

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HONG KONG DESIGN INSTITUTE

SIGNED

LAUNCH ISSUE 2012 HKDI

**SQUEEZE
PLAY**
ALEX FUNG
PITCHES
FOR THE BIG
LEAGUES

**EAMES
COME TRUE**
HOW LOVE
MADE
CHAIRS
COOL

MIAO FACTOR

SAVING
A CULTURE
ONE
STITCH
AT A TIME



«THE VISIBLE UNIVERSE IS A STOREHOUSE OF SIGNS AND SYMBOLS TO WHICH THE IMAGINATION GIVES A RELATIVE VALUE; IT IS A SORT OF PASTURE WHICH THE IMAGINATION MUST DIGEST AND TRANSFORM»

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

LAUNCH ISSUE

EDITOR'S LETTER

The word SIGNED is an anagram for DESIGN. Maybe there's a message in that. The design process is a profound signature of our creativity and the purest artefact of our common humanity. In the 1968 movie *The Planet of the Apes*, there is a scene in which Charlton Heston, who plays the human space ship captain, is forced to realise that the planet he has crashed upon is Earth. He does so because he comes across the remains of the Statue of Liberty, designed by Frédéric Bartholdi.

It is design, the way in which we take the materials of the natural world and shape them in accordance with our imagination, that makes this planet uniquely human. Should the human race ever be obliterated, future visitors from space will know our story by the things we made. That is how we SIGNED this earth, by DESIGN.

Our chances of avoiding an apocalypse are enhanced if we SIGN our environment with a clear sense of values, with a feel for what increases the quality of life for all. And thus this launch issue of *Signed*, the HKDI's new tri-annual magazine, is devoted to value-driven design, with stories about Charles and Ray Eames, who looked for human connections in everything they did; Peter Buffett, who, despite his billionaire father, finds true value in music and humility; and Koyo William, an HKDI alumni who is pushing the boundaries of environmentally sensitive fashion.

We also explore the ways design can help improve life for elders, raise green consciousness and protect endangered ethnic minorities like the Miao people of China. We hope *Signed* will begin a conversation within the HKDI community, and between HKDI and the rest of the design world about the values of design and their place in the human project. And why *Signed*, apart from its anagrammatical qualities? One explanation lies in the power of signing, be it by way of a signature or by giving an entity a sign. Let the great philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein explain, "There is no such thing as subtracting the cardinal number 5 from the cardinal number 3. But with the introduction of signed integers, we have a new system of numbers... The new statement that was accepted, namely that one can subtract +5 from +3 (to get -2) applies to signed integers, which means something quite different." In other words things that are signed – a number, an intersection, a painting, a contract – are changed. And that's what design does to the world; it changes it forever.

DANIEL JEFFREYS
Editor-In-Chief

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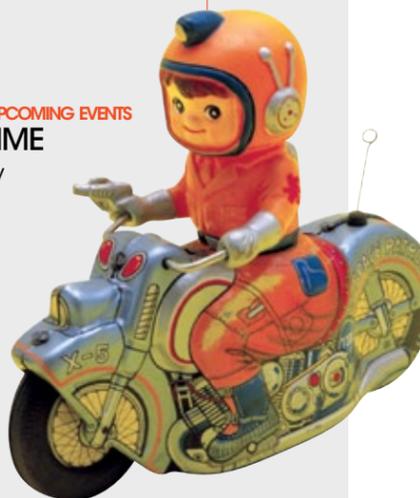


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PHOTOGRAPHY
 ERIC-PAUL-PIERRE PASQUIER/
 GAMMA-RAPHO VIA GETTY IMAGE

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OPPOSITE
ALEX FUNG WITH
SOME OF HIS
JUICERS

WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS - SQUEEZE THEM! SIGNED

Alex Fung, Principal of the Hong Kong Design Institute, has devoted his life to finding new ways to be creative. As he presided over the launch of *Signed*, he decided he wanted a publication that would break through boundaries.



DANIEL JEFFREYS

IT'S EARLY ON a Friday morning and Alex Fung is already proving that his middle name should be "kinetic". He moves at speed around his office, laying his fingers on dozens of the objects that populate his bookshelf, searching for the one that will help him to make a point about how design can do more to serve the community.

"We can't make things and forget they exist," he says, balancing his fingers on a custom-made iPad cover he had just collected from Lane Crawford. "Everybody looks at a given object in a different way. That's what makes design such an interesting challenge."

Fung is famous for making people look at things from unusual angles. His design manual *Creative Tools* puts great emphasis on breaking rules, overcoming fixed mindsets and getting rid of assumptions. He is fond of saying things like, "if the only tool you have is a hammer, then every problem looks like a nail." Then there is his lemon juicer collection, which must be one of the largest in the world.

"I can't remember where I put the Philippe Starck one," he says as he begins to rummage in one of six large boxes by the side of his desk that formerly held Apple computers but now house hundreds of bubble-wrapped juicers. "It's a cliché but, like everything Starck does, it's very representative of a certain kind of innovation."

He finally lays his hands on the Starck one, unearthing it from deep within a set of juicers that all seem to have been made from fluorescent pink plastic. Starck's version looks like a spider with exceptionally long legs. It seems like a perfect icon for thinking outside normal boundaries, because most juicers are short and squat.

"Creative thought is about making new mental patterns," he says. "It's inspired by unanswered questions and redefining values or relationships."



And that's why Fung has the lemon juicer collection, which, since he is an unconventional thinker, has hardly anything to do with extracting lemon juice. The collection has a much bigger role as a means of squeezing new ideas out of people who thought their creativity might have run dry. At least once a year, Fung takes his entire collection out and holds a "juicer symposium", during which participants are first asked to use the juicers for their intended purpose. After that, everyone has to come up with a juicer design that looks nothing like the ones in Fung's collection.

Creative Tools has a pull-out chart featuring 101 ways to squeeze a lemon, running from getting a shark and using its jaws to deploying mouse traps, cogs, steam irons, a drawer and folding chairs. Fung is big on creating massive lists as a means of inspiring creativity.

"The first step is to list ideas without evaluating them," he says. "The first 20 to 30 ideas will be things we're already aware of and may not be very useful. The bigger the list, the greater the probability we will come across an original insight that synthesises two existing ideas."

Fung insists that students try his 101 ideas approach when they are brainstorming, arguing that it's the only way to generate truly unusual thoughts.

"Such a long list forces people to shift their viewpoint, so they imagine how somebody might approach the problem if they were less inhibited by conventions," he says. "Often, the last set of ideas in the 101 is the one that has the most-surprising content and produces significant conceptual advances."

One particular viewpoint Fung is anxious to shift is the international perception of the HKDI, which he believes does not yet reflect the quality of courses it offers, nor the calibre of the graduates it produces.

"We have a world-class facility, nobody has any doubt about that," he says, as we ride up the giant escalator that welcomes students and visitors to the new Tiu Keng Leng campus, which opened during the current academic year. "What people are less aware of is the world-class design education we provide. Through initiatives like *Signed*, we will change that."

Fung's ambition is for the HKDI to take its place in the premier league of design schools, rubbing shoulders in the pages of design magazines, design fairs and design school rankings with the likes of New York's New School, the Fashion Institute of Technology and Central Saint Martins in London.



ABOVE
ALEX FUNG IN HIS
OFFICE AT HKDI

"Hong Kong has the resources and the talent pool, in the form of our students, to be the best of the best in many different fields," he says. "Our alumni already include many design talents who are doing world-class work, and the more that happens the more the HKDI brand will become familiar in international design markets."

Fung continues to add to his lemon juicer collection, despite the large number he has already acquired. He sees collecting as an essential quality of a good designer.

"Collecting is a passionate activity," he says, lining up a half-dozen of his favourite juicers across the top of his desk. "A collection arouses memories and generates new meanings, and it enhances our discernment in ways that lead to creativity."

And that's Fung's life mission, to bring creativity to a world that sometimes seems intent on turning its back on new ideas, to advance the agenda of design at a time when there are so many issues that call out for design solutions – like an ageing population and the shortage of natural resources. And if he has to make a few quarts of lemonade along the way, so be it. ☺

《CREATIVE
THOUGHT
IS ABOUT
MAKING
NEW
MENTAL
PATTERNS》



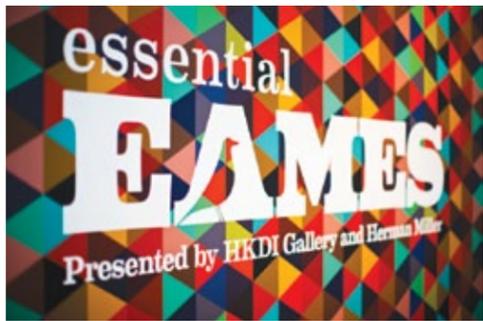
DANIEL JEFFREYS

FIELD OF EAMES



QUEST PRODUCTION/THE KOBAL COLLECTION

There are few people who have had greater impact on the way we live than Charles and Ray Eames. Their chairs and houses did for furniture and architecture what Steve Jobs did for the computer. The first exhibition of their life and work took place this autumn at the HKDI and it has helped to spark a global reappraisal of the couple's contribution to modern design.



ABOVE
EAMES AT THE HKDI
OPPOSITE
RAY EAMES IN AN
EXHIBITION PHOTO WITH
ONE OF HER FABRIC
DESIGNS

THE WORK OF CHARLES and Ray Eames made life easier. Their chairs are comfortable and beautiful, their films explain the way the universe works and the splints and stretchers they invented helped save lives during the Second World War. And, for those who knew them well, it always seemed like their work came in a natural flow, as if creativity was, for them, as breathing is for most other people. Philippe Starck put it thus, “They don’t create beauty and intelligence, they just transmit what they are.”

The Eames name is still most commonly associated with the chairs sold by the Herman Miller company, but a new film about the couple *Eames – the Architect and Painter*, which opened in New York on November 18, argues that their characteristic mix of the practical and the aesthetic has left traces in nearly every aspect of contemporary life. The same aesthetic was very clear in the exhibition *Essential Eames*, which finished its run at the HKDI on December 2nd 2011.

“Charles and Ray did not obsess about style for style’s sake. They didn’t say their style was curves, so everything had to be curves,” says Eames Demetrios, the couple’s grandson and Director of the Eames Office, which preserves and extends the work of his grandparents. “They did not simply design objects, but ideas and experiences. They tried to solve design problems and they believed that the extent to which you have a design style is the extent to which you have not solved the design problem.”

Charles Eames was trained as an architect. Ray Eames, his second wife, was an artist, and together they ran a design studio in California that was a hive of creativity. Charles arrived in Santa Monica during the 1940s from Michigan, and his migration from the industrial Midwest to Southern California was part of a larger cultural and aesthetic shift. The house that he and Ray built in Pacific Palisades, with its simple, boxy shapes, abundant light and whimsical ornaments was a domestic temple for a new, less austere kind of Modernism, one that joined a streamlined, functional, practical style with bright colours and pleasing shapes.



HKDI

HKDI AND HERMAN MILLER



ABOVE
EAMES CHAIRS
WITH DESIGNS BY
HONG KONG
ARTISTS

Their motto was “the best for the least for the most” — a characteristically pithy statement of a utopian ideal of capitalist mass production. The idea that striking design and sound craftsmanship could be available to everyone has an obvious democratic charm, but it also contains a paradox. The Eameses, who had long-lasting contracts with Westinghouse, I.B.M. and other large corporations, were selling the notion that individualism could not only coexist with commercial standardisation, but that idiosyncratic expression could also flourish within the collective rituals of consumption. The stuff you buy, if it’s the right stuff, is part of what makes you what you are.

Their own eccentricity turned out to be a great asset. Charles, tall and tousle-haired with a trademark bow tie and a professorial air, was both awkward and charismatic. Ray, with her bangs and old-fashioned dresses, is described by one colleague as “a delicious little dumpling”.

In archival footage that takes up a large part of *Eames* they look captivatingly odd and much about the way their relationship developed has an eccentric cast. Charles had been married before he met Ray and divorced his first wife in 1941.

Shortly after he wrote to Ray, saying “I am 34 (almost) years old, single (again) and broke – I love you very much and would like to marry you very soon. I cannot promise to support us very well – but if given the chance will sure as hell try.” The letter finishes with a sketch of a hand and an arrow pointing to the ring finger, asking for its size.

How could she resist? They married and made their move to Los Angeles, where they would live (very well) for the rest of their lives. Not that everything was sweet kisses and violin music. Eames did not share credit. His name alone went on the studio’s products. And though Ray was his equal partner and indispensable collaborator, the sexism of the age pushed her, at least publicly, into the margins.

Eames includes an appalling, hilarious appearance the two of them made on *The Arlene Francis Show*, in which the chipper hostess took great pains to keep Ray in her silent, subordinate place, making Charles the reluctant centre of attention. Later their marriage was tested by his infidelity, and their partnership was weakened by a loss of common creative purpose.

HKDI



ABOVE
THE EAMES EXHIBITION
GALLERY AT HKDI

All of which is to say that they were human, and the most gratifying thing about *Eames* is that it shows, in marvellous detail, how their work was an extension of themselves and how their distinct personalities melded into a unique and protean force. Their creativity was such that at times it is hard to keep track of everything the Eameses were making – furniture, house wares, films, exhibitions, they were all in the mix. But the scale and variety of the enterprise also establish them as precursors of digital culture, which combines technology with handicraft, and layers information and images into what Charles Eames called (meaning it in a good way) “information overload”.

The Herman Miller Company continue to manufacture many of the iconic Eames pieces and Eames Demetrios oversees the process of improving upon the legacy that his grandparents left behind.

“They found a human connection in everything,” he says. “For them a designer was like a good host who always anticipates the needs of his guest. The design process for Charles and Ray never ended at manufacturing. They were always trying to make things better.”

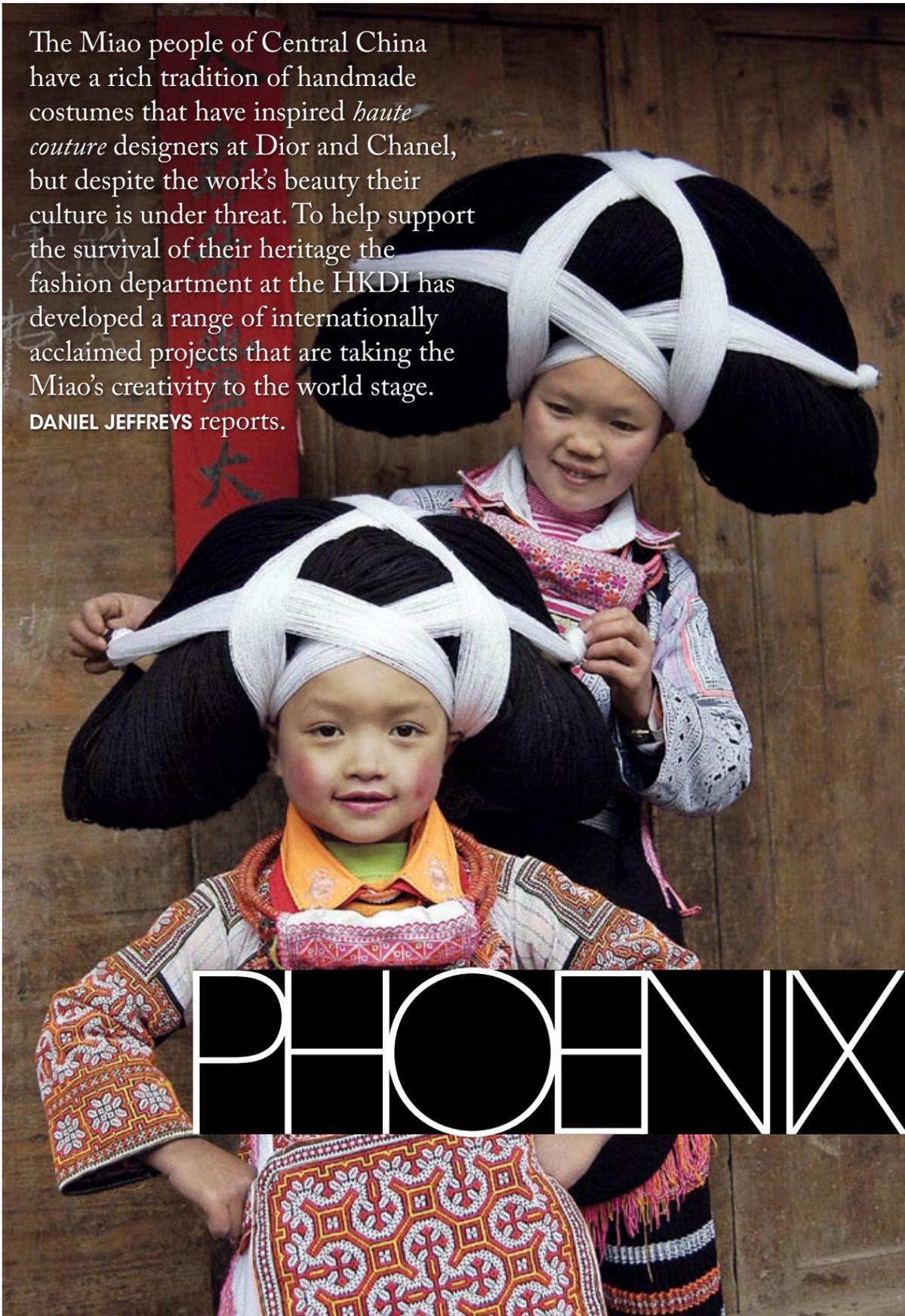
Charles Eames died on August 21 1978, Ray died in 1988, ten years to the day after her husband. Next year would have been Ray’s 100th birthday and the milestone will provide another opportunity to celebrate the couple’s work, a process that is likely to continue for as long as people like to sit in chairs.

“They demanded the honest use of materials and they never delegated understanding,” says Eames Demetrios. “But their humanity is the most important legacy in their work. Their advice was to take your pleasures seriously and that’s just another way of saying that this is the age of choices and every choice we make has an impact.”

BY DANIEL JEFFREYS AND A.O. SCOTT

HKDI AND HERMAN MILLER

The Miao people of Central China have a rich tradition of handmade costumes that have inspired *haute couture* designers at Dior and Chanel, but despite the work's beauty their culture is under threat. To help support the survival of their heritage the fashion department at the HKDI has developed a range of internationally acclaimed projects that are taking the Miao's creativity to the world stage. DANIEL JEFFREYS reports.



PHOENIX

STR/AP/GETTY IMAGES

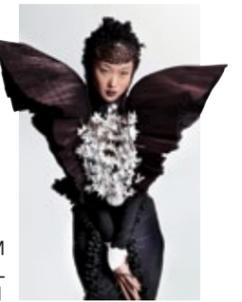


A MIAO INSPIRED DRESS BY IKA OPPOSITE LONG HORN MIAO GIRLS IN TRADITIONAL HEADPIECES

RSING

HKDI

《THE WORK OF THE MIAO PEOPLE IS A GREAT SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR DESIGNERS》



RIGHT A MIAO INSPIRED PIECE BY KOYO WILLIAM
BELOW MIAO DANCERS AT THE 9TH NATIONAL
TRADITIONAL GAMES IN GUIYANG, SEPTEMBER 2011

WHEN MIAO GIRLS are seven or eight years old they begin to learn embroidery skills from their mothers and start to craft the wedding dresses they will wear as young teenage brides. The Miao, who constitute an ethnic minority of some eight million people scattered through Yunnan, Hunan, Guizhou, Sichuan and Guanxi provinces, consider a young girl's skill with embroidery as a good indicator of her prowess as a wife and mother.

"In the modern era the work of the Miao people is a great source of inspiration for designers," says Shaun Cheung, senior lecturer in the HKDI's Department of Fashion and Image Design. "Their facility with colour in the dresses they make and their creativity with the silver pieces that are used in wedding jewellery all provide excellent ideas for designers."

The first stage of the HKDI's Miao project began with an idea for an exhibition of pieces made by Miao girls, to be displayed alongside Miao-inspired clothing designed by leading fashion practitioners in Asia. Cheung and his colleagues assembled an impressive list of designers that included Lu Lu Cheng, Chiyung Cheung, Dora Chu (a Central Saint Martin's design graduate who has worked with Alexandra McQueen and Vivienne Tam), Jennifer Chung, Ika, Janko Lam, Kenny Li, Peter Lau, Lok Lai Ming, Sophy Ma, Prudence Mak (who has worked with Stella McCartney), Florence Tang, Pacino Wan, Koyo William (of the famous Koyo jeans brand) and May Wong.

The team of fifteen designers each crafted several pieces that infused the traditional Miao culture with contemporary touches, the designers seeking ways to retain the essential spirit of the Miao techniques while infusing them with a more carefree interpretation of femininity or using the structure of Miao garments to devise pieces with an enhanced sense of drama.



FENG LI/GETTY IMAGES; TOP: HKDI



FEATURE

MIAO COUTURE
BY KOYO WILLIAM



HKDI

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MIAO READY-
TO-WEAR BY
JANKO LAM



HKDI

LAUNCH ISSUE 2012 | SIGN3D



FROM LEFT
MIAO INSPIRED
WORK BY
JANKO LAM,
LULU CHENG
AND PETER LAU



RIGHT MIAO
PIECES BY
JENNIFER
CHUNG AND
(BELOW) IKA



“Some of the Miao styles are like the most stunning pieces you see on the runways in Paris and Milan,” says Cheung. “The headdresses of the Long Horn Miao look like something that might have been designed by Alexander McQueen.”

A central part of HKDI’s mission was to delve deep into the Miao culture in search of sustainable design techniques. The design of Miao wedding dresses is part couture technique and part storytelling, for the Miao culture is rife with legends. The phoenix which plays a central role is a bird that lives for a thousand years before being reborn from fire and its own ashes. A famous Miao town in Western Hunan is Fenghuang, a word usually translated as phoenix, which is named after a 2,300-foot mountain peak to its north-west.

Long ago, so the legend says, a young peasant, exhausted from foraging for wood, fell to the ground to rest beneath a tree on the mountain’s slopes. As he slept he heard a beautiful voice, but when his eyes opened he saw nothing and believed the sound he had heard must have been no more than wind racing through the leaves. His imagination enlivened by the graceful sound, he took a leaf from the tree, rolled it and played it like a flute, producing a pure, sweet sound. He did this for many days, and finally his perseverance was rewarded. He looked up and saw a phoenix in the tree above him. Days later he returned to the tree and again began to play with the leaf. On this occasion a beautiful woman appeared who said she had been the phoenix and was drawn to his music. The young man and the woman lived together thereafter and from then on the mountain was called Fenghuang.

Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* has a similar tone to that of the Fenghuang transformation and both hint at magic within the natural world that can be brought to life by those who have the right spirit. It is in this vein that Miao girls make their wedding dresses and silver jewellery, hoping with each needle stitch and hammer blow they will endow the weave of their dress and the shape of their necklaces with the power of everlasting love.

“If we can sustain these techniques we can sustain something important about humanity,” says Cheung. “They use natural dyes, the Miao live close to nature and co-exist with the seasons. For most of us in towns that’s now an alien way to live.”

The next phase of the Miao project will see the HKDI’s fashion department create a book that catalogues the culture’s heritage and includes accounts of how the fifteen designers came to create the pieces that were in the HKDI’s *Miao Culture & Sustainable Design* exhibition. Since that exhibition took place several of the designers have received commercial orders for their Miao inspired pieces, including some of the knitwear designed by Ika.

“The Miao have always used textile making as a language to record their history and beliefs,” she says. “The way they weave is an instrument of their vocabulary.”

Ika says she found herself rendered speechless with joy when she first began to explore the designs of the Miao.

“The colours invaded me like a powerful dream,” she says. “A thousand words would not be enough to express the beauty of Miao culture.”

Koyo William found himself having a similar experience and was carried along by the mythology and power of the Miao designs.

“The cross-over with the Miao aesthetic and the gothic rock vibe I use in Koyo Jeans has taken my designs to new heights,” he says. “I can understand why designers who encounter the Miao culture

are completely transformed by the experience. It’s almost like the Miao was the birthplace of *haute couture*.”

“The Miao rituals and legends are beautiful,” says Cheung. “And the way they work, with natural dyes and rugged fibres, often using flax, means that the clothes are environmentally sustainable and last for a long time.”

For Cheung and his fashion department colleagues this has been a crucial aspect of the Miao project. The fifteen designers were asked to do more than just mimic Miao design; their brief included the requirement that the designs draw on the sustainable elements of the Miao culture.

Although the pieces made by the Miao have a couture element, many of the Miao ethnic minority live in difficult circumstances with high levels of poverty. As such the fashion and image department see the Miao project as part of the HKDI’s commitment to value-driven design.

“By raising awareness of the Miao’s heritage we hope that more will be done to sustain their culture,” says Cheung. “We hope that centres of craftsmanship will grow in Miao areas and that this will help bring more Miao elements into contemporary collections while helping to support the magic and mythology of their heritage.”

HKDI

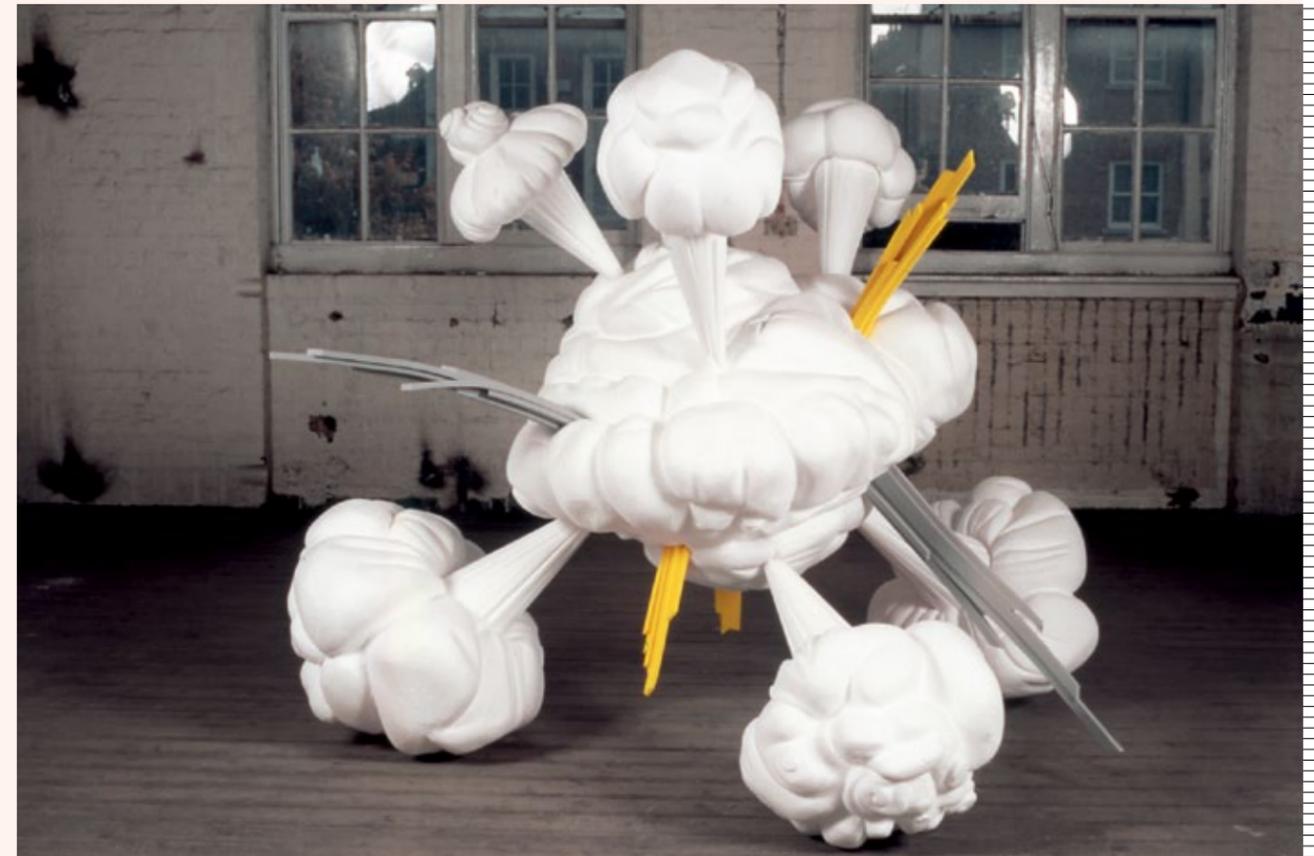
HKDI



BRIT PARADE

This summer saw the first-ever large-scale exhibition of contemporary British art in Hong Kong. The exhibition called at four cities, providing an inspiration for HKDI staff and a challenge for its travelling curators, as **QUEENIE LAU** and **DELPHINE ALLIER** report.

GILBERT AND GEORGE. COURTESY OF WHITE CUBE



THE EXHIBITION *Made in Britain: Contemporary Art from the British Council Collection 1980–2010* was held at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum between June 30 and October 9. The diverse exhibition showcased nearly 150 works produced between 1980 and 2010 by artists such as Damien Hirst, Sarah Lucas, Gillian Wearing and Mark Wallinger. It also featured works by Turner Prize winners including Richard Wright and Wolfgang Tillmans, as well as several Turner nominees.

Hong Kong was the exhibition's third stop. It had previously visited Chengdu and Xi'an, and is at the Suzhou Museum until January 8 2012.

Contemporary art in the UK often reflects on social or cultural issues, creating a dialogue between contemporary art and society. This approach was a strong feature of the *Made in Britain* show.

ABOVE
MATT FRANKS,
FOOOOOM!!, 2000
OPPOSITE
GILBERT AND GEORGE,
*INTELLECTUAL
DEPRESSION*, 1980

My favourite piece was titled *Fooooom!!*, by Matt Franks. What impressed me most is that the artist used humble materials like polystyrene, foam rubber and a tiny bit of steel to create something momentous. As Franks says "The work is an image of an idea made

3-dimensional, it was intended to refer to baroque art, pop culture and human inspiration, the explosion is an embodiment of metaphor, destruction made safe and turned into soft friendly cloud reminiscent of cartoons, baroque art and graphic depictions of detonations with all the indexical signs of energy erupting removed."

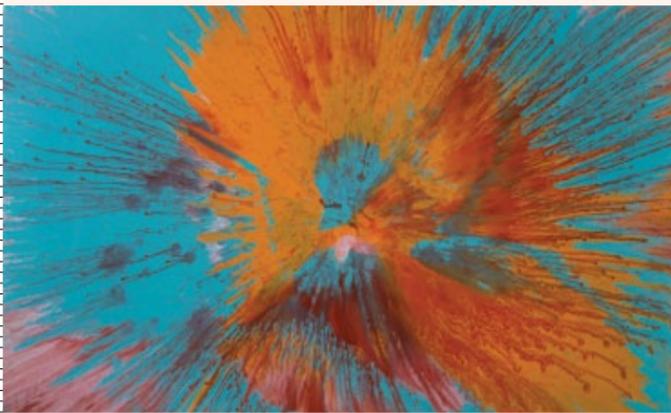
Fooooom!! reminds me of work by Wilson Shieh, who adopts traditional Chinese classical *gongbi* or fine-brush painting to tell contemporary Hong Kong stories. Through the combination of old and new elements and their interaction, Wilson created new and unexpected interpretations, his works blur the boundary between high art and popular art. I hope that in the near future there will be an exhibition in Hong Kong that responds to the *Made in Britain* show featuring local contemporary art for the past three decades, to see how Hong Kong art reflects on or responds to our own social and cultural issues.

Queenie Lau, Curator, External Affairs Office, HKDI and IVE (LWL)

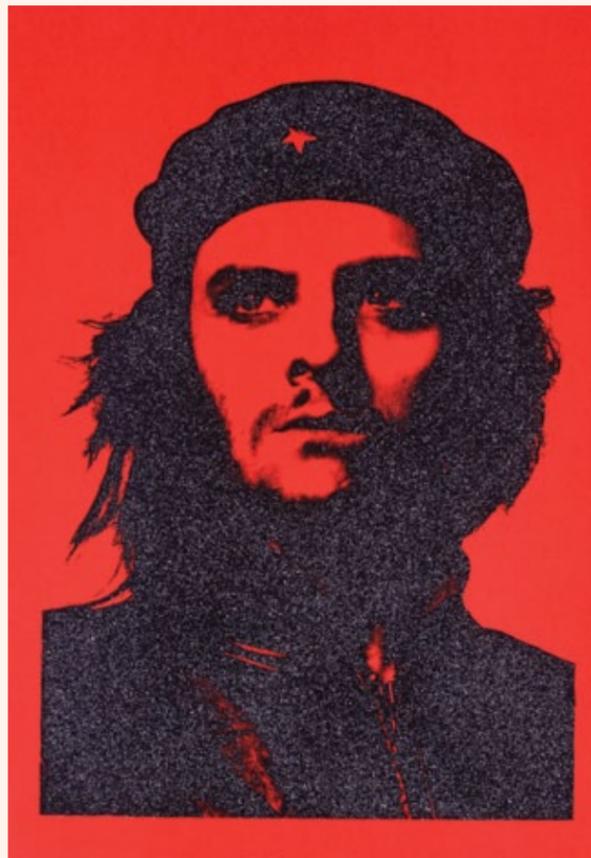
MATT FRANKS



MARK WALLINGER, COURTESY OF THE PAUL STOLPER GALLERY AND LIVE STOCK MARKET; HIRST HOLDINGS LIMITED AND DAMIEN HIRST; PHOTO: PRIDENCE CUMING ASSOCIATES LTD, COURTESY OF WHITE CUBE



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
MARK WALLINGER, *ROYAL ASCOT*, 1994; GAVIN TURK,
HASTA LA VITORIA, 2004; DAMIEN HIRST, *BEAUTIFUL
JUICY ORANGE SPLATTERED ALL OVER A SUMPTUOUS
BLUE I FEEL NAUGHTY PAINTING*, 2006



SARAH LUCAS, COURTESY OF SADIE COLES HQ, LONDON

MADE IN BRITAIN was conceived by a group of curators from China, in collaboration with the British Council Visual Arts department, based in London. The main intention was to create an exhibition of works that would give an introduction to British Contemporary Art to an audience that might not have had much prior exposure to British Art. It is also a project that focused on cultural exchange and experience sharing among museums and curators from different museums.

In June 2010, a group of curators from a selection of Museums across China came to London, to meet with the Visual Arts team, look at the British Council Collection and discuss working together to create a touring exhibition. It was decided that the exhibition would tour to four museums across China including Sichuan Museum in Chengdu, Hong Kong Heritage Museum, Xi'an Art Museum and Suzhou Museum.

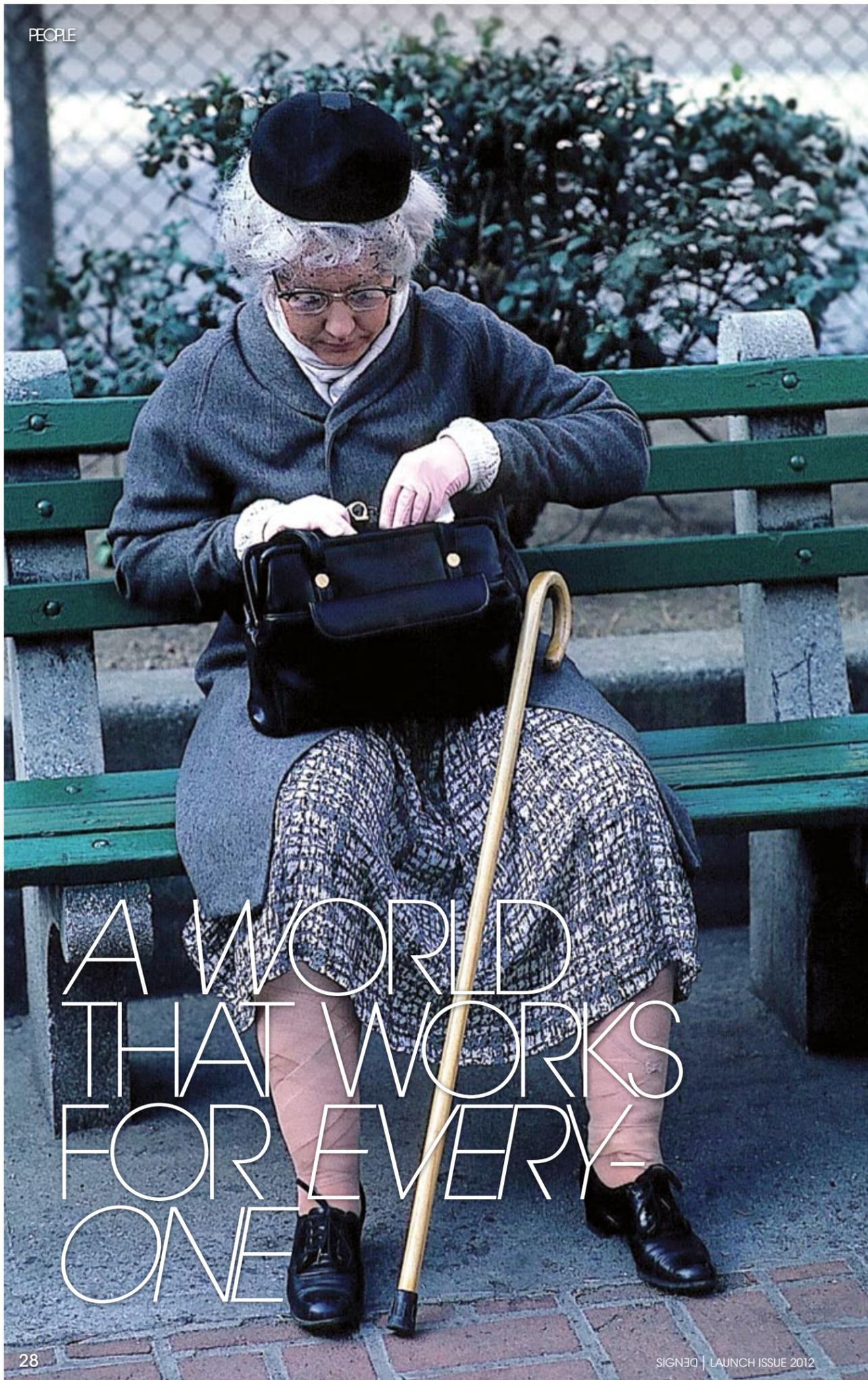
From the outset, it was a real challenge to balance the demands that the curators made with regard to key works from the collection, whilst making

BELOW LEFT
SARAH LUCAS,
*SELF PORTRAIT WITH
FRIED EGGS*, 1996

sure the pieces selected were robust enough to travel to multiple venues and be displayed under differing conditions. We also had to consider the size of the works in transit, as there are limits on the size of cases that can be carried on domestic flights in China. To make the exhibition possible we worked with a capable transport agent who could handle all the paperwork needed, and was able to provide technical staff to assist in the installation should any of the Museums not have enough in-house staff. Because of the large amount of movement within China, we were advised by the transport agent to use an ATA Carnet to ease the custom process at the airports. Although this simplified the customs clearance during the transportation, it meant a lot more preparation work in London, including highly detailed information about the consignment, right down to the number of light bulbs!

The exhibition has been configured differently in each venue to adapt to differences in where we could install works that needed power, and which walls were strong enough to hold heavier works. For example, Sichuan Museum in Chengdu had a lot of space but it was split into small sections, so it was necessary to create small combinations of works that would sit well together but also lead viewers around the space and provide lines of interest that connected the sections. Xi'an Art Museum was the largest space we worked with, but despite its size there was comparatively little wall space able to support framed works, so we had to try to use the walls that were strong enough and configure the others to house the AV works. Hong Kong Heritage Museum managed their own installation plan and it was fascinating to see how they composed installations, the groupings of works being much more structured than our usual approach, and the overall effect was very impressive. In Suzhou, our last stop, the gallery space was the smallest we worked with and we had to reduce the size of the show but the Museum is beautiful, so I am looking forward to seeing many visitors before we close in January. 

Delphine Allier, British Council



A WORLD
THAT WORKS
FOR EVERY
ONE



LEFT MOORE
AGED 26; OPPOSITE
MOORE AS AN
85-YEAR-OLD ELDER

*In 1979, twenty-six year old **PATRICIA MOORE** disguised herself as a woman in her 80s and travelled to 116 cities throughout North America, to discover if urban design met the needs of the elderly. Dressed in her grandmother's clothes, she developed a unique form of immersion research that revitalised the role of architecture and design in our daily lives. Now she is working with the HKDI to develop solutions that work for all age groups. Here she lays out her passionate vision for the future of design.*

WE HAVE BEEN designers since the moment our Cro-Magnon ancestors began chipping stones to make cutting tools. Creating for our comfort, providing for our existence, responding to the daily challenges that impact our lives, these are all matters that require design solutions.

The places and things which we encounter every day are the results of someone's daring, thinking, and action. Throughout history, designers have been people who challenged the norm, rose to the occasion, and seized the opportunity to make a difference.

The path of the designer is a noble one. Da Vinci's curiosity paved the way for the first flight of the Wright Brothers. The combustion engine led to rockets successfully travelling into space. The invention of the moment gives birth to the products of the future.

The pioneers of the field – Loewy, Teague and Dreyfuss – shaped the products that fill our lives. Automobiles,

aircraft, telephones – all the things we, as consumers, have come to expect and require – were made possible by the creativity of the art and science that is design, under the direction of dedicated designers.

In the 1960s, product designers found themselves faced by ever-growing challenges. Concerns about poverty, environmental protection and physical accessibility gave them a new role as arbiters of the quality of life.

Determining the shape and scope of our cities, protecting and supporting the fragile resources of our planet and the independence and autonomy of

all persons throughout the course of their lives have catapulted the significance of good design and the position of the designer into an entirely new and vitally important role.

Just as Da Vinci questioned what was hitherto accepted, today's designers must redefine what is known. Today's answers must support tomorrow's questions. There has never been a more exciting or vital time for design. And the need for humanism in design has never been greater. By focusing our talents on the needs of each individual, designers have given birth to a new order: "inclusivity by design".

This "design for all" approach focuses on possibilities, not limitations. Inclusivity in design supports the belief we can provide solutions for shortcomings. Where there is ignorance, we will strive for enlightenment. Where there is a roadblock, we will create a pathway. For example, we can no longer speak of the disabled. Our responsibility is to enhance a person's abilities,

«The need for inclusivity has never been more critical»

AN ELDERLY MAN WALKS PAST AN ADVERTISEMENT FOR A NEW LUXURY STORE IN THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF HONG KONG



MIKE CLARKE/AP/GETTY IMAGES

recognising that all of us are distinct and “differently-abled”. Design and designers are true “enablers” who present and promote balance in all places and things. We no longer focus on age as a limitation to a response. Our “elders”, not the “elderly”, require good design in their lives, as much as people of all ages.

The designer’s domain spans from birth to death. With the dawn of the new millennium, designers have emerged as navigators, translators of our hopes and our desires. Their work has never been more important, and their opportunities to make a difference have never been greater.

Beyond providing the corporate realm with a successful bottom line, designers have the ability to fashion the quality of life itself. Design is no longer a mere variable in determining the course of the future: it is the means of our very survival.

So why has the international design community seemed so slow to embrace these ideas?

Perhaps it’s the circumstances in which industrial and urban design was conceived. Born in an era of economic chaos, design’s primary objective was to promote products. Whether people needed them or not, designers led them to believe they could not live without the “thing” of the moment.

That imperative was not seriously challenged until the advent of a more humanistic approach to design in the 60s, when the issue of personal wealth, individual health and the environment became important arbiters of a designer’s worth. Tragically, the 60s pioneers soon fell under the influence of economic pressures and in late 70s and most of the 80s, when profit and glitz became the market’s king once again.

Now, designers have begun to focus on individual needs again. The ageing baby boomers in the United States have created a catalyst for change. Growing concern for our children, parents and the world we live in has meant that accountability is regaining control. The human factor has returned to centre stage.

Yet, despite a font of good will, it appears the design community has done little more than fill student portfolios with good intentions and perpetuate myths and misconceptions, thus failing to satisfy real consumer needs.

The results have been product and environmental designs for those considered “average” or less than

“normal” that fail them at many levels. True design universality is still the exception. As a force for creation and change, designers need to step back, analyse their mission, and treat all consumers as equals. The need for inclusivity has never been more critical.

If we assert that some people – because of age, body form, or functional range – can be disregarded during mainstream product development, we will fail to meet the wishes, needs, and dreams of consumers as a whole. When we describe people as “young” or “old”, “able-bodied” or “disabled”, we create conflicting camps and reduce resources for everyone. Nobody is elderly, we all have to age. Nobody is disabled, we all have different abilities.

As long as chronic health conditions and the effects of disease, ageing, and injury create consumers who might use wheels to “walk”, eyes to “hear”, fingers to “see”, there will always be a place for specific-need products and environmental compensation. But those requirements are best considered within the context of the design process, so that even the so-called special situations become commonplace and ordinary.

Only when we focus on providing features and aspects to meet the range of everyone’s needs, not just those of specific people with other abilities or younger, healthier consumers, can we will realise our potential as designers, architects, and human engineers.

Unless we change our attitudes and perceptions of the “norm”, we will continue to create safe passageways for some and roadblocks for others. As consumers negotiate the hazards of everyday life, they should view designers as pathfinders. Design is the ultimate prosthetic, and designers are the veritable enablers.

Ours is an exciting mandate that extends beyond aesthetics. We have the capacity to fashion the quality of life itself. Design is no longer a mere variable for determining the course of the future; it is the very means of our survival. 

Patrica A. Moore is the President of Moore Design Associates LLC. In 2000 she was selected by a consortium of news editors and organisations as one of The 100 Most Important Women in America and was named by ID Magazine in 2007 as one of the world’s 40 Most Socially Conscious Designers. In 2006 she was given the American Society of Interior Designers’ Humanitarian Award and she is a Fellow of the Industrial Designers Society of America.

OPPOSITE
PETER BUFFETT
AT HKDI

PLAYING FOR KEEPS

When Peter Buffett paid a visit to HKDI in November it was a delight to find that the son of America's richest stock-picker is a compelling paradox of refreshing candour and Zen-like aphorisms. By DANIEL JEFFREYS and SARAH HAMPSON

ON THE CHINESE Mainland readers have bought over 400,000 copies of Peter Buffett's book *Be Yourself* since it was released in March 2011. It's likely that if Peter's last name was Smith the book might not have done so well.

Such is the power of branding. But the 53-year-old second son of Warren Buffett (who is known as "The God of Stocks" on the mainland and ranks consistently among the world's wealthiest people with an estimated fortune of \$44-billion) has an unusual relationship with money and his famous surname, which he admits, "can be both a blessing and a curse." An award-winning musician and composer (he visited HKDI to perform his charming show, *Concert and Conversation*) Buffett is an unexpected mixture of practical advice and what

sounds a lot like Buddhist philosophy, speaking about the "quest to be yourself" and "true wealth being your values."

He is also a compelling paradox. Despite his family's wealth, he doesn't consider himself rich - not with money, anyway. His grandfather left him \$90,000 when he was 19. At 40, his father gave him enough to pay off some "equipment loans" for his music business and the mortgage on his \$194,000 home in

Milwaukee. He doesn't speculate on investments. "I have never bought a share of stock."

And yet he gives away millions that were never his. His father's long-held view on inherited wealth was that he would give his children "enough money so they would feel they can do anything but not so much that they could do nothing." However, he has heavily endowed their independent foundations. In 2006, he gave each of his three children a billion to pursue their own vision of philanthropy.

It would seem that while the famous patriarch was telling his children to do anything and follow their passion, he was, at the end of the day, giving them the job of stewarding his millions. "Yeah," the younger Mr. Buffett



HKDI

laughs. “He never actually asked.” His father’s directive did cause him consternation about how the responsibility would affect his musical career. In addition to writing songs, he has written Emmy-winning scores for TV and film, including the “Firedance” scene in the Oscar-winning film, *Dances with Wolves*. “I wondered, ‘Will this pull me off track? Will it in some sense be a burden?’”

He credits his wife, Jennifer, with helping him figure out the focus of their NoVo Foundation, which gives away millions to empower women and girls through education, collaboration and economic development. It had grown out of his interest in native culture, a sense of how “patriarchal domination” had shaped much of history and society. “It seemed clear that what seemed like feminine values, collaboration, listening to others and consensus, needed to come more into play to balance things out,” he says.

Interestingly, the balance he enjoyed as a child is what he most reveres about his upbringing. His mother, who died in 2004, and his father were “very yin and yang,” he explains. His father, who is famously frugal, never moved from the house in Omaha and still drives himself to work. He gave his children 75 cents a week for allowance. Once, when his daughter, Susan, asked her father for a \$41,000 loan to renovate her kitchen after she had a child, he refused, telling her to “go to the bank like everyone else.”

But if he learned about a strong work ethic from his father, his mother taught him emotional values. “She would radiate compassion, love and acceptance,” he explains. He would walk home from the local elementary school every day for lunch and find his stay-at-home fifties-era mother, talking with other people, often less fortunate, from different parts of town. “The warmth in that room was amazing,” he recalls, shaking his head.

«*My father and I do, in fact, the same thing for a living. We both do what we love.*»

«*I was Exhibit A of a child with wealthy parents who was quote-unquote normal*»

As children, they were never taught about the importance of philanthropy. “What we learned was love of people, and that’s what I think philanthropy is,” he says, adding that those principles were inculcated in them through “a mysterious osmosis” of family culture, never spoken but simply demonstrated through action.

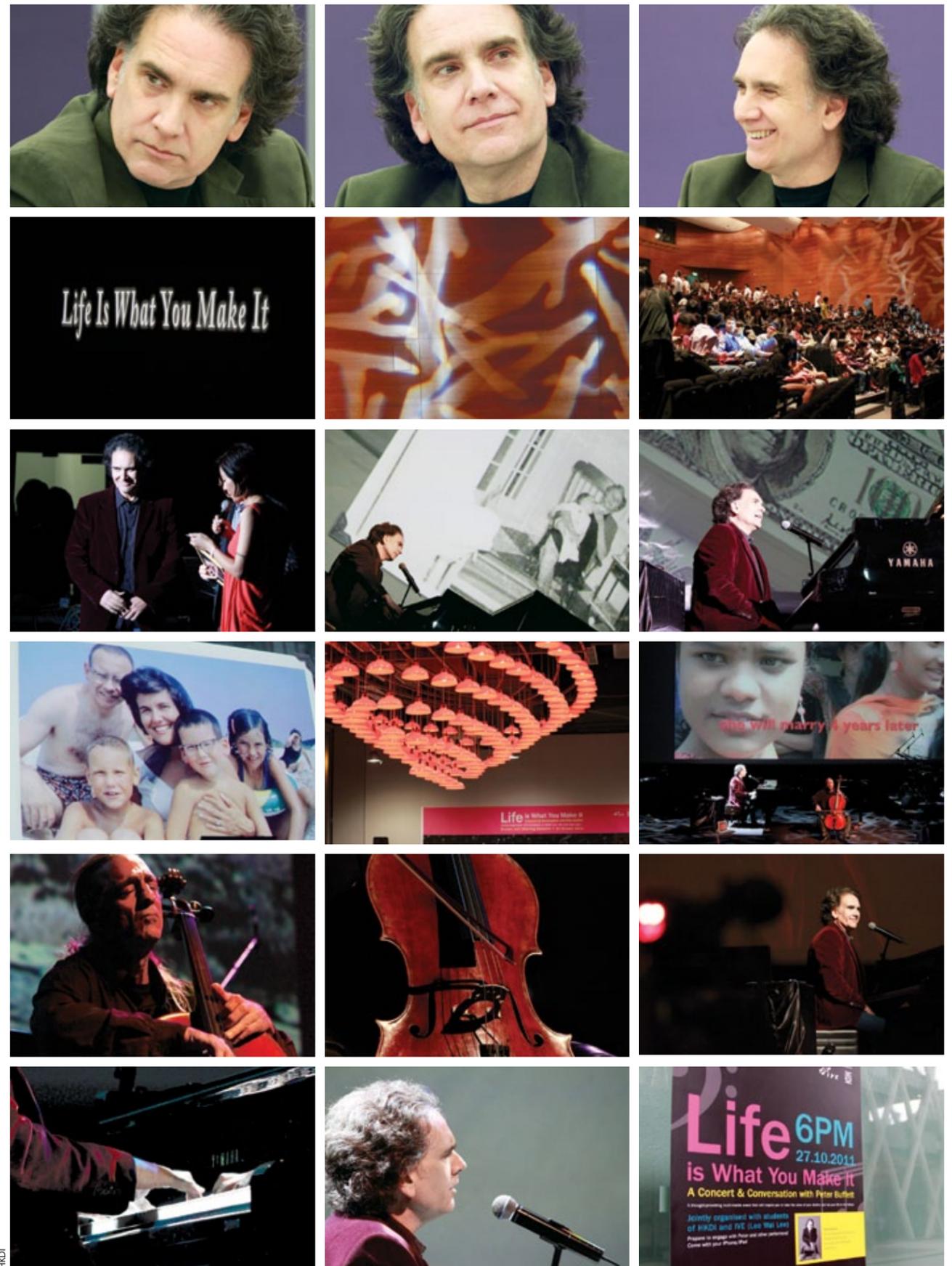
Buffett had been leading a simple, anonymous life until he was asked about six years ago to speak to a banking audience about values and the transfer of wealth between generations. “I was Exhibit A of a child with wealthy parents who was quote-unquote normal,” he says.

Unlike many people who have an intimate experience of money, he is unabashed in talking about it. “I am frugal. I don’t believe in spending money on things to show you have it. I don’t want to wear it,” he says, gesturing to the outfit he prefers to wear: jeans, an open-collar shirt and a sports coat. He volunteers that he drives a basic Ford Escape. “But it’s not like I’m afraid of living,” he quickly puts in. “I won’t deny myself certain things,” he continues. He and his wife, who have no children and have been married for 15 years, bought an 18th-century stone farmhouse an hour north of New York City, where they have an apartment, because they love nature.

“My father knew early on what he loved to do, and he did it, and he’s doing it to this day,” he says. “So I tell people that my father and I do, in fact, do the same thing for a living. We both do what we love.”

He may not be his father in terms of wealth and career choice, but he is similar in his pursuit of doing something he loves. And in the end, while he worried that stewarding a foundation with his father’s money may distract him from his career, he has found that the two come from the same desire - to speak about humanity and equality. “There is no line between them,” he says of the two interests. Maybe his father is an oracle, after all. “It’s his uncanny ability to foresee the future.”

OPPOSITE
SCENES FROM
PETER BUFFETT’S VISIT
TO THE HKDI



HKDI



OPPOSITE
KOYO WILLIAM

JEAN GENE

Koyo William is now an internationally recognised fashion designer with his own label, but his story began at the HKDI, where he first understood the power of creativity and jeans that fit in all the right places.

THEY SAY THAT empires are born in the strangest of places. For Koyo William his empire-to-be was born in the changing room of a jean store.

“I was trying on some American jeans and they just didn’t fit me right,” says Koyo from the headquarters of his fashion company Koyo Jeans in Cheung Sha Wan. “I realised that they were not cut for my kind of body.” From that realisation came a desire to make jeans that were just right for the Asian body type, but then he added another factor as well.

“I wanted my jeans to be the right shape for Asians,” he says, adjusting his trademark sunglasses even though the lights in his studio have the candlepower of several suns. “But I also wanted to make my jeans to embody an Asian aesthetic, to have features that appeal to an Asian aesthetic.”

KOYO WILLIAM

His instincts were so on the money that he now has, well, lots of it: Money that is. Or, at the very least, he has a very successful business with branches in over 100 cities on the Chinese Mainland, two in Paris and stores in Hong Kong. Although none of that had come to pass in the early 1990s when Koyo went to work as a designer for a fashion wholesaler in Sham Shui Po.

His employer let him make lots of business decisions and he frequently found himself required to place orders for millions of dollars. It was a very big jump into the deep, deep end of fashion’s business side, but it helped him to build the international business he has today.

“I once bought thousands of dollars worth of Nike labels and then discovered they were counterfeits,” he says. “I found a design solution by sewing multiple labels onto the same pair of shorts, so it looked quite trendy. We sold them at quite a high price and made a handsome profit.”

Before long Koyo had bought his employer’s old shop but a trip to Paris in the late 90s showed him that the products he was making were not yet good enough for the world market. Back in Hong Kong he bought lots of different designer jeans and tore them apart to assess



KOYO WILLIAM



LEFT A KOYO JEANS
ADVERTISEMENT
OPPOSITE THE SPRING/SUMMER
2012 COLLECTION

“Koyo William Cheung shows what I really want,” he says. “It’s high class fashion for performers, for the stage. It helps to carry the brand name to a different level.”

Koyo has learned that building a successful fashion brand is as much about strategy as it is about innovative design. He has studied many of the top designers and has a particular fondness for the work of Karl Lagerfeld at Chanel and Nicolas Ghesquière at Balenciaga, who share some of his Goth sensibility, but the most influential designer in his life comes from closer to home.

“My idol is my father,” says Koyo. “My father is a carpenter and I used to watch him at work and the precision with which he made things, the craftsmanship, that’s something I find very inspiring.”

Koyo has worked hard to move himself toward the centre of the international fashion world but he still keeps a close eye on HKDI. He was one of the major participants in the *Miao’s Culture & Sustainable Design* project and exhibition staged by the Institute in 2010 and he sees such initiatives as an important step toward enhancing the HKDI’s international reputation.

“I think the HKDI designers get better every year. I think the way that HKDI thinks about the market and how they think about clothing design should be more commercial. Students need to open their eyes and develop a strong connection to the market. The many exchanges that the HKDI now has with Europe are important. Students need to go to Paris and have their eyes opened.”

Which is a voyage that worked very well for Koyo. He now makes jeans for thousands of European customers every year, adjusting the Asian cut of his original jeans to fit the European frame, a case of reverse engineering the impulse that drove him into the jeans business two decades ago. ☺

the way the fabric was cut and sewn. He also visited many factories to see how design and production could be better integrated.

In 2002 the HKDI graduate set up a new company and in 2004 used it as a launching pad for his high-end menswear series. By 2006 he was ready to return to Paris and launch his Koyo Jeans. Fifty buyers signed up to take his product and he became the first Hong Kong based designer to have his jeans displayed at the prestigious Galeries Lafayette.

“Competition is important,” he says. “If I hadn’t gone to France the first time, I would not have opened my eyes. Seeing the world is important.”

It was in France that Koyo began to develop the distinctive Gothic look with which his brand is now most closely associated. And the inspiration didn’t come from another designer but from the beautiful medieval buildings he saw all around him in Paris.

“I like the Gothic Rock style,” he says. “I don’t want hip hop it is not my style. I stayed in Paris for a long time and I was inspired by Gothic style architecture, that’s where a lot of my Goth signatures in shapes and motifs come from.”

Koyo has now developed two distinct brands: Koyo Jeans and Koyo William Cheung. The first serves the mass market, but the second is aimed at the one that is closest to Koyo’s heart.

KOYO WILLIAM

OUR FUTURE SELVES



A KENSINGTON ELDER

DESIGN.LIVES

DESIGN.LIVES

In 2009 **DR. YANKI LEE** initiated a series of projects to challenge the concept of ageing as a problem to be solved, choosing instead to cast the ageing process as unique experience for each individual and a culture from which design lessons can be drawn. Her research is leading to a series of innovative design projects that will benefit all segments of the community.

TOGETHER WITH COLLABORATORS in design and social science Yanki Lee launched the DESIGN.LIVES Projects in 2009 to facilitate the process of inclusive design, by which she means design that caters to the needs of everybody in the community, whatever their age. The project views design for the elder members of the community as a process of “design for our future selves” given that everybody who lives long enough will one day be “old”.

The overall mission of the DESIGN.LIVES lab is to educate

art and design students and design professionals to empathise with and understand other people’s lives as part of their creative process; to engage social workers and their organisations so that they understand and participate in the art and design process; and inspire public policy makers to develop creative solutions through art and design projects.

To reach their goals DESIGN.LIVES collaborated with the Hong Kong British Council, Hong Kong Design Centre, MaD and the Royal College of Art and Royal Society of Arts to develop a series of design

research projects related to ageing and ability. The project developed an intercultural agenda called “Ingenuity and Ageing” which is investigating creative methods to draw upon the insights of ingenious older people in places such as London and Beijing. As part of this process Dr Lee also conducted a series of DESIGN.LIVES Labs with the theme of + Age-ing in place (s) aimed at young designers and targeted at developing intergenerational design projects that engaged with aged people.

1 +AGEING IN KENSINGTON, LONDON, UK

THE METHODS LAB was started in 2008 for design students at the Royal College of Art (RCA), London to learn about inclusive design methodology and interdisciplinary collaboration. In 2010, it officially became part of AcrssRCA interdisciplinary collaboration week. Its theme focused on Ageing in Kensington: exploring design for our future selves. The five-day version of the Methods Lab in Nov 2010 involved 36 students from nine RCA departments and visitors from the Media, Art & Design Faculty (MAD) in Genk, Belgium. The students worked together in teams with local residents from

Kensington as their ‘creative partners’. Kensington was chosen not only for its proximity to the RCA but because it has one of the highest life expectancies in the UK. Participating students were guided through a five-step inclusive design process to develop a proposal that introduced social change through design. Each team worked with an older resident from the local area who became their creative partner. They investigated their lifestyle and co-developed design proposals that improved the local area and enabled people to attain a more sustainable lifestyle in Kensington that creates a balance among social, economic and ecological issues.



AGEING AND AN ACTIVE LIFE ARE INCREASINGLY SYNONYMOUS



ACTIVE MEMEBERS OF THE TSINGHUA ELDER COMMUNITY

2 +AGEING IN TSINGHUA, BEIJING, CHINA

WITH PENSIONS EQUAL to half of their salaries before retirement, apartments for life, a familiar environment and a connected community, more than 6000 retired academics are actively ageing on Beijing's Tsinghua University Campus in China. Tsinghua University is one of China's top higher education institutions and just celebrated its 100th anniversary. It features first-class learning and

advanced facilities in science and technology with more than 30,000 staff members and students. Many of its retirees are scientists who have respectable social status as subject experts as well as mentors for many China's key political leaders. This makes the Tsinghua community a perfect laboratory for the study of successful ageing. Working in collaboration with sociologists, gerontologists and

design experts in both China and the UK, this study aimed to explore the lifestyles and aspirations of this group in order to find new ways to tackle ageing issues. This year-long project (Dec 2010- Dec 2011) is part of the UK-China fellowship of Excellence programme funded by the UK's Department of Business Innovation and Skill (BIS). The award enables young researchers from the UK to conduct

cutting-edge research in a Chinese institution and Dr Lee conducted this study to engage with this prestigious group of older people who were the cream of the nation in the second half of the 20th century. This group of Chinese intellectuals is actively resisting the clichéd general features of 'old age', and have insisted upon maintaining a strong Tsinghuaian communal identity.

The research methodology employed by Dr Lee and her colleagues was a participatory design approach that functioned through a series of design events that had been planned to coincide with five traditional Chinese festivals on the Tsinghua University Campus. The goal was to capture the living strategies of the residents, their pursuit of personal ambitions and the way

they sought to make a continued "contribution to the nation" through "the continuation of labour". In parallel with this strategy, the design research also employed the methodology of reflexive ethnography in its interactions with a core group of around 20 scientists aged over 80. In this approach ageing is viewed as a "culture" with the capacity to inspire creative designs.

DESIGNLIVES

DESIGNLIVES

IN ORDER TO introduce a solution-focused design methodology to address the specific subject of social inclusion for elders, Dr Lee was invited to conduct a three-week DESIGN.LIVES Lab at the HKDI. Instead of conducting a research project about developing design solutions for the ageing population, Dr Lee expanded the focus from aged people to the ageing process and design solutions for “our future selves”.

Six teams were formed with over 30 Higher Diploma design students from three-design discipline: Interiors, Products and Graphic Design. A three-week design workshop was organised for students to experience solution-focused design and participatory methodology in design within the local community. Students were briefed to act creatively about the concept of design outside their disciplines and beyond. Each team was responsible for designing “something” with the residents of an estate adjacent to the design school.

There were three stages of the three-week workshop, from problem solving to solution focused. In the first week, Dr Lee allows more free space for the students to practice problem-solving methodology as they researched the issue through visits, interviews and data mining. In this part of the project Dr Lee conducted short design exercises to give students a chance to present their tentative results and build team spirit. In the second week, students’ habitual ways of knowing were challenged. A social designer from Brazil conducted games with students in order to understand the significance of non-verbal experiences. At this stage, students were asked to invite residents from their assigned estates to join a tea party at the design school. In a tutorial section, DESIGN.LIVES ideas about



THE HKDI DESIGN.LIVES PROJECT IN TIU KENG LENG

3 +AGEING IN TIU KENG LENG, HONG KONG

solution-focused methodology and participatory design. In the third week, students were responsible for setting up six design booths to create a Chinese New Year Market to “sell ideas” to the local residents, in order to build bridges between the design school and the residents of the six estates in the neighbourhood.

The brief to students was unlike ordinary design projects during their study. They were not asked for a final design proposal but to design participations that engaged residents. A local bamboo structure master was commissioned to build six traditional temporary market stalls for the six teams to install their designs. Instead

of designing objects for sale to celebrate Chinese New Year, students were asked to design means of participation to engage the local community. Each team was guided to identify an object to represent their experience and to design their booth around the object. After two days of construction, the final task for each team was to “run” their stalls and develop operational ideas for further interactions with residents. There was a team who aimed to encourage residents to have more physical interactions than online debates, they used balloon as a means to invite people to leave messages for the others. Similarly, one team was focused on



developing methods for residents especially with those are disabled to express their wishes, they collected fallen leaves for people to write messages on and send to others. A big lantern was constructed with colourful colanders to attract visitors to make Chinese New Year wishes. Recycling was a popular issue among the design students and two teams collected waste from housing estates to reconstruct something and send back to the community. One team used old newspapers to create plant pots for local residents. Another team collected unwanted furniture and deconstructed them into new pieces of furniture to demonstrate new uses.

THE NEXT STEP – LIVEABILITY AND DESIGN

AFTER ALL THESE experiments and reflections, a new project, Designing Liveable Cities for all Age and Abilities is being planned to bring interdisciplinary collaborators from different cultures to work together and co-develop new perspectives of design to address ageing, youth and social inclusion through citizen participation. 

Dr Lee is a design advocate, researcher and educator of design participation who has founded a design gallery & consultancy, EXHIBIT at Golden Lane Estate (www.exhibit-goldenlane.com) in London. She is also a research fellow at the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design at the Royal College of Art. With an MA in Architecture from the Royal College of Art and a PhD in design participation from Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Yanki focuses on design methodology for participation and social innovation. She is co-investigator of UK's EPSRC funded i-Design 3 Inclusive Design Research Project (2006-2010) and Public Engagement Project, 'Design Our Tomorrow (DOT)' which is introducing inclusive design methodology to the UK secondary school Design & Technology curriculum. Dr Lee is the holder of the UK's BIS UK - China Fellowship of Excellence 2011.

DESIGN.LIVES

DESIGN.LIVES

DESIGNED TO LAST

Issues of creativity and sustainability have usually been separated since the industrial revolution in the West over two hundred years ago. While most designers have thought about how to sell their products, rather than how to save the earth, an increasing number have begun to argue that this separation is untenable. The HKDI's **YAN YAN LAM** is one of them. As she explains to Daniel Jeffreys, a sustainable future for the planet is something that will only happen by design.

WHAT DO YOU do if you design washing machines, and one day you see one of your products floating in a stream? And how does your reaction get magnified if it is only a few years old?

Dr. Yan Yan Lam laughs at these questions. She knows them well, because they were faced by Professor Fumikazu Masuda, who spent the first half of his career designing electrical appliances before becoming a professor at Tokyo Zokei University.

"He was walking past a river and he saw a washer he had designed jammed under a bridge," she recalls. "He knew the machine was not old, which forced him to realise its design was not good enough. Otherwise, the washer wouldn't

have been cast out in that way."

The damascene conversion that followed transformed Masuda from a designer of disposable consumer "durables" into somebody who is committed to designing for the future of the planet. It is one that Lam has also experienced herself.

"When I began to learn about global warming, I thought I had to do something about it," she says. "I felt a responsibility, so I started to think about ways in which I could get other designers to buy in to sustainability. That's when I embarked on setting up a sustainable design task force."

The latest manifestation of Lam's "buy-in" process was the Green is Cool forum that took place in September 2011. Billed as "design for sustainable living" it featured

five global experts on sustainable design, including Professor Masuda.

"The forum was part of a process," says Lam. "We need to go back to basics and design for better living. Sustainability and design must go together, so the first question for a designer should always be 'Is it necessary?' Design lives in a world beyond function and it always has a greater impact on the world around it than pure product performance."

The example of Masuda's washing machine is extremely apt in this context. He designed it to sit in a home and process laundry. He did not design it as a bridge abutment, and yet that was the function it assumed after it was discarded. Had Masuda thought of the uses his product might perform

LEFT POND AND PINE -
LANDSCAPE BASIN &
FAUCET SET, A SHALLOW
WASH BASIN DESIGNED
TO ENCOURAGE WATER
CONSERVATION BY
HKDI STUDENT TSE YAN
LAMB. IT WON A SEAL OF
DISTINCTION, RED DOT
DESIGN AWARD 2011



« The first question for a designer should always be "Is it necessary?" »

DR. YAN YAN LAM



LEFT TEA TIME, A CLOCK MADE OF TEA LEAVES

after it ceased to be a washer, he might have made very different choices during the design process. If the washer had been designed for easy recyclability, and had a built-in post-washer value for those who recycle such things, maybe it would not have been tossed into a stream.

“It’s very important for design quality and sustainability to be in balance,” says Lam. “We can make a lot of progress just by having design that makes people think about sustainability.”

The green forum was promoted as an event of interest to professionals, business executives, tertiary students and members of the public who were interested in the latest thinking about sustainable living. The event branded green as “the new cool” and set three objectives: to establish how going green saves money and time and makes people



ABOVE A MAGAZINE RACK MADE FROM RECYCLED MATERIALS
TOP HANDBAGS CRAFTED FROM RECYCLED BASKETBALLS

more stylish and healthy; to assess international design trends and market developments in sustainable living; and to begin the process of “co-creating” a greener Hong Kong.

“I know co-creating sounds a bit clumsy,” says Lam. “But we have to work together on this, and it’s a creative process. Too many people in the design world think sustainability and environmental protection are things that can be left to somebody else, but we all have to take responsibility.”

Lam believes a key first step is for designers to think about their choices of materials and how those materials are used. Working with colleagues in other departments, she inspired students to begin designing everything from clothes and furniture to handbags using recycled materials. One of those involved with the project designed

a product called “Tea Time”, which is a large clock made from dried and recycled tealeaves collected from Hong Kong teahouses.

While such initiatives might be useful, a significant obstacle to increasing their impact is an issue of linguistic confusion. In the paper *Building Sustainability into Design Education*, co-authors Lam and Alex Fung wrote, “... sustainability has no single and agreed meaning, just like liberty, justice and democracy. Its meanings are contested, and a key function of education for sustainability is to help people reflect and act on these meanings.”

In other words, designers must be encouraged to debate the meaning of sustainability before they can be expected to design in ways that will be regarded as sustainable by the rest of the design

community. That is an especially complex process when the world has such disparate levels of wealth and economic performance.

“In some countries, design will be focused on alleviating poverty,” says Lam. “And that can often mean pushing issues of sustainability into a back-seat role. But, for the sake of the entire planet, all designers have to start making decisions that consider the long-term future of the economy, ecology and equity of all the world’s communities.”

Lam and her colleagues believe education has a key part to play in the process. Masuda sees teaching about sustainable design as both a first and last line of defence to protect the planet against environmental damage.

“The new vision of education for a sustainable future places education at the heart of the quest

to solve the problems threatening our future,” he says. “Education is not just an end in itself. Rather, it is one of the most powerful instruments for bringing about the changes required to achieve sustainable development.”

Lam built on her experience with the green forum to develop a curriculum framework for the HKDI. Its objectives are to study and understand the importance of sustainable development, learn and create in new ways, educate with new approaches, build partnerships with other sectors of the community, and foster a sustainability mindset. Of these five, Lam believes the second could have the greatest immediate impact.

“Design educators and designers should use their abilities to the utmost in creating design that helps to realise and promote sustainable cultures and societies,” she says. “Designers must find ways to create designs with the lowest possible environmental impact.”

Lam acknowledges that meeting these goals in Hong Kong will be difficult at a time when most people in this city want things to sparkle and shine, and property development occupies a dominant and often antagonistic role in the environment. However, she believes the alternative to building a more sustainable society is much worse.

“We don’t want our entire planet to become like Professor Masuda’s washing machine, discarded in some inter-galactic stream,” she says. “If that happens, we will have to blame ourselves and realise, as the Professor did, that our design simply wasn’t good enough.”

PLAY TIME



Although Hong Kong was once the centre of the world's toy manufacturing industry, the city does not have a museum honouring these icons of childhood. But that will soon change, writes **DAISY ZHONG**.

MOST OF THE WORLD'S major cities have toy museums, but not Hong Kong. But the gap will be filled, at least temporarily, on December 16th, when Toys Paradise opens.

"This will be the first-ever toy exhibition in Hong Kong with a cultural and historical perspective," says C. K. Yeung, organiser of Toys Paradise, a three-month exhibition showcasing 60 years of the city's toy culture at the HKDI.

"Hong Kong has been the world's 'Toy Town' for the past six decades, and this has been vital to its economy," says the toy guru, who worked in the industry here for 50 years and watched it grow from its primitive origins to its current high-tech incarnation.

The exhibition will feature more than 1,000 pieces made in Hong Kong, along with toys created by artists and students. Many of them have fascinating stories to tell about the history of toys, including three pre-war metal toys and a couple of items from the late Qing Dynasty. Most items in the exhibition were provided by Yeung's personal connections, including Joel Chung, an assiduous private collector of Hong Kong toys.

Yet the exhibition is not just about the frivolous enjoyment of a few entertaining playthings. Yeung stresses that toys are intimately related to transformations in society.

"Toys are important, ever-evolving embodiments of creativity that combine elements of culture and design," he says. "They tell a profound story about the era in which they were made."

The exhibition will also hold workshops for students from secondary schools and colleges, who will be invited to take part in designing and producing toys from paper, wood and metal. The most creative of these will win places in the exhibition. Yeung says guided school and public tours, as well as seminars, will be arranged to enrich the exhibition with long-term educational value.

"Toys Paradise is not just about creating something entertaining," says Yeung. "We also want to educate, enlighten, and inspire."

Yeung hopes the event will spark off an interest in creativity and toy design in young students, some of whom may turn out to be important members of the local pool of inventors. "Creativity is now the key element for raising the Hong Kong toy industry to a higher level. To become more competitive, Hong Kong toy companies must further enhance their creativity in terms of design and high technology."

Yeung says he will also plan a regional touring exhibition after Toys Paradise closes. Next year has been designated "Hong Kong Design Year", an initiative supported by the SAR government; so Yeung's dream of establishing Hong Kong's first toy museum seems to be moving closer to a reality. "I have always had a true fascination for toys, from my childhood until now. They've basically been my whole life. I never did nor will I depart from that."

DAI/GETTY IMAGES

« DESIGN IS THE METHOD OF PUTTING FORM AND CONTENT TOGETHER. DESIGN CAN BE ART. DESIGN CAN BE AESTHETICS. DESIGN IS SO SIMPLE, THAT'S WHY IT IS SO COMPLICATED. »

PAUL RAND



HONG KONG
DESIGN
INSTITUTE
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設計學院

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《WHEN THE
ONLY TOOL
YOU HAVE
AVAILABLE IS
A HAMMER,
EVERY
PROBLEM
LOOKS LIKE
A NAIL.》

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