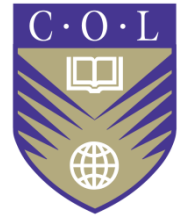


# *Visual Arts Education and New Technologies: Sharing cultures at the DeTao Masters Academy*

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*Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts (SIVA)  
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*By Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić & Sir John Daniel (DeTao Masters)  
Commonwealth of Learning*

(Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić)

## **Greetings and Introduction:**

Vice President of SIVA, Deputy CEO of the DeTao Masters Academy, Distinguished Guests, Students of SIVA, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is an honour to give this lecture.

Our title is *Visual Arts Education and New Technologies: Sharing Cultures at the DeTao Masters Academy*. Sir John Daniel and I are Education Masters with the DeTao Masters Academy and we shall have our studio here in the Creative Industries Cluster Building at SIVA.

We will deliver this lecture jointly and here is our plan.

I shall begin our presentation by exploring how the definition of visual arts has developed over time.

We then examine the revolution inspired by new media and technology in art, giving the example of David Hockney as an artist who has embraced technologies ranging from the iPhone to multi-camera video to give new dimensions to the interpretation of nature.

Sir John will then address the issue of art education and look at how the UK Open University used the knowledge media, through its Art Explorer programme, to reach large numbers of students in the teaching of art history.

Starting from Larry Lessig's statement that: "a new technology (the Internet) has given us a new freedom" we next explore the new possibilities for sharing creative works and mixing them to create new art forms. By developing the Creative Commons license that allows artists to share copyright widely,

Lessig has created a movement for sharing cultural works with exciting implications for artistic expression.

Building on these reflections, I shall then give examples from the rich inter-disciplinarity found in the DeTao Masters Academy. The DeTao Masters clustered within the SIVA project are a remarkable collection of international talent in the visual arts. Drawing on interviews with a number of distinguished Masters we report on their motivation for working in China, the importance they attach to multi-disciplinary training and their reflections on the keys to professional success at the highest levels.

As we draw to a close Sir John will ask how we might use the knowledge media to bring the artistic insights of the DeTao Masters to a wider audience in China and we will seek your advice on how to do that.

Finally, I shall tell you about our backgrounds and why we became DeTao Education Masters.

## What are the Visual Arts?

First then, what do we mean by the Visual Arts? Wikipedia defines visual arts as follows:

“The visual arts are art forms that create works which are primarily visual in nature, such as ceramics, drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, design, crafts, and often modern visual arts (photography, video, and filmmaking) and architecture.”

However, these definitions should not be applied too rigidly as many artistic disciplines (performing arts, conceptual art, textile arts) also involve aspects of the visual arts as well as arts of other types. The applied arts, such as industrial design, graphic design, fashion design, interior design and decorative art are also included within the visual arts.

Thus the current usage of the term "visual arts" includes fine art as well as the applied, decorative arts and crafts, but it was not always so.

Before the Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain at the turn of the 20th century, the term artist was often restricted to the fine arts (such as painting, sculpture, or printmaking) and not to crafts or applied art. This distinction was emphasised by the Arts and Crafts Movement which valued vernacular art forms as much as high forms. But art schools distinguished between the fine arts and crafts, maintaining that a craftsman could not be considered a practitioner of art.

Training in the visual arts has generally been through variations of the apprentice and workshop system. In Europe the Renaissance movement to increase the prestige of the artist led to the academy system for training artists. Today most artists train in tertiary-level art schools although many countries have retained the notion of the academy.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the concepts of arts in general and visual arts in particular have acquired new meanings. Art has become a freer concept that can embrace different forms and media of expression.

Striking examples of this evolution are Andy Warhol and Nam June Paik. Warhol has a wide range of artistic expression through painting/collages and also as a film director (e.g. “Sleep”), while Nam June Paik is a renowned Korean video-artist.

Today we shall emphasize the notions of freedom and multi-disciplinarity, combining fine and applied arts and performing arts both in creation and in teaching. As well as looking at multi-disciplinarity in the arts we shall note the links between the arts and scientific disciplines.

We shall also explore how technology is changing how visual artists work as well as the way that art is taught. Indeed, the use of new technology imposes a multi-disciplinary approach on both artists and educators because technology has its own dynamics and demands specialist knowledge in its users.

## The Impact of New Media and Technology

An artist who has embraced technology in a compelling way is David Hockney, who has divided his career between his native Yorkshire in England and Los Angeles.

Hockney was nearly 70 years old when he began to experiment with technology, so demonstrating that using technology in the visual arts is not the preserve of young people. Indeed, Hockney believes that the ability to paint increases with age and he often quotes the Chinese proverb that “painting is an old man’s art”. We wonder if that saying still resonates in SIVA and in China generally.

Hockney is also a good example of the other theme of our presentation: multi-disciplinarity. He is primarily known as a painter, but is also an accomplished draughtsman, video photographer and stage set designer. His acclaimed designs of sets and costumes for the opera Turandot in San Diego and Beijing show his versatility.

Although Hockney is described in art history books as a great contributor to pop-art in the 1960s, it is his recent work that that has inspired us to use him as an example.

The headline “David Hockney illuminates Paris” appeared in a Paris newspaper on 1 November 2010 to announce his exhibition of ‘paintings’ of flowers using only the iPhone and the iPad as media.

It featured 200 works and it was the first time – according to the artist – that an exhibition has been sent to a gallery entirely by e-mail.

The exhibition was all about “light and projection” but also expressed the artist’s love for drawing, giving intimate miniatures of flowers, more evocative of Van Gogh than of pop-art.

“I like to draw”, Hockney told an interviewer in 2009, “I draw flowers every day on my iPhone and send them to my friends, so they get fresh flowers every morning”. An art critic wrote that the iPhone images presented “intriguing explorations of colour and line. The British artist achieves stunning effects of texture and light on the iPad”

Hockney has embraced the opportunities offered by new technology to create art and has taken up drawing on computers since getting an iPhone. New media for artists have both advantages and disadvantages, but the speed allowed here in applying colour is something new. Swapping brushes in the hand with oil or watercolour takes time.

Some might have considered this Paris exhibition somewhat eccentric. However, the exhibition that opened the 2012 season in London at the Royal Academy of Arts “David Hockney: A Bigger Picture”

is an altogether different event. It is a large-scale exhibition of the artist's exploration of landscapes and attracts long queues of admiring art lovers.

Although it spans a 50-year period, Hockney affirms that the exhibition is "not a retrospective. When they came to me three or four years ago, many of the pieces that are in the exhibition did not exist". The majority of works date from 2005 onwards after he returned from Los Angeles to England.

The value of this seminal exhibition is that it brings together Hockney's use of new technology – iPad, iPhone, digital camera and video with his large paintings of landscapes in his native English region of Yorkshire through different seasons.

In addition to the oil paintings, watercolours and sketches, the exhibition includes a display of his iPad drawings and a series of videos produced using 9 high-definition cameras, which are displayed on 18 screens and provide a stunning visual journey through the landscapes that have inspired his large canvases. We noticed that most visitors sat through the whole 30-minute video presentation spellbound. One critic remarked that "these videos made me realise that I had never really looked closely at a tree before".

## (Sir John Daniel)

### Teaching Art and Art History

Talking of Hockney provides a natural transition to our next topic: art education.

Despite his enthusiasm for technology, Hockney believes that children have a basic need to draw and should be taught the basics of drawing before working with other media, including computers. Hockney says that the answer to complaints about boring art teachers is to engage exciting teachers, not to ignore the basic skills.

Hockney says, "I used to point out, at art school you can teach the craft; it's the poetry you can't teach." He quotes another Chinese proverb that to be a painter "you need the eye, the hand and the heart. Two of the three won't do."

Since we have both worked at UNESCO, it is natural that we refer to UNESCO's 2<sup>nd</sup> World Conference on Arts Education, held in Seoul in 2010. One of the conclusions of the conference was a question:

"Arts education inherently involves dialogue between old and new. In that spirit of dialogue, we look forward to probing further into a major, but little discussed question: Can tradition and innovation not only coexist, but actually synergize to produce significant cultural and economic progress?"

The work of David Hockney shows that the answer to that question is 'yes'.

That UNESCO conference also stressed the multiple roles that gifted individuals can play. Artists can be scientists and inventors, Leonardo de Vinci being a brilliant example. The reverse is also true. Some great scientists were also accomplished artists, including present-day Nobel Prize winners.

For example, the Chinese Nobel laureate Gao Xingjian, is a novelist, short story writer, and dramatist. He pursues a second career in painting and made his living as an artist before winning the Nobel Prize.

The Seoul Conference Agenda asks how to meet the new needs of learners in a rapidly changing world that is characterised by remarkable advances in technology on the one hand and intractable social and cultural injustices on the other.

The Conference called for intergenerational learning in order to safeguard knowledge of traditional arts. It also urged dialogue and sharing among different cultures.

### *Teaching Art History with the Knowledge Media*

As an example of a successful application of technology to art education is a system called Art Explorer that we introduced when I was the president of the Open University in the UK in the 1990s. The Open University teaches at a distance and by British standards is a large university with 200,000 students, although I realise such numbers are not impressive in China!

As president I wanted to ensure that the Open University took full advantage of the Internet and multi-media technology in its teaching. So we brought together our best Web and Internet researchers in what we named the Knowledge Media Institute. Stamenka and I have adopted this same name for our studio at the DeTao Masters Academy here at SIVA.

The term ‘knowledge media’ expresses the fact that the Internet has a much more intense and interactive relationship with knowledge than previous technologies.

One role of the Open University’s Knowledge Media Institute was to help the faculties of the University to use multi-media technologies in their teaching. I was quite surprised when the Arts Faculty, rather than the Science Faculty, became the first department to seize this opportunity. I shall describe the application that it developed: Art Explorer.

The vital first step was to begin with the needs of the learners, not with the technology. I expect it is also your experience that in the study of art a major challenge is to get the students onto the same wavelength as the teachers. To have useful discussions, students and teachers must share similar conceptual and perceptual frameworks. But beginning students do not have these frameworks and the teachers have often forgotten the days when they did not have them either. If students do not ‘see’ what experts see they cannot understand the experts’ arguments.

Art Explorer was based on an analogy with dreams and aimed to help beginning students of Art History foster personal constructs about paintings and develop a richer understanding of their perceptions of paintings.

It used the interactivity of multi-media to bring together the personal perceptions of students and the shared conceptual frameworks of the experts. To do this Art Explorer had students work with paintings, starting with their down-to-earth perceptions of works of art and engaging their feelings about them. It also aimed to make the study of art fun – but purposeful fun.

The analogy with dreams led to designing Art Explorer as a series of episodes, which is the natural style of multi-media, rather than a narrative. It seeks to exploit the non-sequential character of multimedia to involve students directly in making sense of their own activities.

There are four major episodes in Art Explorer. Within each there are different experiences that encourage students to look closely at paintings and to reflect on their discoveries. These experiences juxtapose the private experience of the learner with the purpose of the expert teacher. All instructions are spoken and animated: audio is supported by visual sequences which simulate the activity described.

The first episode challenges students to express their own ideas. Students are asked to look at 12 paintings and to type in words or short phrases that describe individual features in them. They can type in whatever they like, but often have to look quite hard to produce more than a few words about any one painting.

The student here has chosen the category 'Modern' and is sorting the paintings on that criterion. Then the computer comes into play: it has been storing students' words of description and analysing them in various ways. These data are now used to challenge students to elaborate and refine their own concepts and to re-examine the paintings.

As they proceed students are given various activities which push them to reflect upon their own work and to benefit from their experiences; for example, to develop more robust categories for discriminating between paintings.

Episode 2 is more dramatic. It surprises students with what they can do and encourages them to be curious about what they can see. It is designed to be fun as well as attention-grabbing and thought-provoking and has a strong element of 'play'.

The paintings in this section are 'live'; meaning that parts within them can be moved or changed in various ways by the student.

Parts can be moved both within and across paintings and students can change the size and axis of various ingredients. It would have been impossible for students to do these things with traditional teaching media.

Students are given a range of visual puzzles to solve which require them to look increasingly closely at details as they change the paintings' appearance in various ways. To solve the puzzles learners need to consider the different ways artists have handled the ingredients at their disposal. Thus learners are drawn gradually towards thinking about paintings as *made* objects, rather than as mysterious phenomena, and gradually self-discovery blends with guided discovery.

The emphasis throughout Art Explorer is on student activity, but perhaps this sequence - where learners experiment with their visual understanding by manipulating their perceptions - is particularly vivid. It demonstrates one way in which multimedia can act as a dynamic intermediary between expert and beginner.

Episode 3 pursues this theme in a more disciplined way. Thus students continue to work with the basic idea that a painting is a made object, but are supported more firmly as they examine this idea.

Again the emphasis is on interactive tasks, but this time students are guided very carefully towards an expert understanding of some of the ways in which paintings work their effects. For example, students may experiment with flat shapes and try to work out how to arrange these flat shapes to suggest volume. Alternatively, they can manipulate a table – rendered in three dimensions and animated – so as to experiment with 'eye-level' and perspectives. In each case, students' experiences are related back to particular paintings. The aim is to exploit multimedia to help students understand their perceptions more fully by directly 'handling' them.

Finally, Episode 4 takes students to another practical issue: the notion of function. Students are provided with various ingredients (flowers, people, some background and so on) and invited to build these into a design for their own painting. However the painting they construct has to serve a function, and students are given a choice of commissions (for example an advertisement or an illustration of a proverb).

This practical task re-invokes many of the 'illusionary' issues raised in earlier episodes but requires an engagement with the problem of how to achieve the desired illusionary and emotional effect *and* meet the demands of a commission. This student has illustrated the English proverb 'pride comes before a fall'.

I hope I have shown you how Art Explorer supported students as they developed their *own* language for describing what they see in paintings. It aimed to relate these student-owned ideas to some of the organising ideas that constitute the discipline and discourse of Art History.

I stress again that the design of Art Explorer began and ended with students in mind. The Open University team was convinced that the most fruitful way of designing for educational multimedia is by concentrating on a teaching need.

## (Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić)

### Mixing and Sharing through the Internet

This example of the use of multi-media leads us naturally to the notion of mixing and sharing through the Internet. The Internet is foremost among the drivers of change that have unleashed the freedom of expression and innovation that characterises the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the era of globalization.

Larry Lessig summed it up in his statement that: "a new technology (the Internet) has given us a new freedom". Lessig played a key role in developing the Creative Commons license that allows artists to share copyright widely. He thereby created a mechanism for sharing cultural works with exciting implications for art education.

An aspect of particular interest to us is Open Educational Resources (OER), which are educational materials that may be freely accessed, reused, modified and shared.

The movement started in 2001 when the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) made materials from 100 of its courses available free of charge on the Internet, with open licences allowing anyone to use, adapt and remix them. This has grown into a global movement of which China is part through the CORE (Chinese Open Resources in Education)

## Practical examples: the DeTao Masters Academy

### *DeTao – the concept*

Having laid out our basic premises, we now look at the DeTao Masters Academy as a new model that aims to blend tradition and innovation to foster cultural and economic progress in China.

To articulate DeTao’s vision, I will again use the analogy of dreams. A successful businessman, George Lee, inspired by the Shanghai Expo, had the dream of creating a unique pool of global talent, beginning with Visual Arts and SIVA. He wants China to recover its talent for innovation.

In the words of this week’s edition of *The Economist*: "China was once a dazzling innovator: think of printing, paper, gunpowder and the compass... it could be so again". His idea is for world-leading authorities, called Masters, to pass on their ‘tacit knowledge’ to senior apprentices who will then act as bridges to larger Chinese student audiences.

If I understand correctly, the words “DeTao” have several meanings in Chinese, one of which is “planting a seed”. That seed has grown rapidly in the last two years.

At first the dream seemed like a fairy-tale fantasy. Indeed, several Masters admit that when they first received the e-mail invitation from DeTao they were tempted to dismiss it as “spam”. But the dream is developing into an exciting adventure with great potential.

The new building at SIVA for the Creative Industries Cluster will soon be officially opened. From the original handful of Masters, the DeTao network has now attracted some 70 exceptional talents from all over the world in a variety of disciplines, all committed with enthusiasm to making George Lee’s dream a reality.

Sir John and I were privileged to conduct video interviews with a number of Masters in the Visual Arts last year. I shall highlight some features that they share. Despite their diverse origins and backgrounds and strong individuality, a common trait that unites them is multi-disciplinarity, which we find in their academic backgrounds, in how they approach their professional work and in the way they intend to pass on their tacit knowledge to their apprentices in China.

A second common feature is that many of the Masters use new technologies in diverse ways in both their work and their teaching.

Third, all the Masters have a palpable enthusiasm for sharing and “clustering” their expertise and talent. This is already happening in the fascinating knowledge creation process that we are now witnessing at SIVA and augurs well for the future.

### *DeTao – the Masters*

*Sing-Choong Foo & Nathan Wang*

Let me begin with examples of two Masters, both in the Film Industry, whose areas of expertise are inter-related: Sing-Choong Foo, a Master of Special Visual Effects and Nathan Wang, Master of Music. Both are of Chinese origin but live and work in California. They already have functioning studios in Beijing.

Sing-Choong's academic background combined advanced Physics and Film production (special effects). Nathan has a pluri-disciplinary background as a musician, mathematician and psychologist. However, music has always remained his passion and he now works both in Hollywood and in Chinese cinema. He considers the DeTao opportunity as a "dream come true".

#### *Haim Dotan*

Another example is Haim Dotan, who works in both the US and Israel. Although he is primarily an architect, he is also a talented painter and a poet. We were proud to learn earlier this year that his two books of Poetry and Architecture "After the Rain" and "Echo in the Desert" won the prize for the Most Beautiful Book in China 2011.

Prof. Dotan is a man with a mission to change the way that people live in urban centres. He wants to use technology to achieve low cost, ecological green cities and more socially focused and culturally authentic communities. Haim Dotan believes passionately in interacting with his apprentices – of different ages and generations – in direct communication, using poetry and its links with architecture as one the channels of communication.

#### *Matias Del Campo*

Another architect, Matias del Campo, who designed the Austrian pavilion for the Shanghai Expo, took the unusual decision to build it entirely in China from 3D models. He considers that DeTao is the 'epicentre of an earthquake' in architectural training. Prof. Del Campo's studio will contain advanced equipment (e.g. laser cutters, 3D printers), which can be shared with other Masters. Communication between Master and apprentices will take place through a variety of channels.

#### *Rainer Maria Latzke*

Rainer Maria Latzke is a practitioner of mural art and Frescography. He has already started his studio work at SIVA. He considers that talent is not sufficient and believes in craftsmanship and training. Like David Hockney, he believes that for a painter the brush must become an extension of the arm. He intends to collect a world heritage of mural and ornamental art and make it available in his studio. He wishes to help his students become masters themselves, using 3D production techniques which provide Frescography tools to assemble different parts in an interactive way. He will provide students with skills that will enable them to earn a livelihood.

He finds that DeTao provides a fantastic opportunity and sees great value in working with other Masters to combine the different expertise existing in SIVA.

#### *Roger Fidler*

Roger Fidler (USA) also has a pluri-disciplinary background as a journalist, designer, technologist and entrepreneur but perceives his core specialty as Information Designer.

In the early eighties, he foresaw the decline of printed newspapers and forecast that digital publishing would be the future. He conceived a 'tablet' that would be portable, lightweight, and easy to use but

would respect the essence of newspapers, which is browsing. Other newspaper people thought he was crazy, but Chinese and Indian graduate students were eager to work with him.

So he persevered and the tablet became a reality in Steve Jobs' iPad 30 years after he conceived the idea. He received one of the very first iPads from Apple in April 2010. He believes that design comes first and engineering second, which distinguishes Apple from Microsoft and is the basis of Apple's success.

In China he intends to emphasise with his apprentices his beliefs in hard work, perseverance, taking risks, not fearing failure but coming back with a new idea. He sees China as the place to have dreams right now, but feels that some mindsets must change.

*Timothy Jacob Jensen*

Chief Designer and CEO of Jacob Jensen Design, Timothy is the son of renowned Danish designer Jacob Jansen who is famous for streamlining form language playing between light and darkness. Timothy places Scandinavian values – Honest, Caring, and Peaceful - at the heart of his design forms that include a large variety of products from watches to coffins!

He is an artist but also a businessman. His company is represented in museums all over the world, including the Modern Arts Museum in New York. He has a studio in SIVA with young designers permanently based in Shanghai. He himself visits one week every second month. Pleasant, witty, talented, creative, he played a video presenting his work that marked us by transmitting the peacefulness, harmony and beauty of his design through different forms and expressions.

He sees China as a huge market and the DeTao Masters Academy as an irreversible trend. He believes in hard work and doing things the 'hard way'. He believes it is better to lose money if necessary in persevering towards excellence and wishes to transmit the ideal of hard work to the Chinese apprentices.

*Richard Tabor Greene*

Let me end by quoting Richard Tabor Greene. He believes that prose is dead and the web is an alternative to prose as it is a better interface. He has developed new ways of presenting knowledge and has identified 60 models of creativity. He works with his students by encouraging them to compare and express their different interpretations and associations to the same film or piece of visual art and finds that this type of communication is mutually enriching. He believes that China today is just like America of 100 years ago – the land of opportunity.

In China people have dreams, big dreams, for example Richard Greene met a noodle seller who wants to create an airplane industry.

**(Sir John Daniel)**

### **Taking the DeTao Masters to a wider audience**

We have taken but a handful of Masters as an illustration of the breadth and wealth of talents from the entire world embraced by DeTao Masters Academy. Clearly their studios at SIVA will become a tremendous intellectual and artistic powerhouse as they work with their Chinese apprentices. But people

all over China could also benefit from contact with these Masters. Who knows what sparks of creativity might be generated if people across China could share the Masters' ideas?

So how can we extend the Masters' "tacit" knowledge beyond the privileged few apprentices to a much wider Chinese audience?

One way is to use new technologies through our Knowledge Media Institute. We cannot do this alone but will need partnerships with institutions that reach people across China, such as the expanding network of Open Universities with their major commitment to Lifelong Learning.

Several Masters have expressed their interest in having their teaching delivered at a distance.

Of course, this would imply developing/adapting courses, training teachers and masters in the use of technology and providing some means of interaction with students. I have given you the example of Art Explorer developed by the UK Open University.

Last November we had a first meeting with the Beijing Open University (BJOU) and presented to them a possible scenario that takes advantage of the teaching and learning systems of BJOU and the expertise of the DeTao Masters.

If the informal approach with BJOU is successful and evokes widespread interest in the Masters' work the next step could be to work with selected Chinese universities to create more formal courses. These could be offered as part of advanced lifelong learning programmes.

This could possibly be linked to the "China Modern Distance Education Project" launched in 2011, which uses satellite TV as its basis. The project provides the universities which are part of the pilot approved by the Ministry of Education with an opportunity to transmit their lessons through TV.

An exciting challenge, as the Creative Cluster at SIVA develops the sharing of knowledge between Masters, would also be to create content as Open Educational Resources, based on the principles of sharing and remixing to produce learning resources of quality that we described.

The Open Education Resources movement is already growing in China as in the example of Tsinghua University's course on Ancient Chinese Architecture.

Another way of widening the impact of the Masters is a series of lectures by Masters at major university campuses and these have already begun. Our presentation today could develop into a series and we would appreciate your advice on this. I am delivering another lecture at Peking University next week and other DeTao Masters have delivered presentations at prestigious Chinese universities. The challenge is to achieve synergy between the DeTao Masters' Studios and traditional on-campus teaching.

We would very much appreciate your feedback on this to guide us in our future work.

(Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić)

## The roles of Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić and John Daniel

As we come to the conclusion of this talk, we would now like to talk about our roles as Education Masters. This includes the function of our studio, called the Knowledge Media Institute and what has inspired us to work in China as DeTao Masters.

Our key themes today were pluri-disciplinarity, technology and sharing. Sir John and I exemplify these themes in our own personal and career trajectories.

Although we have different cultural backgrounds, England and Yugoslavia, and contrasting educational experiences, Metallurgy and Literature, we share an international outlook and often call ourselves “global nomads”.

Sir John has worked in France, Canada, the UK and the US. Of his ten immediate family members only two are now living in the countries where they were born. I have been educated in four different education systems, in three languages, and lived and worked in Austria, Norway, France, India, Yugoslavia and Romania. None of my immediate family has remained in their native country and they now live on three continents. Neither Sir John nor I continued in our original disciplines and our paths joined as education experts at UNESCO.

We began working together ten years ago and I began to share Sir John’s commitment to openness, technology and new approaches to education that are made possible by globalisation and the Internet. He in turn was influenced by my commitment to the internationalisation of higher education.

In October 2010 Sir John was invited by DeTao to join the DeTao Masters Academy to contribute to the lifelong learning concept underpinning the initiative and to share his expertise in distance education with Chinese institutions. DeTao then invited me to contribute with my expertise in innovative global higher education models.

When we first came to China and DeTao we needed time to develop our roles and the concept of the Knowledge Media Institute that will be our hub. Meanwhile, DeTao itself is evolving rapidly as the number of Masters grows. I was personally very excited by beginning my work here at SIVA and was inspired by the interviews that Sir John and I conducted with the visual arts masters as those disciplines are close to my own interests.

Sir John and I have presented some of the possible orientations of the Knowledge Media Institute. The longer we are part of this process, the greater our commitment to George Lee’s vision and to developing a sustainable model of knowledge transfer that can be of wide benefit to China. I speak for both of us when I say that it is the creative and innovative character of this initiative that both challenges and inspires us.

We now turn to you for your feedback and advice. Thank you for the privilege of addressing you.

## Reference

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