

Press release from the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London

Floating Olympic children add mystery

to London tradition at the 2007 Lord Mayor's Show

London 10 November: Hong Kong once again enchanted the crowds at the City of London Lord Mayor's Show, with its biggest ever display at the event today (November 10, London Time). This is the third time that Hong Kong has been represented at the Lord Mayor's Show, which has been held in the city every year since 1215. The show developed around the new Lord Mayor's journey to swear an oath of allegiance to the reigning monarch.

This year's Hong Kong display included three floats – making it the second largest entry in the procession. The floats not only included a full-size dragon boat and a Star Ferry carrying Chinese musicians but also a display of the mysterious *Piaose* or 'floating children' of Cheung Chau. For London, the display featured three pairs of young children dressed in specially made outfits: traditional Chinese dress; a London 'pearly king and queen'; and Olympic equestrian contestants, to celebrate Hong Kong's hosting of the Beijing 2008 equestrian events. People watched in astonishment as small children seemed to float along above the crowd, apparently standing on another child's outstretched hand.

In addition, there was a breathtaking acrobatic display by Chinese tissue and hoop acrobat Cyrene Lee outside the Lord Mayor's residence at Mansion House. Combined with the colourful float entry, the Hong Kong entry was colourful and memorable.

Miss Sarah Wu, Director-General of the HKETO, London, which devised and organised the display said: "This year's Lord Mayor's Show entry demonstrates the vibrant and colourful traditions and culture of Hong Kong. We have much to celebrate this year, the tenth anniversary of the creation of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The Olympic element to our display demonstrates how proud we are to be hosting the equestrian events for the 2008 Beijing Olympics and underlines our links with London, Olympic City for 2012. We invite people from around the world to visit Hong Kong and enjoy the equestrian events next year."

The Lord Mayor's Show attracts huge crowds on the city streets each year, while the BBC broadcasts it live to about two million people in Britain and globally. Hong Kong has a long tradition of working with the City of London and the Lord Mayor, who always makes a point of visiting Hong Kong during his tenure. This year's Lord Mayor, Alderman David Lewis, was born in Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong, the 'floating children' form part of the Cheung Chau Bun festival procession, created in the late 19th century to placate the spirits of islanders killed in a plague outbreak on Cheung Chau. In the island procession the children seem to float above the crowd apparently standing on another child's hand, or a paper fan, or the tip of a sword – in reality they sit on a tiny seat attached to a steel framework which supports both children.

The children, drummers and flag bearers were from the Medway Dragon and Lion Dance Association in Chatham, Kent, and the dragon boat team was provided and crewed by the Thames Dragon Boat Club based in East London.

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