



A visitor browses artwork created by people with disabilities at the "Cross All Borders" exhibition. Photo: David Wong

## Disabled 'cross all borders' in art exhibition

Annemarie Evans

It's a work of mixed media art called *Enlightenment* – a pile of scanned pages on plastic in a box surrounded by books, to represent the experience of visually impaired people when they read.

The piece, by poet Lo Keng-chi, 32, who says he has 30 per cent vision, shows how visually impaired students have to scan every page of a book into a computer so that it can be read out to them on a voice recorder.

**People with disabilities use places out of their imagination, out of sensation**

Tang Hoi-chiu, chief curator, Hong Kong Museum of Art

"It's a completely different reading experience," he said, "I wanted to express the obstacles we face."

Lo's artwork received the gold award in the section for those aged over 18 at the "Cross All Borders" exhibition, which showcases art by children and adults with disabilities at the Central Library in Causeway Bay until Monday.

The exhibition, jointly organised by the Arts with the Disabled Association Hong Kong, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and the Art Promotion Office, is the second Hong Kong festival showcasing new visual artists with disabilities. Last year's focused on performance art.

This year, more than 500 budding artists took part in the competition, producing installation art, ceramics, oils, acrylics, crayon and pencil drawings as well as calligraphy.

Nine-year-old Lee Wang-on, of Tin Shui Wai, who has autism, won the silver award in the children's section for his crayon drawing of a bus.

So Kit, 17, who has a mild intellectual disability, won in the youth division for her *Blue Houses* – a ceramic house showing people sitting around a table, which she created at an arts workshop.

One of the judges, Tang Hoi-chiu, the chief curator of the Hong Kong Museum of Art, said he was fascinated by how many of the participants tossed the rule book out and addressed art often without conventional norms.

"I found it very artistic and creative," he said. "The themes of the city, the use of colour. And often, in terms of presentation, people with disabilities use places out of their imagination – out of sensation, out of feeling."

Janet Tam Mei-hing, the disabled association's executive director, said the exhibition purposely does not mention the disability of the artists. "We want people to see the art and not the disability," she said. The artwork is also displayed sufficiently low for it to be seen easily by people in wheelchairs.

"Many of our artists are self-taught," she said, often because many arts and cultural programmes are not accessible. "I'm not talking about ramps or wheelchair access, but whether [at an exhibition] there are audio descriptions of the exhibits, a tactile map, Braille descriptions."