

“Life Learning Rules –from MCS to the Art World.

A Chat with Jenny Pat”

23 March 2013 (Saturday), 3:00-4:30p

Gallery Article, 1 Shin Hing Street, Central (www.galleryarticle.com)

It was a Rugby Sevens Saturday in Hong Kong. Approximately 30 Maryknoll alumnae avoided the crowd in Causeway Bay as they headed west of Central looking for No. 1 Shin Hing Street – the address of Gallery Article.

Gallery co-owner and Maryknoll alumna Jenny Pat ('98), was going to give an up-close, personal sharing on the art world in Hong Kong, and how the years in Maryknoll helped her through the ups and downs.



Jenny, grand-daughter of the well-known Chinese painter, Fu Baoshi, opened Gallery Article in 2012 along with Eleanor Chan, also a Maryknoller ('92). Jenny began her art career in auction houses and was trained as an Art Restorer at a preeminent art conservation center in Hong Kong. Recently, she was featured in Dealer, a television show about buying and selling art and collectibles on the Discovery Channel.

Jenny grew up surrounded by artists in her family. Even though her mother is an artist, she never taught Jenny to paint. In fact, it was an Art teacher in MCS who discovered Jenny's artistic talent when she was in Primary 4. Jenny recalled walking down to the Art Room in the basement where she was greeted by an intense yet enticing smell of paint and musty air. The Art Teacher, Mrs. Yip, gave a simple instruction for the class to draw a portrait of their choice. While others drew cartoons or Hello Kitty, Jenny's inspiration was from the photo on the newspaper spread across her table - Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev soon came into form on her art paper, and Mrs. Yip marveled at Jenny's completed portrait. In time, Jenny received continuous encouragement and affirmation from Mrs. Yip to work on her artwork. Her mother also recognized Jenny's talent, who remembered her first award was a set of oil pastels. Through the years, while her family members seldom praised her, non-family members always complimented her, which became her source of energy and drive.

Maryknoll had prepared Jenny with many tools to face the world. She learned during her school days to appreciate “Life Learning Rules” set by the Sisters. These are simple rules, or instructions like “Act and sit like a lady”, and “Do not eat on the streets” helped her build her identity, become law-abiding, as well as humble, all of which are essential to her early career in the Art Industry.

Jenny's first taste of the commercial art world began in glamorous auction houses, the China Guardian and Christie's Hong Kong. However, Jenny revealed that working for the art industry was not glamorous, especially when she was a young rookie in the Traditional Chinese Painting Department, working alongside with male colleagues 30 to 40 years her senior. She found herself, for the first two years, holding up paintings upside down to show to clients. Yet through his experience, she discovered interesting perspectives of the art piece when one is not distracted by forms. Being the granddaughter of Fu Baoshi did not give her any advantage, so most of her art knowledge was gained through being curious, asking questions, and eaves dropping. Although difficult for a typical Maryknoller, Jenny learned to hold back personal opinions, be quiet, and humble.

When asked what was taught at Maryknoll that impacted on her career choice, Jenny admitted that it was the moral and ethical values. Therefore see how many art pieces today being treated as a commodity is most disturbing for her. She believes true artist do not create commodities. True artist creates art to express him/herself, and it is this spiritual creation that differentiates human from animal.

Jenny is also inspired by Maryknoll to be compassionate toward those less fortunate. It started when she volunteered at a Centre for the Blind. It was initially out of curiosity, but once she met the fulltime staff, she discovered how personally rewarding it was to help those in need. Today, Jenny's goals is to

set up a genuine art gallery run by Chinese, promote art, not just art pieces with commercial value. Her vision is to use her gallery to promote Hong Kong as an Art Hub, and support struggling artists. To be successful in the art industry, Jenny says one must truly love art and needs to be well connected. She is particularly compassionate towards struggling artists who are talented. She recalled as a 15 years old teenager, she took her mother's paintings from gallery to gallery for consignment. She understands how vulnerable an artist feels, exposing one's work for everyone to criticize. For a struggling artist, this is his/her livelihood, and s/he depends on art dealers and galleries to pay him/her. The confidence of a talented artist is often stripped away just because no one is willing to promote his/her work. Jenny wants her gallery be the window for these artists to showcase their work, allowing as many artists to show their true abilities.

To Jenny, the art world is spiritually nurturing, a way of spreading beauty to the world. She is, at the same time, demonstrating the true spirit of a Maryknoller, showering the world with passion and compassion in her love of art and people.

By Melody Funk (‘)



I walked away from the gallery that lovely Saturday afternoon feeling encouraged knowing that our young alumnae are passing on the Maryknoll spirit not only within the school but to the community. I couldn't help thinking how similar Jenny and Eleanor are to the Maryknoll Sisters, serving with a passion and compassionate heart. Needless to say, the good work that our Sisters have done was accomplished with toil and hardship. Jenny and Eleanor will face similar challenges in this highly competitive art industry. With their steadfast passion and a true love of art, goodness will happen in the world around them. The most important thing for them is to look to the future and have no regrets about anything they do.

Melody Funk (‘82)

As a young Maryknoller who would like to become an artist, I see Jenny and Eleanor as my goal and role models. They are exactly what I aspire to become in the future – being confident, passionate and carrying out the Maryknoll Spirit. Although it seems to be very tough to survive in the art industry, they still try their very best to be compassionate towards society. That reminds me of a phrase from our school song, “To home, to country, to the world”. We do not have to become a Maryknoll Sister in order to fulfill our duties; I believe every Maryknoller has her own way to contribute.

It was so interesting to hear from Jenny about her days in Maryknoll. Indeed, I agree that the art teachers are really encouraging. “Connection and passion is all we need.” I will remember Jenny's words and hopefully we will meet one day in this world of art, as artists and a part of the Maryknoll family. Once again, thank you, Jenny and Eleanor!
Kitty Kong (Form 6)