Driftwood Transcultural Forum: A Cross-boundary Academic Experiment

On August 6, Driftwood Transcultural Forum took place at SFU’s downtown campus. Engaging with well-known Chinese-Canadian poet Lo Fu’s unique aesthetics of exile and his concerns for displacement and drifting as the everlasting fate of humanity, the forum was established as a globally oriented and locally grounded platform to facilitate transcultural debate, discussion, and dialogue. Over fifty scholars, writers, artists, media producers and commentators as well as members of the general public from Canada, Mainland China, and Taiwan participated in this interdisciplinary and cross-boundary academic experiment.

This all-day event started with a morning panel consisted of presentations by Lo Fu and experts of his work, which strived to unfold the poet’s illuminating ideas about the “Aesthetics at the World’s Edge”, and a following roundtable discussion to further discuss the particularities and universal appeals of Asian-Canadian artistic and cultural production. In the afternoon session, invited speakers and audiences had a series of dynamic, rigorous, and reflexive discussions, further dissecting the dilemma of multiculturalism, the limitations of “nation-state” framework, and the possibilities and challenges of transcultural communication from a variety of perspectives, including political economy, cultural policy, gender politics, racial issues, pedagogical practice, media industry, translation, literary publishing.
Jenny Kwan, Member of Parliament for Vancouver East, arrived at the Forum to honor Lo Fu on behalf of the Canadian federal government in recognition of his outstanding artistic achievement and contribution to transcultural debate, discussion and dialogue. At the end of the event, Orient Star Media, a Richmond-based bilingual media company, announced two scholarships for the M.A. Double Degree Program in Global Communication at SFU with the purpose of encouraging more young scholars to participate in the endeavors of transcultural communication.

Born in Mainland China in 1928 and moved to Taiwan in 1949, Lo Fu and his wife Wu Qiongfang moved to Canada in 1996 and have been living in Richmond, B.C. since then. He wrote his masterpiece *Driftwood*, a 3000-line poem, while in Canada. Now at the age of 89, the couple plans to move back to Taiwan this September.

SFU’s David Lam Center for International Communication is one of the two primary funders of this event.