After a long discussion over the West Kowloon Cultural District project, some came to the conclusion that cultural organizations should be managed by the government instead of the commercial sector. This is both true and not true. Cultural affairs are non-profit-making and require a large amount of subsidies from the government as in the cases of education and medical care. On the other hand, direct government control might lead to political interference and bureaucracy. Today most art management theories favor the Arm's Length Policy which involves the division of powers among the government and the public. This describes exactly the present relationship between the Hong Kong Arts Development

Council and various art organizations. Para/Site was able to quickly rearrange its resources to put together an exhibition in response to SARS and 14K T-shirt event in just a few weeks. Such efficiency and flexibility, which are rarely found in governmental agencies, explain why privately managed cultural organizations are irreplaceable.

### *Facing the challenges*

Artist-run art spaces are often more committed to art especially when there is a controversial situation. Such commitment is just not possible in bureaucratic organizations. During the past 12 years, Para/Site has also faced many difficult situations that put our commitment to test.

We have raised many eyebrows from the start when we dug through walls, flooded the gallery and showed nudity to the public. Actually all these were no big deals in the art industry. It is just that in Hong Kong most exhibition venues are management-oriented and would rarely allow such acts. Two major events that truly shook up Para/Site only came later.

### *Child pornography?*

The first touchy situation came in 2001 when we were preparing for the exhibition of “Constructed Reality - Conceptual Photography from Beijing”. There were two photos showing the nude bodies of children aged five or six, and our co-organizer decided not to exhibit those photos in their own venue. Our first concern was legal liability. Anything illegal is out of the question (of course, there are exceptional cases like the law is not reasonable, civil disobedience). Possessing child pornography is illegal in the first place. But the question was, were those porn photos? There was no straight answer. Even they are, artistic works are entitled to the right to defend, which prevents the exhibition from breaking the law. We also discussed the value of those photos as art objects. But again, who can say for sure. Our conclusion was that we needed to understand the reasons for displaying those art works. Actually those photos were selected by our curator and out of respect we were not supposed to censor his selection. On the other hand, as a venue provider, we could not run from our responsibilities toward our audience. In the end, we informed our curator and posted a small warning in the venue so that the audience could prepare their

mind before watching the photos. And our staff were there, ready to explain to the audience why those photos had been selected. The exhibition went very well and no complaints were received.

### *Challenge the authority of the organizer*

More challenges struck Para/Site in 2004 while “An Open Rule exhibition: Blink•Space, Drifting Presence” was taking place. It was an open-ended open-source exhibition where the audience can create their own work on-site. Law Man Lok’s art work was a label that read “Break it” on Para/Site’s glass door and soon somebody actually broke our door and the shards of glass were all over the floor. The gallery staff could not decide then whether they should get involved. They had left the broken glass there for a while, leaving the art work as it was. But eventually they cleaned up the glass pieces just like anybody would.

We the board members only learned about this incident afterwards, and had a discussion over the way it was handled. No doubt, it was a challenge directed at the organizer, which we welcomed with an open mind. We definitely would not take away the artist’s work, but would not want to see any damage done to the gallery space either. Audience safety was also our concern. Unlike in the case of children nudity photos, a non-intervention approach might not be the best idea. Since the exhibited works were open to audience’ participation, we could choose to use our creativity to respond to this incident, because we are audience too. Some colleagues suggested to add the word “Don’t” before “Break it”, or a disclaimer about compensation claims. Our staff could have reacted in their own creative way without following any guidelines. This art work has led us to reconsider our role as a venue provider. Is it an active role or a passive one? Although some inconvenience was caused, the incident was a great experience to us.

Para/Site is a place that makes you grow up. As Tsang Tak Ping puts it, it is like playing an informal soccer game around the block. We just want a good game, and anyone can join the game when a space is available. At Para/Site, we can take part in whatever capacity we are interested in to fulfill our expectations about art. Para/Site is built on a collective effort. The passion and selfless contributions of each member have kept us going.

### *Self discipline and military discipline*

But passion alone is not enough to keep an organization running. Experience tells us that we can't count on that. Many of our colleagues or staff chose to leave when their passion worn out. To ensure Para/Site's development and efficient management, we need full-time curators that have leadership skills and understand the organization's mission. There are four functions of management, with the last two being more difficult than the others when put into practice:

1. Planning – to come up with new ideas and set objectives
2. Organizing – to allocate and coordinate various resources, turning a plan into action
3. Leading – to distribute work and responsibilities
4. Controlling – to monitor work progress and results, and see whether everything is moving toward the right direction to achieve the established objectives

However, in a liberated environment where one is free to do his/her own thing, it is often all talk and no walk. That is why, if somebody has a new idea, we'd always ask him/her to follow through everything. It is hard to ask others to do something that doesn't interest them. Anyway, we all do our share of work willingly. After all, we do come up most of our ideas together, and we know what we need. Quality control is not really an issue to us because we put our trust in one another. We haven't had any quality problems so far. In fact, the results are often better than expected, even though we fell behind schedule for a couple of times.

We have also debated over our style of management. One board member thinks military-style management should benefit Para/Site and make it a more professional body. Other board members don't agree. We work together and help out each other like friends. Giving orders is just not the way to get things done. Actually we can adopt different management styles in different environments. Etzioni (1961) defined three forms of control:

1. Coercive power – achieved through threats of penalty
2. Remunerative power – achieved through rewards such as money, fringe benefits, vacation and welfare
3. Normative power – achieved through symbolic rewards such as respect and prestige

The third type of power is commonly found in charity and cultural organizations like Para/Site. Relying mostly on subsidies, Para/Site cannot offer financial rewards to motivate people to work. Instead, it draws people in with its ideals and a free, liberal environment. In some cases where certain rules must be followed, we'd make it clear that what kind of penalty will be imposed if one fails to follow those rules. Among those who have worked with Para/Site, most recognize the organization's beliefs, direction and operation style. Hardly anyone does it for the money.

### *Institutionalize but open*

Also, we are often asked about the problem of institutionalization. Some people have a general view that all government-funded organizations are bound to be institutionalized and lose their perspectives. It is true that we had to consider the Arts Development Council's demands when applying for its yearly subsidy. But we also raise our own fund for part of our income, which gives us a certain level of freedom. As a pressure group, we submit position papers now and then in response to government policies. And, we have openly criticized the Arts Development Council while participating the Art Biennial. I think we do have to watch out for problems like institutionalization and conservatism, and need to review ourselves constantly to avoid such possibilities. Among us, there are those who operate non-government funded cultural groups with great autonomy. That works too. I believe a society should allow different forms of organizations. One form is not necessarily better than another.

Some co-workers once said "Para/Site" sounded a little odd and suggested using another name. But the name Para/Site describes us just fine. Art is a fringe industry in Hong Kong and faces a lot of constraints. We survive by living off different places, and adjusting ourselves continuously in different situations to complement existing systems. I believe, by holding on to its position, Para/Site will go on.

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The author is the Instructor I of School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong.

Translated by Phyllis FOK