

The art of Wing Chun

The martial art form popularised by Yip Man and Bruce Lee is a soft but tough fighting style. US-born kung fu master and former fighter Chris Collins tell us about his journey to becoming a sifu

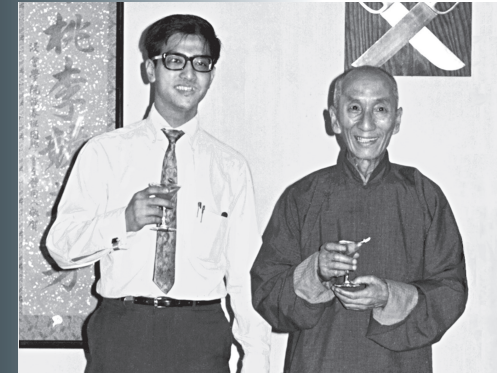
THANKS to the late Hollywood actor Bruce Lee (李小龍) and a string of movies about kung fu master Yip Man (葉問), Wing Chun has become one of the best-known Chinese martial arts, attracting people all over the world to learn it. Among them is Chris Collins, a former United States **marine**. He has taught Wing Chun in Hong Kong for 16 years, to hundreds of students from around the world.

An art that caught the eye

IN 1995, the marine Collins met an old Chinese man practising martial arts in a national park in California (加利福尼亞州). A softness and calmness in the movements that he had never seen before immediately caught his eye. He was soon fascinated by Wing Chun. After six months of searching in Hong Kong, he finally met his sifu, Cheng Chuen-fun (鄭傳勳) at a kung fu centre in Yau Ma Tei (油麻地) run by Leung Ting (梁挺), a pupil of Yip Man.

“He teaches you calm. When you have contact with your opponent, you don’t have to be hard. You move with them to divert the force,” Collins explains. He has lived in Hong Kong for 18 years on and off. He founded the Hong Kong Wing Tsun Association in 2011 and is now a master level instructor.

Collins looks at Wing Chun as an **alternative** to team sports for teenagers. “The beauty of martial arts is that there is nobody to rescue you, and you have to do it yourself.”



Leung Ting (left) and Yip Man.

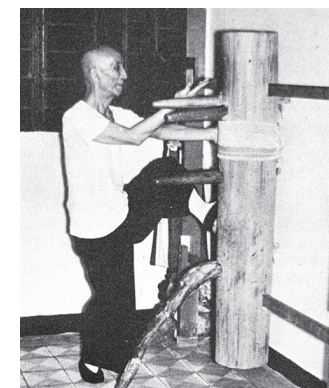
Wing Chun in Hong Kong

WING CHUN is a Chinese kung fu system, which began over 400 years ago. It was further developed in the southern Chinese city of Foshan (佛山), from where the great martial artist, Yip Man, brought the kung fu to Hong Kong in 1950s.

It soon spread to different corners of the world with the help of Leung Ting.

Distinction of Wing Chun

COLLINS used to be a boxer, wrestler, bouncer and US marine. He finds Wing Chun quite different from many other fighting systems. He says its structure is not based on the physical **pro prowess** of the individual, but instead built on a foundation of body **mechanics**, the dynamics of human anatomy, and the science of movement.



Yip Man demonstrating a Wing Chun technique.

A soft martial art

THERE are two different styles of kung fu: soft and hard. Wing Chun belongs to the soft category. “You are able to change, like bamboo, bending yourself, but not breaking,” Collins says. The hard one could be **rigid**, whereas to be soft, the motion of the arm relies on the pivot joints of the elbows, wrists, shoulders, knees and hips.



Straight to the point

COLLINS says directness is the most important feature of Wing Chun. “It is very direct and simple, but the simplicity is what makes it so complex. You have to be so clear in your ability to understand and apply what you are doing.” The directness comes from **anticipation** of the opponent, to feel he wants to push me, he explains.

Practise for the directness

TO obtain such directness, Collins says the first skill that a new learner has to practise is ‘sticky hand’. “It puts you in contact with your opponent,” says Collins. “Once you are in contact with your opponent, then you can feel him change. It is not about ‘I have to **overpower** you’, but about ‘I have to feel your energy’.”

Vocabulary

rigid (adj) 僵硬的

M: Meaning **E:** Example

M: stiff and does not bend, stretch or twist easily

E: The **rigid** plastic containers are widely used to store things.

Rigid is also used to describe laws, rules or systems that cannot be changed or varied, or to describe someone not willing to change their way of thinking or behaving

E: Several colleges have **rigid** rules about student conduct.

E: The old man was a fairly **rigid** person who had strong religious views.

1 marine (n) 海軍陸戰隊員

M: member of an armed force trained for military duties at sea as well as on land

E: A small number of **marines** were wounded.

2 alternative (n) 替代品

M: something can be found, used or done instead of something else

E: New ways to treat the injury may provide an **alternative** to painkillers.

3 prowess (n) 傑出技能

M: a great skill at doing something

E: He is always bragging about his **prowess** as a hunter.

4 mechanics (n) 運作方式

M: the way a process, system or activity works or the way it is done

E: What are the **mechanics** of this new process?

5 anticipation (n) 預期

M: a feeling that makes you believe something is going to happen

E: There has been an atmosphere of **anticipation** for a few days now.

6 overpower (v) 制服

M: manage to take and maintain control over someone

E: It took 10 guardsmen to **overpower** the burglar.