

CULTURAL HERITAGE



Virtual Museum

Hong Kong Shue Yan University is active in the field of cultural preservation through its launch of Hong Kong's first virtual museum dedicated to a national-level intangible cultural heritage. The Contemporary China Research Center at Hong Kong Shue Yan University has created an immersive digital experience outlining the Chiu Chow Hungry Ghost Festival (Yu Lan Festival), effectively bridging traditional culture with state-of-the-art technology.

The project, conducted by Professor Selina Ching Chan from the Department of Sociology, commenced in 2020 with comprehensive research, including data collection and in-depth interviews. The virtual museum employs state-of-the-art technology to present the festival through ultra-high-definition 8K 360-degree panoramic displays, detailed 3D models created using photogrammetry, and various digital archives including historical photographs, newspaper clippings, comics, and animations.

Accessibility stands as a key feature of this digital technology. Visitors can explore the museum through multiple platforms: Meta's Oculus VR headsets, personal computers using the free Altspace VR software, or through an on-site experience at the university's VR Cave. The museum goes beyond traditional viewing experiences by employing interactive elements that allow visitors to create personal avatars and engage in real-time interactions with others.

The metaverse virtual museum immerses users in the multisensory experience of the Yu Lan Festival, a significant community celebration. Recognized as a national-level intangible cultural heritage since 2011, the Chiu Chow Yu Lan Festival is a vital component of Hong Kong's cultural landscape, traditionally celebrated during the seventh lunar month with customs centered around ancestral veneration and spiritual offerings. The museum further highlights the community's spirit and the charitable



activities associated with the Yu Lan Festival, emphasizing its role in fostering social cohesion and grassroots mobilization. It also focuses on preserving and innovatively incorporating modern elements into intangible cultural heritage studies. Phase 2 of the virtual museum demonstrates how long-term anthropological fieldwork since 2012 has provided a solid foundation to support a unique documentation and curatorial process. A participatory approach involving local communities in presenting their festival-related memories has been adopted to promote a more inclusive and democratic representation of cultural narratives. This virtual museum emphasizes emotions, personal recollections, social memories, and histories with diverse layers of meaning, incorporating perspectives from various stakeholders across different eras. This approach is also different from the existing exhibitions of intangible cultural heritage, which often concentrate on standardized and idealized practices, intangible cultural heritage transmitters' voices, overlooking the varied practices, social transformations, and multiple interpretations among different stakeholders in varying contexts.



INNOVATIVE DIGITAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION

The educational impact of this initiative extends beyond preservation. The virtual museum serves as a comprehensive learning platform, facilitating cross-disciplinary research among university students, supporting studies of Hong Kong's social transformation, and providing state-of-the-art teaching resources for schools at all levels. Professor Chan expressed that this technological approach is an effective means of engaging younger generations with traditional cultural practices while ensuring their preservation for future study and appreciation.

This project outlines Hong Kong Shue Yan University's commitment to innovative research methodologies and cultural preservation. By indicating VR technology for educational and cultural purposes, the university has established a new direction for digital heritage preservation in Hong Kong. The research team's ongoing commitment to expanding and updating the museum's content ensures its continued relevance and educational value, making it a significant contributor to the preservation and promotion of Hong Kong's cultural heritage in the digital age.



“The first virtual museum of national-level intangible cultural heritage merges tradition with cutting-edge technology, preserving the Chiu Chow Hungry Ghost Festival and revolutionizing cultural heritage education and engagement.”





VR Museum
Phase 1



VR Museum
Phase 2

Related Publications and Presentations

Chan, S. C. (2020). Heritage conservation and ethnic associations: The Chaozhou Hungry Ghosts Festival in Hong Kong. In *Heritage and Religion in East Asia* (pp. 125-147). Routledge.

Chan, S. C. (2023). Unequal inscriptions of the Hungry Ghosts (Yulan) Festival celebrations as intangible cultural heritage in Hong Kong. *China Perspectives*, 132, 49-59.

Chan, S. C., & Cai, S. (2023). Preserving and Exhibiting Intangible Cultural Heritage via Virtual Museum: A Case Study of the Hungry Ghosts Festival in Hong Kong. *The International Archives of the Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Spatial Information Sciences*, XLVIII-M-2-2023, 405-411. <https://doi.org/10.5194/isprs-archives-XLVIII-M-2-2023-405-2023>

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