

Title of Project:

(English)	Hong Kong Southbound Writer during the Cultural Cold War: Xu Xu and the Development of “Visual Novel” Games
(Chinese)	文化冷戰下的香港南來文人：徐訏及「視覺小說」遊戲開發

From 1950 to 1969, the Chinese writer Xu Xu (徐訏 1908-1980) published more than 40 novels in Hong Kong newspapers and periodicals such as Sing Tao Wan Pao (《星島晚報》) and World Today (《今日世界》), which effectively demonstrated his dedication to literary writing. Yet despite Xu’s prominence as a Hong Kong literary figure and representative of the “southbound intellectuals” (mainland Chinese thinkers who fled south to Hong Kong in the wake of the Chinese Civil War), his works have not been adequately examined in relation to contemporary socio-political dynamics in Hong Kong.

Filling this important gap, the proposed project will first recontextualise Xu’s overlooked Hong Kong novels with reference to the Cultural Cold War and “Greenback culture” —a U.S.-financed movement that involved the translation of Western literature into Chinese and the production of original Chinese literature aligned with American ideals. This will involve an in-depth examination of the correlation between Xu’s works and local politics, including the colonial power within Hong Kong’s literary field during the 1950s and 1960s.

The second part of the project will go beyond traditional textual analysis in humanities research. As Xu’s novels were published in serialised form in newspapers and periodicals, they reflect unique patterns of literary production, dissemination, and consumption in Hong Kong during 1950s-1960s. To shed new light on these patterns and connect the literature of the time with wider cultural, social, and political trends, I will restore and reconstruct the reading experiences of Xu’s contemporary readers.

The project’s third part will seek to accomplish knowledge transfer by extending literary research to the fields of artificial intelligence and design. Referencing the literary game Adventure of 30 Cents (三毫子大冒險) developed by The Education University of Hong Kong via the STEAM platform in 2023, a series of playable “visual novel” (視覺小說) games based on Xu’s novels will be developed. Visual novels are a form of digital interactive fiction that emerged after 2000 and feature minimal gameplay elements, closely resembling the experience of reading a novel on a computer screen.

By making Xu’s works accessible through this interactive platform, the project will not only contribute to the emerging field of “techno-humanities” but also foster a renewed interest in modern Chinese literature, especially amongst younger audiences more accustomed to digital than traditional media.