

Street Talk: Eric Lee, Tram Enthusiast

Tram enthusiast Eric Lee is the curator of the “Hong Kong Trams Station” exhibition at the Peak and chairman of fan group Hong Kong Trams Enthusiast. He tells **Joanne Lee** about his fascination with the double-deckers.

By **Joanne Lee** | Aug 20, 2015

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HK Magazine: What do trams mean to you?

Eric Lee: Trams have served Hong Kong people since 1904, and can represent the spirit of Hong Kong. The tram models used in Hong Kong were eliminated in foreign countries in the 30s and 40s. At first, Hong Kong used British trams, but factories that produced tram parts in Britain closed down in the 30s. Trams nowadays are all designed and made in Hong Kong. It is hard to find a form of transport that is locally produced.

HK: When did you first start collecting model trams?

EL: I started when I was studying in primary school. There were not many tram-related toys at that time, and only metal models were available. I begged my parents to buy me one and that started my collection.

HK: Why do you find them so fascinating?

EL: I lived near the tramlines when I was a child. I only felt that trams were special because they traveled on rails, were powered by overhead electrical wires and had colorful advertisements on their bodies. You didn't find these features on other kinds of transportation.



HK: Where do your models come from?

EL: I handmade my own models when I was small. As there were not many tram-related toys at that time, I bought train models and changed them with home-made tram bodies. I used paper to make the bodies at first, and later used plastic and toothpicks. Now we make souvenirs for Hong Kong Tramways. They cost around \$200-\$300 and people who are less interested in trams might not pay so much. So we produce coasters, folders and toys too.

HK: What do you do at Hong Kong Trams Enthusiast?

EL: Hong Kong Trams Enthusiast is an organization for tram enthusiasts to communicate and we hold exhibitions. We cooperate with organisations, like Hong Kong House of Stories, to hold tram tours to tell people more about the history of trams and the changes to the tramway.

HK: What do you see as the future of trams?

EL: I hope we can continue to develop the tramways and not simply treat them as a leisure activity. Trams are still a form of transportation, not just part of tourism. It is hard for trams to survive if they stop while other modes of transportation develop.

HK: Vintage vs. modern trams: Which do you prefer?

EL: I like the modern ones. Vintage ones have their own characteristics but they are part of the past. Young people like new and special things—you feel more excited when you see new robots. But people who have lived through that period may find vintage trams more appealing.

Visit Hong Kong Trams Station at Shop 18, Level 2, The Peak Galleria, 118 Peak Rd., www.hktramstation.com.

