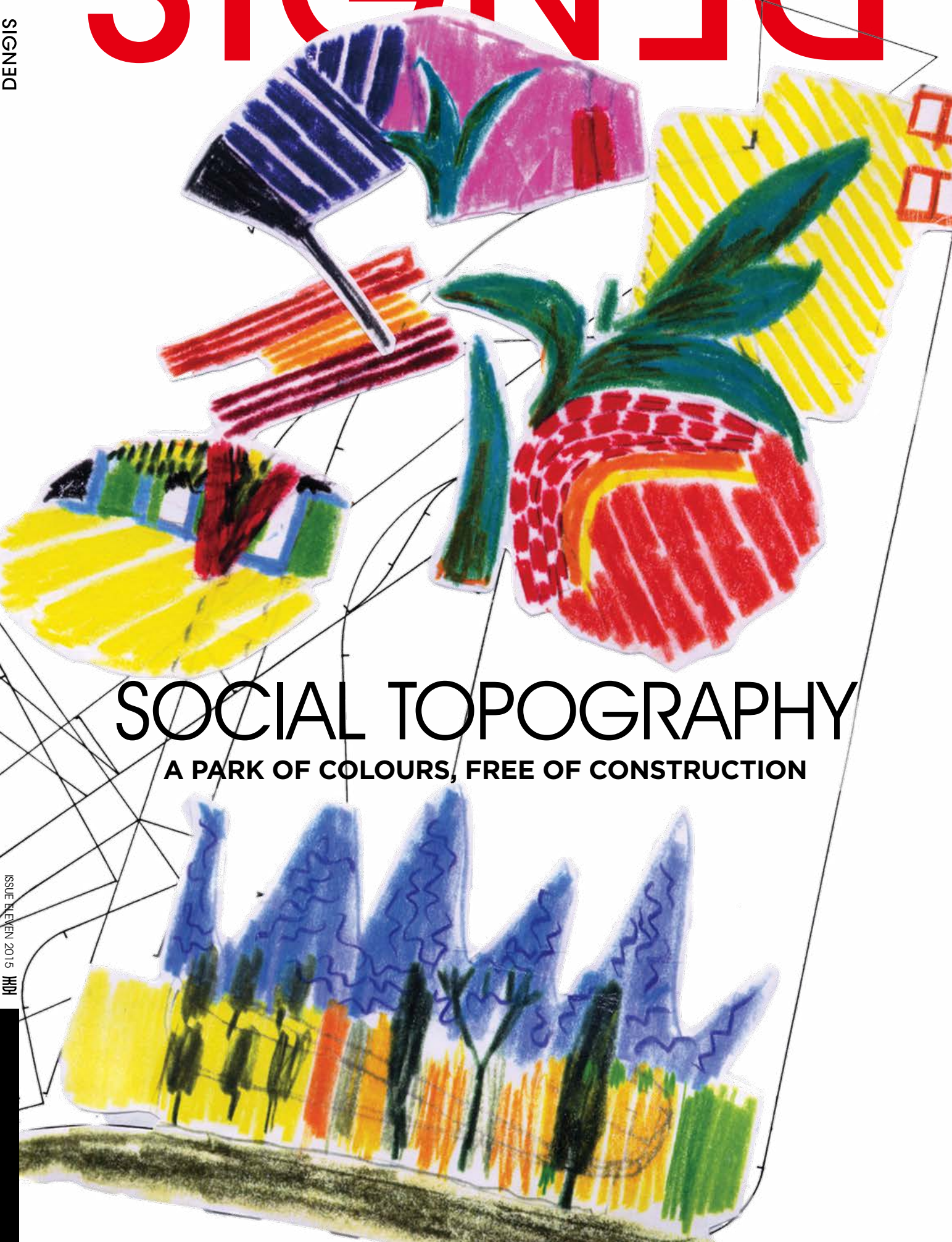


THE MAGAZINE OF THE HONG KONG DESIGN INSTITUTE

SIGNED

DESIGNS

11

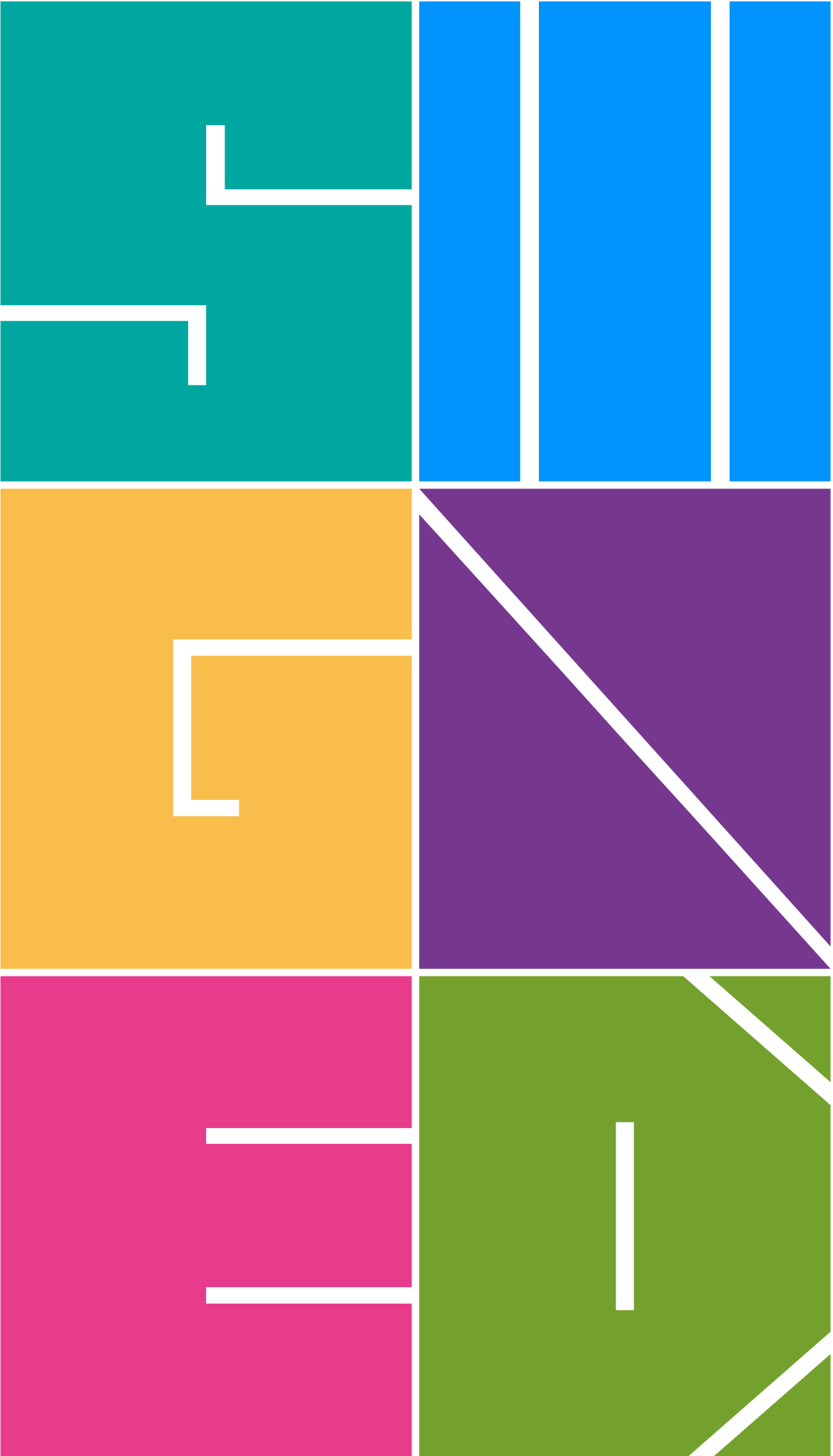


SOCIAL TOPOGRAPHY

A PARK OF COLOURS, FREE OF CONSTRUCTION

ISSUE ELEVEN 2015

HKDI



Before the concept of “design” even emerged, the practice had a much more commonsense application - to create relevant objects, spaces and functional attributes that enhance the way society and people live.

As William Lidwell stated in *Universal Principles of Design*: The best designers sometimes disregard the principles of design. When they do so, however, there is usually some compensating merit attained at the cost of the violation. Unless you are certain of doing as well, it is best to abide by the principles.

These days, perhaps our audacious imagination has taken design to a “supersonic” level. There are designs that bear merits of beauty and ostentation, but when you take away the superficiality, what does it do for its user?

It’s a question that will be forever debated and analysed by the design world, but here lies its true purpose. The way we ponder the future of design is so in sync with the development of society that it is at once a reflection of what we are, and where we envision we will be. It is a measure of reality with a dose of fantasy, and that makes design an amazing discipline.

Having spent years supporting design through my editorial work and non-profit endeavours, I am pleased to be taking the helm of *SIGNED*, a magazine that celebrates the vision Hong Kong holds. Our line-up is as eclectic and inspiring as our city - a combination of East and West, old and new.

Check out Business of Design Week’s amazing line-up this year with its partner city, Barcelona, while looking back at the evolution of something quintessentially Hong Kong - the qipao.

We also speak with HKDI alumni to find out how the institute has inspired them and prepared them for their careers, and take a peek at the amazing Image Lab 360° at PMQ.

Celebrating the evolution of Hong Kong, we speak with renowned photographer Tse Ming Chong, whose work captures the changes of our city.

The possibilities of design are endless and we hope you will join us on this journey of discovery and introspection, because we all play a part in “designing Hong Kong”.

Desiree Au
Publisher

CONTENTS



04

Catalan class

We examine this year's impressive line-up of Hong Kong's Business of Design Week, with its partner city, Barcelona



06

The school of constructed realities

Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby discuss their design fiction



10

Back to the future

Spanish architecture firm EMBT continues its urban regeneration with some impressive structures



14

Innovation explorers

Danish architecture students use the Arctic conditions as inspiration for a series of products



18

The father of "Swiss Punk"

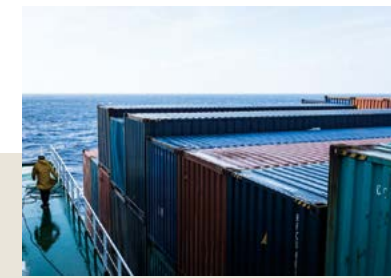
A look at the influential work of the typographic designer Wolfgang Weingart



22

Captured in time

Tse Ming Chong's photographic diary of Hong Kong



28

Out to sea

An exercise in slow living by photographer Leong Ka Tai



32

A fitting tribute

A look back at the history of the iconic qipao



36

Waste management and upcycling

A project to turn waste material into new rugs that benefits the planet and local industry



38

Get the look

Image Lab 360° provides real experience for design students and a service for the community



40

Far from useless

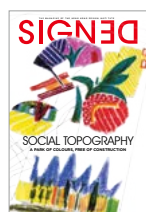
China's most celebrated fashion designer Ma Ke invites us into her studio



42

Outstanding alumni

We speak to four of the winners of this year's Hong Kong Young Design Talent Awards



COVER IMAGE

Park of Colours, 2001. Mollet del Vallès, Spain. Sketch by Enric Miralles / EMBT.

The Hong Kong Design Institute is a member institution of the Vocational Training Council. For more information about HKDI, please check our website on www.hkdi.edu.hk, or email us at hkdi@vtc.edu.hk

Signed is produced on behalf of the Hong Kong Design Institute by Rubicon Communications, +852 3583 5678. Printed in Hong Kong by Icicle Production Co., Ltd.

Editorial Board: Leslie Lu, Cecile Kung, Daniel Chan, Daniel Fung, Tse Ming Chong, Terence Wong, Wong Pak Kay, Frieda Lee, Annie Lam
Publisher: Desiree Au | **Managing Editor:** Mat Gallagher
Art Director: Noel de Guzman | **Production Manager:** Phoebe Cheng
Designers: Jessica Li, Stanley Chung | **Photography:** Calvin Sit
Contributors: Katarina Brieditis, Anthony Dunne, Katarina Evans, Fiona Raby, Eunice Tsang, Tom Pattinson | **Copy Editor:** Douglas Parkes

CATALAN CLASS

This year's Business of Design Week partners with Barcelona, a city with a vibrant design heritage and one of the most community-driven architectural cities on earth

Since its inception in 2002, Hong Kong's Business of Design Week (BODW) has brought some of the most influential figures from the world of design to the city, to inspire and educate on disciplines including architecture, interior design, city planning and product design. Artists and fashion designers mix with technological gurus of the future as ideas are exchanged and business opportunities explored.

For the first time in 2015, BODW's partner will be a city rather than a country and Barcelona has been selected for its artistic heritage, awe-inspiring architecture and community-driven, smart design.

"Partnering with a city rather than a country puts our focus squarely on this year's programme embraced of community and culture," explains Dr Edmund Lee, the Executive Director of the Hong Kong Design Centre – the organiser of BODW. "Design in Barcelona is both community-driven and forward-thinking, but never at the cost of the city's rich traditions."

Lee explains that Hong Kong and Barcelona both value the power of design in creating business and societal values and that it is a timely juncture to explore how good design contributes to cities of the future.

Barcelona is a living dream for designers and architects. Bold, brash, colourful and distinctive, the city manages to seamlessly mix 13th-century Catalan gothic architecture with contemporary buildings by international architects such as Herzog and de Meuron and Frank Gehry. The redevelopment of old buildings can also be seen in EMBT's excellent redesign of the old Santa Caterina Market with its mosaic roof, however Barcelona is most famous for the modernist works of Antoni Gaudi.

Gaudi is recognised internationally for his abstract and surrealist colourful buildings and his magnum opus, the Sagrada Familia.

Speaking this year at BODW, which is supported by Create Hong Kong, is Jordi Faulí the chief

architect of the building. Construction of the Roman Catholic church began in 1882 but the building, with its mixture of gothic and art nouveau styles, was only a quarter completed by the time of Gaudi's death in 1926.

Faulí is the ninth director of the Sagrada Familia and has devoted most of his professional career to the building. As the leading expert on the church, Faulí has boldly claimed that it will be completed by 2026 – the one hundred year anniversary of Gaudi's death.

As the partner city, Barcelona will see a host of speakers including winner of the Best Young Designer of Barcelona Fashion Week Txell Miras, furniture and lighting designer Jorge Pensi and the Spanish artist and designer Javier Mariscal. Architects Benedetta Tagliabue of EMBT and Josep Lluís Mateo of Mateo Arquitectura are also talking, as is Ventura Barba, the Director of the Sonar Music Festival.

Representing the rest of the world are David Butler, VP, Innovation and Entrepreneurship of The Coca-Cola Company and Mark Waites partner in Mother, the UK's largest independent branding agency whose motto is: "To make great work, have fun and make a living. Always in that order."

Mr Agustí Colom, newly appointed Councillor of Barcelona, said: "It's a great honour and challenge to be the first partner city of the BODW. We understand design as a strategic tool with significant social and economic impact, helping to make our companies more competitive, increasing the sustainability of our neighbourhoods and improving citizens' quality of life and wellbeing."

**Business of Design Week -
Barcelona Inspires Design**
November 30th to December 5th
Hong Kong Convention
and Exhibition Centre
For more information and online
registration, visit: www.bodw.com



THE SCHOOL OF CONSTRUCTED REALITIES

Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby

Today we visited a new school of design developed specifically to meet the challenges and conditions of the 21st century. It offers only one degree, an MA in Constructed Realities. Having sat through the presentations for the open day, we were still a little unclear about its distinctions between real realities, unreal realities, real unrealities and unreal unrealities, but we were intrigued enough to want to know more.

The school provides a mix of theory, practice and reflection. There are no disciplines in the conventional sense; instead, students study bundles of subjects. Some that caught our attention were Rhetoric, Ethics, and Critical Theory combined with Impossible Architecture; Scenario Making and Worldbuilding mixed with Ideology and Found Realities; and CGI and Simulation Techniques taught alongside The History of Propaganda, Conspiracy Theories, Hoaxes and Advertising. Projects are expressed through various forms of reality: mixed, immersive, simulated, unmediated and so on. Students can also attend the classes Multiverses and Branding, The Suspension, Destruction and Production of Disbelief, Reality Fabrication: Bottom Up or Top Down?, The Politics of the Unreal, Reality: Local Variations, and our favourite, The Aesthetics of Unreality.

After the presentations we asked the Director about the thinking behind the school. He was a little reticent at first, which is understandable knowing the risks associated with relocating design from its cosy home in the old reality-based community to a new one among reality makers, fabricators and constructors, but he was keen to share. He began by explaining that in his view, for most people today reality isn't working, that it broke sometime near the end of the 20th century:

"It's clear that reality only works for a privileged minority, but designers advocate a realist approach, which means they work within the constraints of reality as it is for the minority. The school aims to challenge this by making reality a little bit bigger to provide more room for different kinds of dreams and hopes. An important part of this process is generating multiple versions of reality, and this is where design comes in."

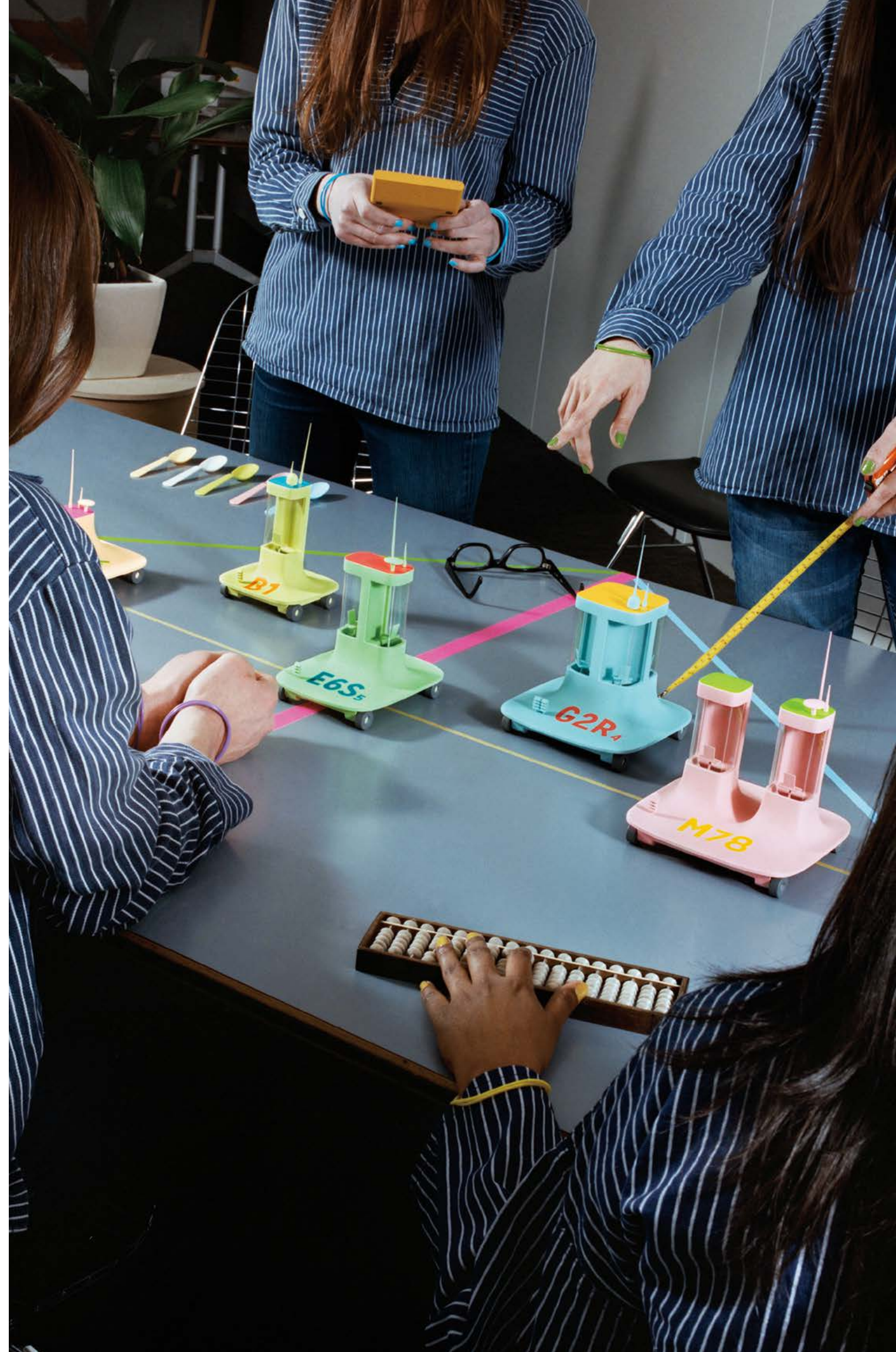
"We concluded," he said, "that the only way to challenge this unsatisfactory situation was to be unrealistic – to breach realism's heavily policed borders and to fully embrace unreality."

Listening to him, we began to think so too.

Article originally written for Maharam Stories, with permission to reprint

Opposite: Digitarians

PICTURE CREDIT: JASON EVANS





Top: Biocar, CGI. Above: Digicars

PICTURE CREDIT: TOMASSO LANZA AND LUKE HAYES / DESIGN MUSEUM

Q+A

Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby

Would you mind telling us the inspiration behind your project *The School of Constructed Realities*?

Being educators as well as designers, we're always thinking up new projects for our students. When we were invited to write a short design fiction for maharam.com, we thought it'd be interesting to imagine a new kind of design school. We're very interested in how you prepare designers to operate in a world where boundaries between reality and fiction are not only blurring but multiplying and folding in upon themselves. What kind of curriculum, theory and projects would be needed to prepare designers for constructing new, alternative realities? We're currently developing this project for a small exhibition at the MAK's Geymüllerschloß in Vienna, which opens in summer 2015.

Realities are important elements in your recent exhibitions and work, how would you like to challenge people on the ways in which realities are presented and perceived?

We'd like people to begin to see reality as not fixed, but something that can be re-imagined and even reconfigured. Of course, designers cannot do this by themselves, but we can act as catalysts to get the process going by presenting tangible bits of alternative worlds that invite viewers to imagine their own. We think dreams are important too, even if we're not always sure how they can be realised.

How would you describe your experience of constructing or presenting an alternative reality?

We start with values, priorities, hopes, fears, dreams – often in opposition to, or critical of, those we live with on a daily basis. Then we explore how these might translate into new cultures, behaviours, ethics and so on, which we use as the basis for designing new devices, systems and services. Once we've

made them tangible through models, prototypes or video and photographic scenarios, we present them to different groups through exhibitions. Sometimes these are expert audiences, like scientists and researchers, while at other times they are the wider public. When people see our work we hope that they will "reverse engineer" our designs to explore the politics and alternative values behind them, contrasting them with ones that prevail in today's society.

What role does fiction play in the presentation of your design concepts and in your exhibitions?

For Fiona and I it's very important that people recognise our work as fiction and enjoy it as such. Some of our colleagues develop highly realistic design fiction that sometimes function as hoaxes, or fool people into believing they are real. We prefer to use playful design languages, ambiguity and even absurdity to invite people to engage imaginatively with our work. It's not for everyone, and can be hard work, but for people who enjoy the world of things it's another way to enjoy alternative worlds besides literature and cinema.

How do you envision the future of creative education?

That's a very difficult question, but we must fight for broader models of education that recognise exceptional talent and provide environments where it can be nurtured to the highest level, and contribute to society in ways that might not always be obvious, practical or even knowable at the time. We need to ensure, in a world that is becoming increasingly functional and concerned with the bottom line, that there are still places that can provide a form of design education to support genuine experimentation and creative risk-taking so that truly original minds are allowed to flourish.



BACK TO THE FUTURE

The unique urban regeneration style of Spanish architecture firm EMBT is showing how to make the old into the new

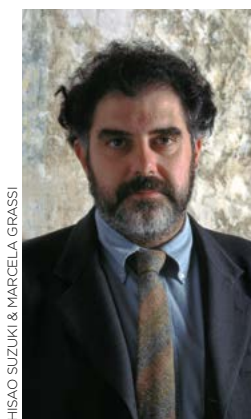
ALEX GAULTIER



ROLAND HALBE



ALEX GAULTIER



HISAO SUZUKI & MARCELA GRASSI



ALEJANDRO QUEVEDO

For many architects the goal is to build something new, for Miralles it was about regenerating the old

The architect Enric Miralles was fascinated by fixing things. For many architects the goal is to build something new, for Miralles it was about regenerating the old.

Miralles was born in 1955 in Barcelona, a city where architectural gems – from Gothic churches to Modernist houses – are found at every turn. The city's major regeneration in the run-up to the 1992 Barcelona Olympics turned his focus to regeneration and in 1994 he established EMBT with Benedetta Tagliabue.

EMBT has always placed special emphasis on the coherence between the built environment and the public space and its Santa Caterina Market project from 1997 is a perfect example of this.

Set in the old quarter of Barcelona, EMBT reorganised the interior distribution of the market creating service systems, public spaces and links to public transport. It also incorporated residential property, while paying close attention to the unique history and context of the site. The incorporation of public space and market place combined with residential housing, integrated all activities of the neighbourhood, ensuring the social structures of the area not only remained but were further enhanced.

"When you are working on the fringe you can decide what side of the line you are standing on,

Top: Exterior of the Santa Caterina Market. **Middle:** Interior of the market. **Left:** Architects Enric Miralles and Benedetta Tagliabue

”

When you are working on the fringe you can decide what side of the line you are standing on, whether you remake the city or whether you are more interested in giving shape to this fringe in a more abstract fashion



Above: Copagri Pavilion for Expo Milano 2015. Top: Spanish Pavilion for Expo 2010 Shanghai, China

whether you remake the city or whether you are more interested in giving shape to this fringe in a more abstract fashion,” said Miralles in 1999.

Architecturally the building is heavy on post-modern architectural motifs with colourful upturned boat hulls that reference the importance of Barcelona’s coast, while also referencing the city’s most famous architect, Gaudi.

For Miralles, his biggest concern was imposing on the natural environment and he would often say he would look at the environment as a whole, incorporating the position of an existing tree even before developing the space.

In 1998 EMBT was commissioned to design the Scottish Parliament Building, also known as Holyrood. The post-modern building received 250,000 visitors in its first six months and won numerous awards – very much for incorporating the natural space and environment into the abstract design. However, Miralles died just before it opened and he never got to see arguably one of his most acclaimed projects to completion.

After his death in 2000, EMBT continued to expand under the directorship of Tagliabue. The studio continues to focus on working with public spaces and buildings, and now has extensive experience in both Europe and China.

The studio was asked to create the Spanish Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo 2010, for which it won the first prize in the new building category. The building sought to play with the potential of wickerwork – a technique used in handcrafts and basketry both in Spain and China. The use of natural fibres and traditional techniques enabled them to master a new form of architectural design.

Following the 2010 success, the firm went on to create the “Love IT” Copagri Pavilion for the Expo Milano 2015 – using free forms and moving away from the confines of traditional architecture.

The HKDI Gallery is showing an exhibition of EMBT’s work called “Urban Regeneration - Past, Present and Future”, including many of the large-scale, innovative, urban regeneration projects. This is the first exhibition in Hong Kong to show the key concepts of Miralles’ architecture in its urban aspect, and also to disclose how these concepts are being developed by Benedetta Tagliabue and EMBT studio. Never before released models, drawings, sketches and prototypes are exhibited for the public.

Urban Regeneration- Past, Present and Future

November 27th, 2015 - February 26th, 2016

HKDI Gallery, 3 King Ling Road, Tseung Kwan O

www.hkdi.edu.hk/hkdi_gallery/2015/embt/

A group of Masters students in architecture from Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts (KADK) spent three weeks in the extreme colds of the Arctic to try out their innovative prototypes. The results are astounding

The barren regions and sub-zero temperatures found in the Arctic are challenging for even the hardest of explorers. However, for a group of 28 Masters students, they proved to be fertile lands for developing environmental space concepts.

The students from The Institute of Architecture and Technology at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture (KADK), travelled to Greenland, Iceland and Svalbard, working with local communities to enrich built environments and enhance architectural performance, sustainability and resilience.

An exhibition of the students work, called "The Arctic – Architecture and Extreme Environments", is now on at HKDI.

Masters students and teachers from KADK in Denmark



DAVID A. GARCIA

INNOVATION EXPLORERS

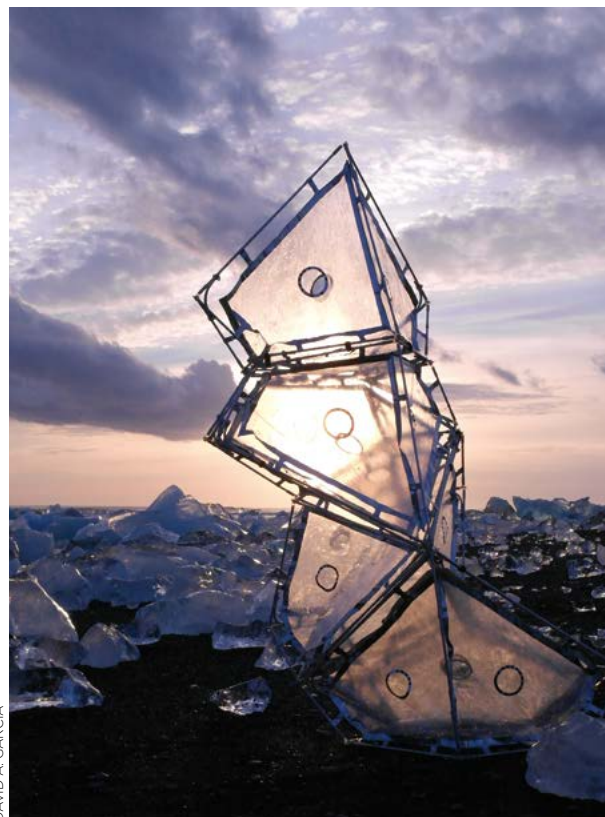
Øyvind Andreas Limi, Light Harvester: An Exploration into the Arctic Light Spectrum

DAVID A. GARCIA

The challenging sub-zero temperatures have been inspiration for many of the students



DAVID A. GARCIA



DAVID A. GARCIA



DAVID A. GARCIA



DAVID A. GARCIA

Clockwise from above left: Anita Bonde Eriksen, Steam and Light: Study of Water's Architectural Potential; Ambient Street Light, A Field Test by Lise Helene Skafte Guldager; Sara Sánchez y Götze, Fabric Flux: Capturing Tension in Sub-zero Temperatures; Julien Nolin, Icescapes

One of the students exhibiting is Robert Baron, who has created a prototype called "Differential Enclosure". He uses Peltier tiles, which convert the difference in temperatures of the cold external outside and the body heat inside to generate energy. This energy is converted into electricity to provide heat and light inside the enclosed space.

Baron hopes that this self-created energy pod can enable researchers to work in extreme conditions for longer without the need of external generators.

Also taking advantage of the heat differential between outside and inside is Stine Bungaard who uses Peltier tiles as insulation on building walls, creating energy from heat loss.

Julien Nolin, who was based in Svalbard, has created an energy generator called "Icescapes". Three "skins" contain batteries that are activated by salt water to generate power.

Student Kine Fagerheim's project, entitled "Open Kitchen: Culinary Processes and Landscape Potentials", sees an alternative method of cooking, in which the process is taken to the great outdoors, slowing the whole thing down. The platform guides

the water to mix with the flour, grains and blueberries and is placed in a geothermal area, allowing the bread to be cooked in the earth overnight at around 90 degrees Celsius.

The challenging conditions have been inspiration for many of the students. Using an aluminium frame and soaked fabric, Sara Sánchez y Götze uses the sub-zero temperatures to crystallise the fabric, creating an ice shell – a temporary shelter that keeps its occupants out of the freezing elements. Gabrielle Gualdi also created shelter using insulated and waterproof materials, complete with built-in pillows, using the waste materials created in production.

The breathtaking exhibition showcases a wide variety of innovative ways of energy creation and safe habitation in extreme environments that can be used around the world.

The Arctic – Architecture and Extreme Environments
October 23rd, 2015 – February 22nd, 2016
Experience Centre, HKDI, 3 King Ling Road,
Tseung Kwan O
www.hkdi.edu.hk/hkdi_gallery/2015/arctic/



KINE FAGERHEIM

Kine Fagerheim, Open Kitchen: Culinary Processes and Landscape Potentials



THE FATHER OF "SWISS PUNK"

Few designers have been more instrumental in changing the face of typography than **Wolfgang Weingart**. His exhibition shows why throwing out the rule book is sometimes the only way to make a difference



MUSEUM FÜR GESTALTUNG ZÜRICH, GRAPHICS COLLECTION, PHOTO: U. ROMITO, © ZHDK

Not every designer working today will be familiar with the name Wolfgang Weingart, but most have in some way benefited from his typographic explorations in the 1970s. Weingart was the founder of a new wave of typographic design known as "Swiss Punk", which saw the old rule book thrown out and a new era of design ushered in.

Born in Constance, the picturesque lake town on the German-Swiss border in 1941, Wolfgang Weingart studied applied art and design at the Merz Academy in nearby Stuttgart. There he learnt the traditional skills of wood and lino cutting but, at the age of just 17, he discovered the school printing machine.

Before long he was setting metal type and gained an apprenticeship in a Stuttgart printing house, where he met his mentor Karl-August Hanke.

At the time, the "International Style" or "Swiss Style" of using logical methods and following a minimalist or functional aesthetic was the universal standard in typography. Hanke – a "Swiss Style" typographer – introduced Weingart to the Basel School of Design, where the young Weingart enrolled to study.

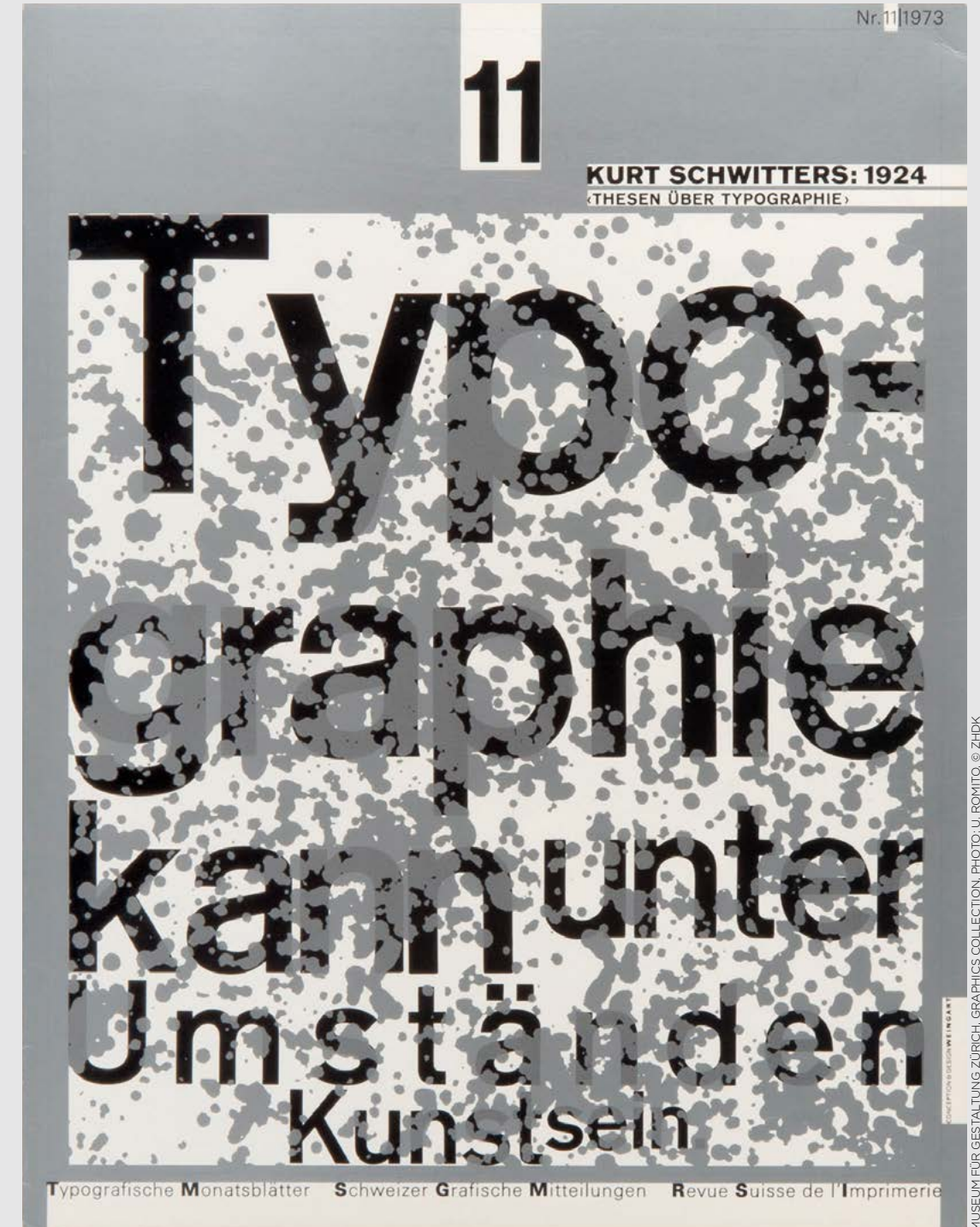
By the age of 27, the largely unknown Weingart was invited to conduct the school's first post-graduate typography class.

The popular "Swiss Style" went down well with the corporate culture of the 1960s but as the sixties made way for the seventies, the counter-culture movement washed like a tidal wave across Europe and America, sweeping up a generation of youth looking to make a difference.

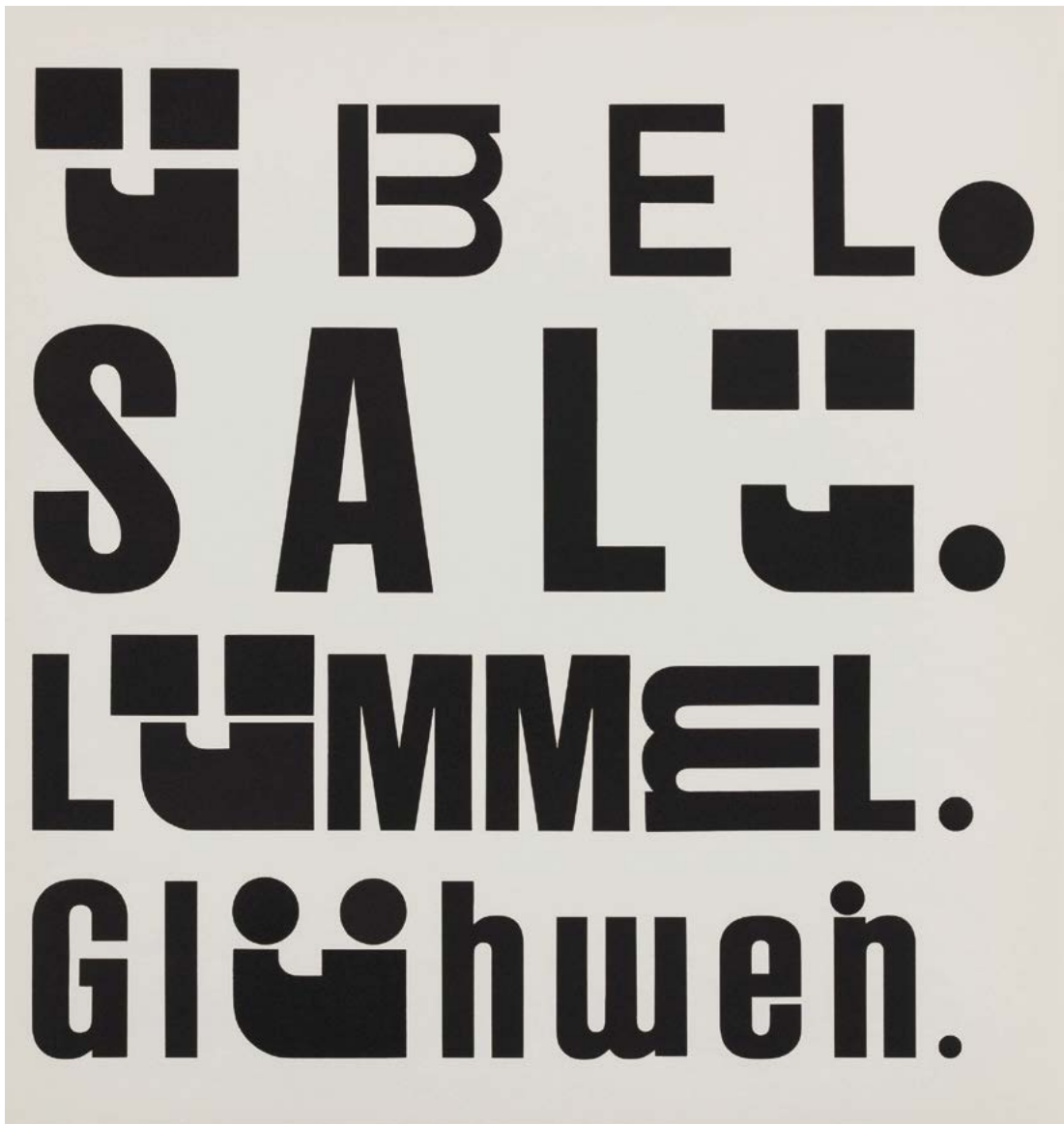
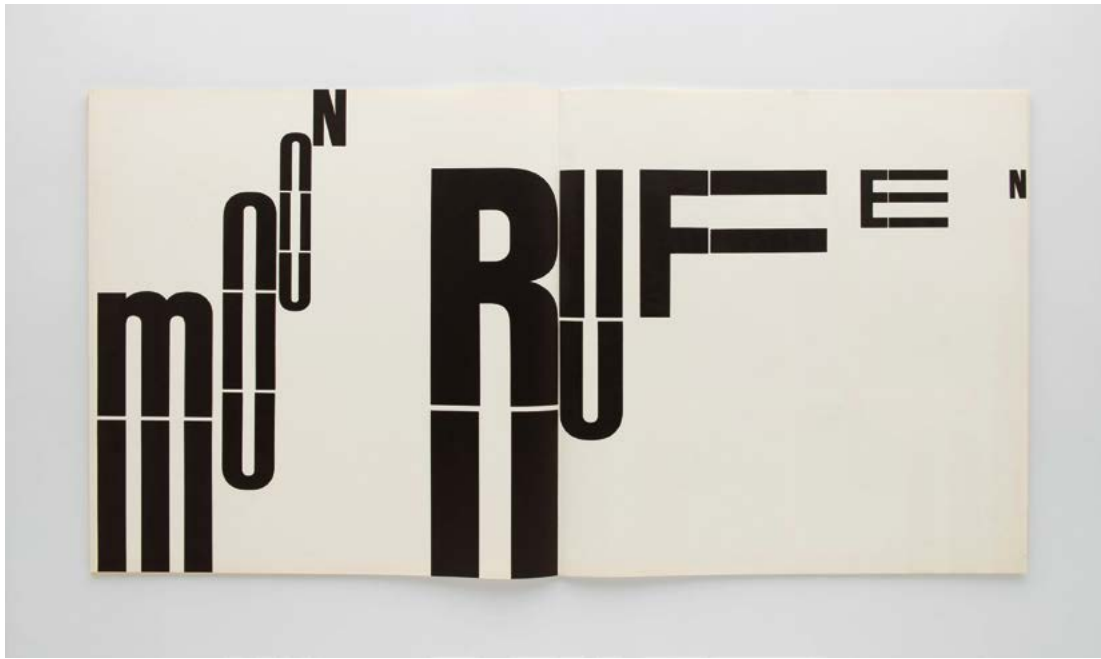
The confluence of a technical education and a naturally rebellious streak saw Weingart turn his classroom in to a laboratory that "stretched the type shop's capabilities to breaking point".

Top: Wolfgang Weingart, Q, design alternatives for the cover of the magazine *Design Quarterly*, 1995, xerography.

Above: Portrait Wolfgang Weingart, photograph, 2011.



Wolfgang Weingart, *Typographische Monatsblätter* Nr. 11/1973, magazine cover from his series of eight, 1973, letterpress



Wolfgang Weingart, *Das Kotzenbuch*, double page, 1970-1972, letterpress, manual typesetting



Roger Séguin, *Accra*, small poster for airline from *City Color Poster* series, 1989-1990, iris print
(Wolfgang Weingart's teaching activity)

Weingart threw out the traditional grid layout and started to place type in a non-uniform, chaotic structure. He used collage, layers and transparent film in his type set (a precursor to computer software programs such as Photoshop). And he worked with a variety of type sizes, fonts and colours in a single work, creating abstract, non-conformist works with an anarchic attitude. Wolfgang Weingart had created "Swiss Punk".

Throughout the 1970s Weingart continued to experiment with halftone screens and Ben-Day films used in photomechanical processes. He stretched and blurred using a repro camera to marry continuous tones and colours. Never one to settle on a single style, he continued to experiment and push boundaries throughout his career.

The exhibition, presented by HKDI in collaboration with Museum für Gestaltung Zürich (Museum of Design Zurich), tells the story of the evolution of "Swiss Punk" and Weingart's career, including some of his striking black and white world format posters, designed for the Basel Kunstkreis in the late 1970s. And his early 80s colour posters that use a non-conformist font size and type.

The energy of his works optimise the punk ethos of that era and few designers can claim to have not been influenced by the changes Weingart brought in.

Weingart Typography

November 6th, 2015 – March 30th, 2016
d-mart, HKDI, 3 King Ling Road, Tseung Kwan O
www.hkdi.edu.hk/hkdi_gallery/2015/weingart/



MAR 94'

Tse Ming Chong

CAPTURED IN TIME

Exhibition view of Hong Kong
'94, in front of the office lobby,
Central Plaza, Wan Chai,
Hong Kong, 1995

Photographer and academic Tse Ming Chong's
visual archive of Hong Kong's rapid development



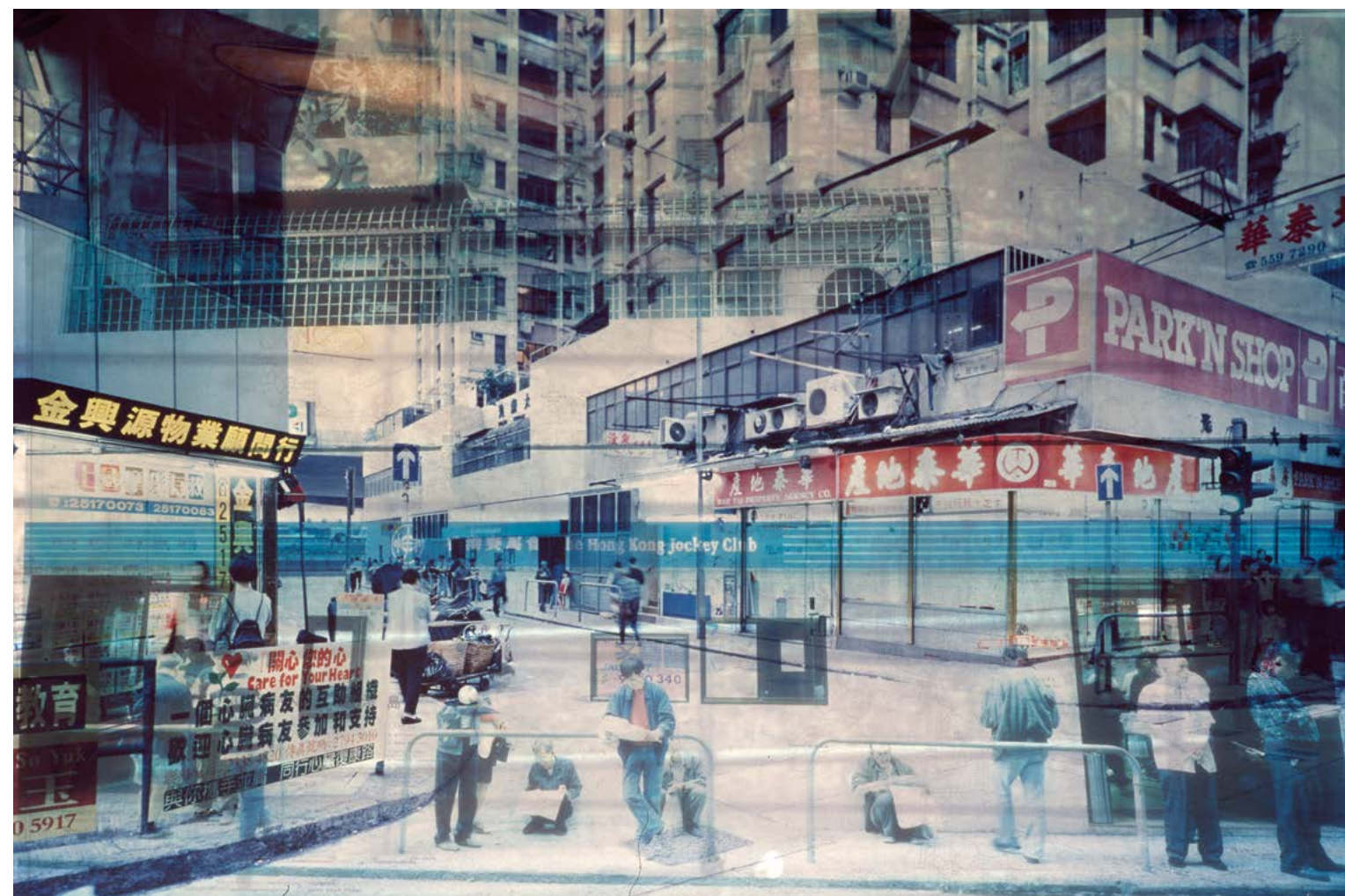
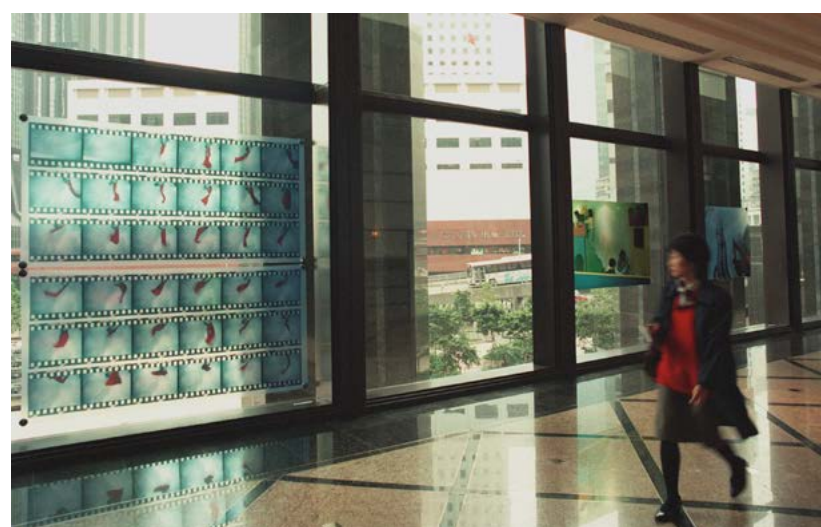
”

People's understanding of past events is often pieced together through photographs

People say that the camera captures a single moment, but I don't think so. A moment is fleeting and intangible – it can never really be captured.” Perhaps a contradictory thing to hear from a photographer's mouth – but then Tse Ming Chong is not your typical photographer. This good-humoured gentleman is patient with his thoughts, and it is obvious why he makes a good lecturer (he is currently the Head of Department of Design Foundation Studies at the Hong Kong Design Institute).

Initially trained as a photo journalist at the Hong Kong Christian Service Kwun Tong Vocational Training Centre, he was enlightened by his teacher, well-known photographer Cheng Chick Woon, who taught him that

a single photograph has the power to change the world. “It imbued me with a sense of mission,” Tse recalls, “I've always closely followed the daily news and the socio-politics of Hong Kong.” One of his most memorable photographs, which also takes the opening page in his recent photobook *Chronicle*, is Tiananmen. The black and white photo depicts the famous Beijing square, in which a large portrait of Mao Zedong is being lowered to the ground by a large crane, surrounded by onlookers. Tse is very aware of an image's connotations – “People's understanding of past events is often pieced together through photographs,” he writes in his book, “But there is always a discrepancy between the source of the image and its truth, and between the reader's understanding of an image and its associations.”



Clockwise from top left: Tram, Hong Kong, 1990; Horse racing will continue in Hong Kong, 1996-1997; Lan Kwai Fong, Central, 1997; Exhibition view in front of office lobby, Central Plaza, Wanchai, Hong Kong, 1994





Clockwise from top: Tsim Sha Tsui Star Ferry Pier, Hong Kong 1997; Queensway, Admiralty, Hong Kong, 2008; Star Ferry, Hong Kong, 1995-2007



”

There are always so many things happening in our city day by day, but we forget too easily

Chronicle, published in late May, is a work of art itself. The level of detail and consideration put into the creation of this book is applaudable. Tse points out the cover slip, which wraps the book, is actually a fold-out poster of his work *Hong Kong Diary '94*, one of his most important photo series. During the 90s when he was living in Peng Chau, Tse would take his daily commute on the ferry to Hong Kong Island. At that time, the Convention Centre in Wanchai was still under construction, and every day he would take a photo of the landfill and construction work. The result is a few hundred images of the city, the blank spaces representing the days that he didn't manage to take a photo. "I made this collection because I wanted to remind myself that I'm creating something out of photography as a medium," Tse explains, "But by photographing every single day, it's a process of learning and practise that reminds me to ask, 'What is photography, and how can I understand it?'"

Carrying his camera wherever he goes, Tse is particularly captivated by street scenes and the behaviour of pedestrians. Silent buildings seem to find a voice through Tse's photography, like the Queen's Pier in Central that was demolished in 2008 despite protests. Scenes of daily life may appear banal, especially in this age of technology where we are bombarded with endless eye-catching images. But provocation is not the aim here. "There are always so many things happening in our city day by day, but we forget too easily," he says, "I want to show that there is not one didactic viewpoint, but multiple views that stem from one event." This sentiment is evoked in his *City Series I* and *II*. Tse wandered around the city, targeting the hundreds of footbridges that link building to building, bypassing the buzzing traffic below. He would stand in the middle of the footbridge and shoot the cityscape, often with the road below

creating a striking, well-balanced vanishing point in the centre. Being well-read in the histories and theories of photography, Tse borrowed the concept of 3D photography. "I am inspired by early stereoview photography that was popular in the 19th century," he explains. "A diptych of two identical monochrome photos would be presented side by side, and you would look at them through a viewing glass to see one 3D image. It was the idea of presenting reality as truthfully as possible. I've changed that concept slightly by creating two different photographs per pair, to suggest that there is no singular viewpoint in society." The first series started out as black and white, to mirror the 19th century vintage style, but in 2014, the controversial Umbrella Movement happened. For this he made a second series entitled *City Series II - The Road*, in the same composition style, but this time in colour. Some of the scenes depict the normally busy roads filled with tents and sleeping protestors, or ghostly empty, devoid of cars or people. Again, presented in diptychs, these photos are extremely powerful, with the cobalt sky at dusk in stark contrast with the warm glow of Harcourt Road under the streetlamps.

Always eager to explore and push the boundaries of photography, Tse has devised a cheeky little flipbook in *Chronicle*. On the bottom left of every other page there is a little icon of a view taken from his home, and Tse invites the reader to flip through it, and see a stop-motion transition from day to night – "It's the development of a year compressed into a single day." Always subtle and thoughtful, Tse Ming Chong's unique photographs are never a straightforward documentary of the urbanscape or political events, but a reflection on the camera as a tool and a mouthpiece for his own thoughts. And more importantly, an open invitation for the viewer to contemplate on city life, and the city in which they exist.

Cargo is loaded on to the ship

OUT TO SEA

Exploring slow living, Leong Ka Tai documented his journey by cargo ship from Hong Kong to South America and the Caribbean. By Eunice Tsang

For over a month in 2013, veteran photographer Leong Ka Tai lived on a French cargo ship with his wife, travelling from Hong Kong to South America and the Caribbean. His aim was to explore slow living - definitely not something that Hongkongers do well. With the vigorous bombardment of polished images from the screens in our hands to the billboards on the streets, our ability to carefully observe has almost been eradicated. Every day on board, Leong would perform a little ritual, in which he dropped a message in a bottle into the ocean, a hopelessly romantic gesture, some would say.

Leong, founding chairman of the Hong Kong International Photo Festival and ex-president of the Hong Kong Institute of Professional Photographers, is a critically-acclaimed photographer whose work has been presented in international literature like *National Geographic* and *New York Times*. Clad in a Hawaiian patterned shirt and a pair of little round spectacles propped on his nose, Leong is amicable and humorous, often joking about his trip. "I was finishing up some work for an international photography festival, and just wanted to get away from everything," Leong explains of how he began his unusual trip. "I found this French freighter and thought it was a great chance to try out some slow living." He brought his wife along, and, when asked

LEONG KA TAI



Left to right: The Filipino crew on board, cutting each other's hair and out on deck

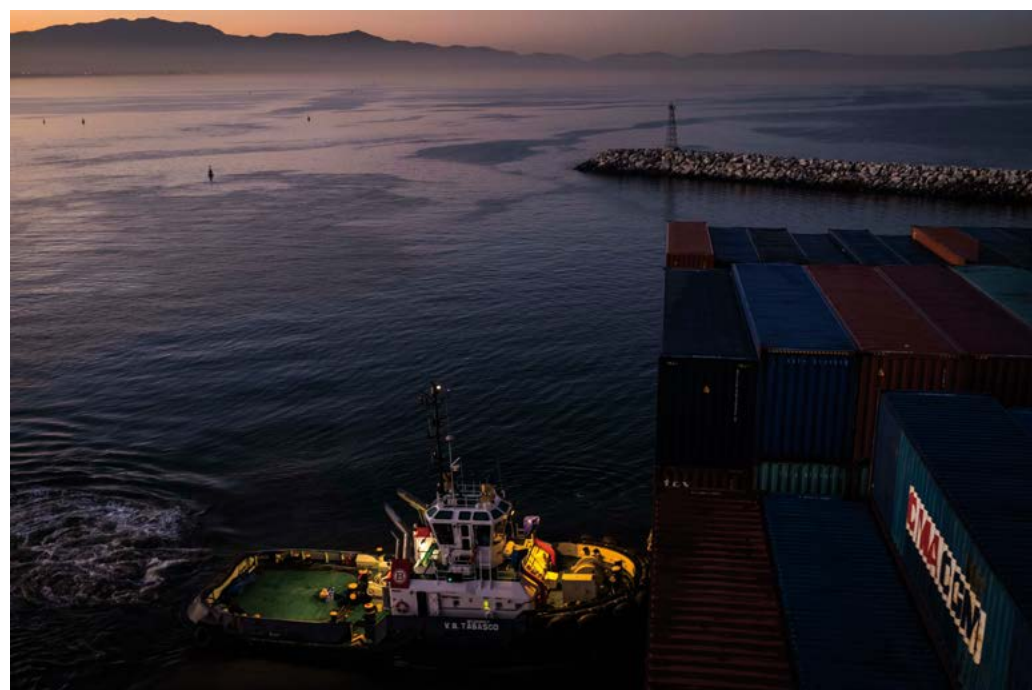
how his wife felt about the trip, he laughs, "It's a big miracle that we didn't fight or argue at all! I was prepared to be pushed into the sea by her." Armed with only one camera – a fixed lens Fujifilm X100s – Leong wanted to "go back to the basics" and explored the freighter every day, walking around the cabins and decks, observing his vast surroundings. "Actually, I was a bit surprised by how I could easily sit alone quietly for an entire day, and how fast a day passes, even when you're not really doing anything," Leong ponders. "Every day I would watch the sky and sea, that's all there is around you most of the time. The changes in the weather and sunlight fascinated me – every day is slightly different. The colours are ever changing, like the fog at night, the

sun at noon, the changes in colour of the water depending on which part of the sea we were in."

Leong's photos capture candid moments of the seamen during their leisure time – working out, drinking beer while watching television and giving each other haircuts. These men are away from home for months on end, with only the company of each other and these photos speak of their camaraderie. "I'm a very curious person. I like to check out what other people are doing," Leong laughs. "The crew members were from the Philippines, and they were very friendly, unlike the Romanian captains and officers who made it clear we weren't welcome in their club," Leong recalls. "They had a schedule and were pretty busy, but sometimes at night we

”

I'm a very curious person. I like to check out what other people are doing



The changing colours of the sea and sky



Village life in Ecuador

would chat over beer." Working through the night, the photos show them bathed in the warm glow of yellow lamps, surrounded by stacks of cargo and towering cranes. Unfamiliar scenes to most of us, despite how much we take for granted the objects contained by these red, blue and green metal containers.

One important part of his trip was his experiment in an alternative form of communication – the message in the bottle. "Nowadays, with our mobile phones, we can connect and reach each other so easily," he explains. "I wanted to try out a very primitive way of communication. I had a little ritual every day, filming each bottle as they were dropped into the sea." Inside each bottle is a personal message written by his friends, some of whom are artists. He also included a "cover letter" in Chinese, English and Spanish, with information on the purpose of the bottle, and his contact details. (He set up a new email account just for this.) "It's about primitiveness and probability," Leong continues, "Because the probability of picking up this bottle is so tiny, there must be some kind of luck involved in it, or fate. It's about how you establish a connection with a stranger."

On the cargo ship, Leong watched quietly as they traversed from Hong Kong to Kaoshiung, Ningbo, Shanghai, Qingdao, Busan, Mexico, then finally Colombia, where he decided to return on land. He and his wife travelled South America for a further four months, their first time ever on the continent. His eyes light up as he lists the names

of cities he visited, his favourite being in Ecuador. "You could go to the famous Galapagos Island," he says, "but we chose to go to a rural village up in the mountains." His photographs show a fascination with ordinary human life – people in traditional costume buying their groceries at a store; a kid with a smug face, apparently satisfied with his new haircut at the village salon; locals strolling or cycling on the cobbled pavement, drenched in the falling shadows of colourful houses.

Leong is now busy in preparation for his solo exhibition at the Hong Kong Design Institute, a mixed media exhibition featuring videos, objects, web content and photos, which will take place in March. It's no easy feat, having taken so many photographs, and hoping to encourage viewers to join him on his contemplation in slow living. He is even developing a mobile app that is a virtual simulation of his message in a bottle project, where users can send messages which, humourously, may not ever successfully be picked up. Out of his 32 bottles that he released into the sea, one has so far been retrieved. Eight months after his trip ended, he received an email from a marine biologist in Vancouver. "This is fate," smiles Leong. Who knows when the next bottle will be picked up, and by whom?

Over the Ocean, On the Road

– A Multimedia Exhibition by Leong Ka-tai

March 18th, 2016 – May 30th, 2016

HKDI Gallery, 3 King Ling Road, Tseung Kwan O

www.hkdi.edu.hk/hkdi_gallery/

A FITTING TRIBUTE

We explore the history of the qipao, and how this iconic dress has come to represent so much

By Eunice Tsang. Photography by Calvin Sit



”

I have the responsibility to tell the new generation what happened in the old days

”

Ashley Ng
Curator

For a century the qipao has captivated hearts – an icon of feminine elegance and sophistication, it is both flirtatious and provocative. In Chinese cinema, no muse is perfect without a body-hugging qipao. From Nancy Kwan's flirtatious red hot qipao in *The World of Suzie Wong*, a 60s film that launched a thousand qipaos, to the 23 exquisite qipaos the willowy Maggie Cheung dons in Wong Kar Wai's arthouse classic *In the Mood for Love*, the unique garment is undoubtedly the epitome of Chinese femininity.

In September, HKDI presented “Orient Beauty”, an exhibition to display the significance of this cultural treasure, and to prompt students' passion for the disappearing craft of qipao-making. The exhibition space is thoughtfully designed to create an immersive atmosphere, as if stepping back in time. Overhead hangs a large light installation, made of hundreds of plastic red lamps that are commonly found in local markets. Bathed in the warm light are various items from the past – a Singer sewing machine working on a vintage fabric, an old wooden Petrel radio and replicas of fashion magazines for visitors to flip through. Surrounding the objects are 20 qipaos displayed chronologically, dating from the 1920s to present day. They are treasures from Ashley Ng's personal collection, the curator and lecturer for the Department of Design Foundation Studies at HKDI. “As a designer and educator, I have the responsibility to tell the new generation what happened in the old days,” Ng explains, “What is Chinese heritage and identity? How do we position ourselves in the international market? What is the scope that a Hong Kong designer should have?” These are the questions that Ng hopes to raise through “Orient Beauty”.

The title of the exhibition exudes a sense of nostalgia, harking back to the colonial period of

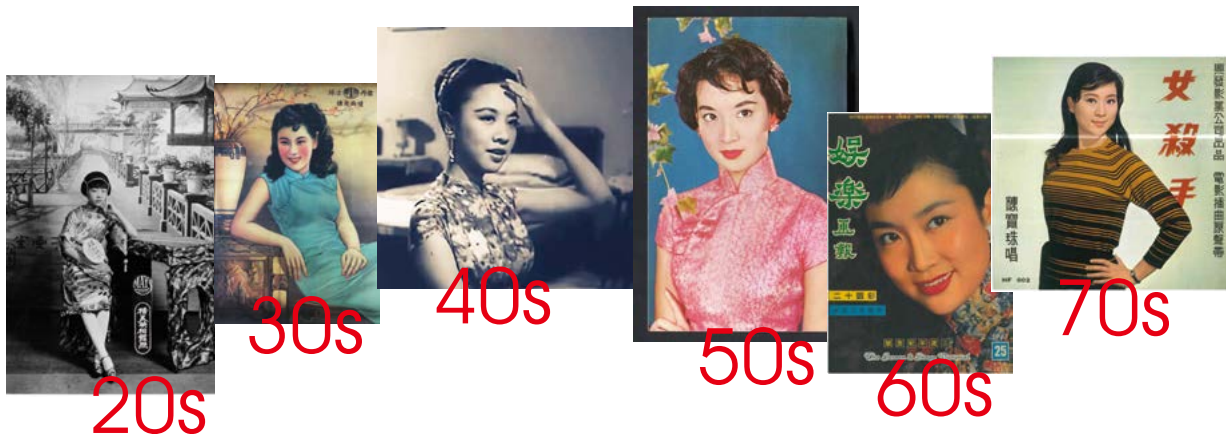


Hong Kong. Influences of Western aesthetics can be found in almost every object in the show. Shanghai Girls posters from the Republican era of 1920s depict demure models in trendy qipaos of the day. Originally hand-painted, these advertisements are now regarded as works of art on their own. Like contemporary adverts, these images emphasise the models' feminine gestures and beauty trends – rosy cheeks, red lips, “new-moon-shaped” eyebrows, and Westernised permed hair. Exhibition boards behind the qipaos provide concise historical background and interesting facts, like specific qipao tailors who were masters of the trade. The respected tailor, Leung Long Gwong, has devoted his entire life to creating qipao. One of his fans was Wong Kar Wai, who continually invited him to create the many stunning limelight-stealing qipaos in his films, including the first transparent collar for *In the Mood for Love* and a flamboyant jewel-encrusted qipao for Zhang Ziyi in *2046*. Master tailors like

Leung take the qipao to the next level, elevating it to haute couture.

The evolution of the qipao reflects the intriguing history of China. From its Manchurian roots as a long, billowing dress, it has undergone a series of changes throughout the century. The 1930s and 1940s are regarded as the golden era of the qipao. Influenced by Art Deco and Western fashion

trends from the 20s, the dress was altered to a slim fit cutting to show off the slender, feminine body. It was also elongated with a low waistline that echoed the Art Deco flapper fashion of America. Far from being conservative, the qipao explored various new fabrics, especially thin ones like satin, crêpe and gauze. Appearing almost transparent, it was a cheeky play of peekaboo, while maintaining



its gracefulness. The sleeves were much shortened to reveal feminine porcelain arms. It also acted as a step forward in the rising equality of women, as the qipao evolved into a simple one-piece, and its famous slit on both sides of the dress emerged so that women could move more freely. The signature stiff, upright collar was replaced with a fun variety – turndown collars, V-necks and even ruffle collars. As seen in the replicas of vintage fashion magazines in the exhibition, highly-stylised models paired the qipao with Western style fur coats, luxuriously long jackets and dazzling jewellery. Inspired by American and European modern art, qipao patterns became bolder and abstract, the most popular designs being stripes and geometric shapes.

In the 1950s, there was a wave of immigrants from Shanghai to Hong Kong. Shanghai being one of the fashion capitals of the world at that time, meant that there was an influx of expert tailors, bringing along their precious experience to the city. The result was that the 50s and 60s became Hong Kong's gilded age, as reflected by the vibrant, sexy designs of the qipao. The excitement from the sexual

revolution in the United States of the 60s spread globally, reaching Hong Kong. The hem of the qipao raised alluringly above the knee and adopted a much more body-hugging cut, mischievously emphasising the silhouette of the female body. The most iconic film of the era was probably *The World of Suzie Wong*. In the film, British-Hong Kong mix Nancy Kwan stars as a local prostitute who falls in love with an American architect, played by William Holden. It's hard to forget her long black hair and voluptuous figure accentuated by the risqué blood-red qipao, which turned her into a sex siren overnight. Such was the fascinating and paradoxical garment – being simultaneously a demonstration of female emancipation, and a leading cause for the sexual objectification of women.

Nowadays, although the qipao is no longer a common sight on the street, it refuses to be ignored. With variations appearing in Chinese weddings, important dinners, significant events and nostalgic contemporary films, it is evident that the dress remains highly relevant to this day.

WASTE MANAGEMENT AND UPCYCLING

By Katarina Brieditis and Katarina Evans



Top left: Waste from sweaters, buttons, zips, tags, labels. Top right: Making of the Re Rag Rug - Kasuri - in India.



Excess material from the T-shirt industry made into yarns.

RE RAG RUG / STUDIO BRIEDITIS & EVANS

All material is good material, you only need to create ways to use it.

Re Rag Rug started as an experimental design project to explore the social and ecological factors of turning waste material into rugs.

It's an example of how design can work with sustainability, and adding value to seemingly worthless material. Many of its rugs are made with craft techniques that don't require large spaces or machines, and can therefore be manufactured as cottage industries in textile producing countries. Such a production, using waste is ecologically sustainable and, at the same time, socially sustainable - as the production becomes a platform for developing crafts and creating jobs.

Throughout history there has been a need to recycle material, whether out of economical or creative reasons. Only in recent times have we forgotten how to make use of the waste material in our close surroundings.

Since 1980 the world population has grown from four and a half billion to over seven billion, and each one of us have doubled our consumption of textile fibres during the same period. One third of these fibres are cotton. Today three percent of the earth's cultivated areas are used for growing cotton and cotton accounts for 10 percent of all chemicals used in fibre production. Needless to say, the Earth is suffering and we need to learn how to re-use the materials already around us.

When launching Re Rag Rug we wanted to challenge ourselves as designers by creating products using existing materials.

Our material comes to us in random forms. A pile of old sweaters, a box of silk ties or discarded T-shirts. The colour palette is already there, limited but full of possibilities. We never have to start creating from a blank piece of paper or wait for inspiration. With our hands on the material we start constructing and use all our collected knowledge and intuition to find new expressions.

The method of using pre-existing forms or products, and placing them in a new context, jump starts our creativity. It leads us into a process where we can be innovative. By doing this we gain new ways of working and communicating and new designs for rugs.

Many producers would like to find a way for their specific waste to be given more value, out of economical reasons as well as environmental. An industry that works in close collaboration with creative designers would result in more sustainable products, as well as more innovative designs and future business models.

So what about all the textiles we choose to throw away? We can all re-use and recycle our clothes. However, in a larger context, the abundance of discarded clothes that end up as waste or landfill is another challenge and we need to find ways to recycle clothes in a larger scale. Recycling and waste management is already developed in other fields, such as glass, paper and metal. In Sweden the waste

management industry has increased by 60 percent since 2000, creating many jobs with it.

Designing and creating products from the waste from another process offers unique possibilities for the development of the handicraft industry, with a richer and more varied range of products and services.

Industry and crafts can co-exist, preferably in the same geographic areas as the waste material is generated. Using waste products for handicraft results in less overall wastage, flexibility in production and adds more value due to the unique nature of the products.

“We design and make innovative, experimental handmade rugs, out of materials considered worthless”

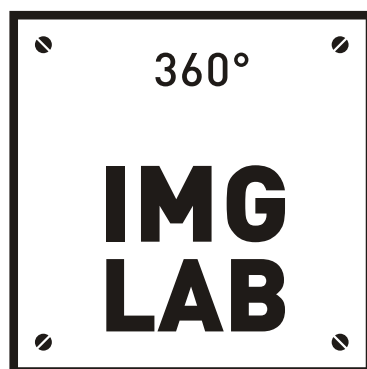
Our first year resulted in 12 unique rugs, or prototypes, which are now a travelling exhibition. Since then we have continued to develop our ideas into a small-scale handicraft production using waste and excess where it is generated.

Our own production of rugs and other textile products are made out of the excess from the T-shirt industry in India. We are also exploring the possibility of production in Sweden using discarded T-shirts that would otherwise be burnt as waste.

Re Rag Rug is now collaborating with two weaving factories, where selvage (the self-finished edge of a fabric to stop it fraying) is a wasted by-product. We like the challenge of elevating material considered worthless, adding design and handicraft skills to create a product of high value.

Waste is a resource that should be considered as good as any virgin material - and creative design is the tool!

For more information on Re Rag Rug, visit: reragrug.blogspot.hk



NEW TO PMQ

Image Lab 360° is an innovative and entrepreneurial concept that combines creative savvy with business sensibility

When we flip through fashion magazines and walk past billboards of gorgeous models, it's often easy to forget that behind one charming face are dozens of professionals, dedicated to ensuring that she looks her best. With modern culture becoming more and more visually based, the look of things has become indisputably important.

Hong Kong is one of the most vibrant and international fashion hubs of the world and has been a nurturing ground for professional fashion designers, photographers, make-up artists and stylists. So it comes as no surprise that an experimental space has been set up in the creative hub that is PMQ. The collection of trendy, independent designer shops, artistic boutiques and quality restaurants is the perfect location and regularly holds pop-up events and exhibitions on art and design. Established by the Hong Kong Design Institute and supported by the Linda Yip Charitable Foundation, the long-awaited space is called Image Lab 360°. As the name suggests, it's all about creating an image – a personal image, branding image, photographic image or other – and it aims to provide a service to suit all needs. “We had always wanted to create an environment where our students can get real-life experiences and industry attachment within their education,” Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader of Fashion Image Design at HKDI Shaun Cheung explains. “Setting up Image Lab 360° at PMQ not only enhances the purpose of PMQ as a centre of creativity, it also allows our students to interact with customers, their peers and industry professionals. As there are a lot of retail shops at PMQ, we thought that creating a space that provides styling, make-up and photography services would be a good complement to the mix.”

More than 300 students study Fashion Image Design (both in the Styling and Photography Stream and the Hair and Make-up Styling stream) each year, and are required to do a certain amount of hours as an intern to learn from real life situations and alumni professionals. Image Lab 360° is the perfect platform that they need. It will post opportunities and job openings within their internal group, and interested students can then apply with a personal profile and portfolio

for screening. “Those selected will have the opportunity to work with internal tutors, such as celebrity make-up stylist and fashion blogger Carrie Kwok and hair and make-up stylist Cecilia Pritchard,” says Cheung. “They will also be supported by advisors who are highly regarded in their industry.” It's the perfect springboard for students to experience the professional world of fashion and design.

Though Image Lab 360° was set up with students' practical experience in mind, nothing is meaningful without a client. “We pride ourselves as a service provider to the public,” emphasises Cheung. “Many of our customers are looking for services for their personal image, from hair and make-up design to photographic portraits and we've done quite a lot for bloggers and celebrities. Our students really enjoy interacting with their clients. It's really encouraging to see that the Lab and its services have been well received.” The Lab's goal is to be a self-sustainable, viable business, and it seems that it is off to a pretty good start. It has been working with the Hong Kong Institute of Professional Photographers in their projects, and is currently working with a Korean cosmetics brand to style its live event participants, and collaborating to provide styling support for singers in its concerts. But celebrities are not the only ones who enjoy the luxury of an endless wardrobe and ever-changing looks – anyone who wants to explore a fresh image can make a reservation at the Lab. To enhance and promote image design as a profession, it also offers courses in styling for individuals and corporate clients alike.

“Fashion design is one element of the industry but fashion styling and image consulting can also be assimilated,” concludes Cheung. “It's the goal of Image Lab 360° to nurture and provide internship opportunities for our students. We are enabling current students to work with alumni and professionals in this field. And are also supporting the industry by providing students with work experience ahead of their graduation.” With more and more talented young students getting a taste of the professional life, it's impossible to imagine Hong Kong ever not being one of the most popular and stimulating fashion hubs in the world.



OUTSTANDING ALUMNI

Organised by the Hong Kong Design Centre, the Hong Kong Young Design Talent Awards celebrate and support up-and-coming designers, awarding sponsorships for overseas placements to help them reach their potential. Eunice Tsang speaks with four HKDI graduates among this year's winners

FASHION DESIGN CALVIN CHAN KING HEI

Winner of the CreateSmart Young Design Talent Award in the Design Practitioners category, Calvin graduated from HKDI in 2011 with a higher diploma in Fashion Design and Development. With a unique eye, he combines unexpected fabrics and cuttings, breaking the moulds of tradition.

What did you take away from your time at HKDI?

I acquired a knowledge of garments, which is absolutely essential to my career. It also gave me opportunities to collaborate with the companies in this industry.

Where are you planning to go with your sponsorship?

I am planning to go to Belgium. I really appreciate the Belgian designers, they have strongly influenced me.

What's next for you in your work?

I hope to develop a few knitwear pieces in my next collection. I studied knitwear design in HKDI, so I hope to apply what I have learnt in the collection.



The World Is Your Oyster menswear label

FASHION DESIGN DARREN TSANG CHE FUNG



Beauty in the War

Winner of the HKDI Young Design Talent Award in the Design Graduates category, Darren's monochromatic and minimalistic collection reveals a heartwarming story.

Tell us about your winning piece...

It's called "Beauty in the War", a token of appreciation and admiration of women. It's actually about the women in my family – my father passed away when I was very little, so my mother and grandmother were left to take care of me. I really admire their strength and ability to raise me by themselves. Women may stereotypically be seen as fragile and delicate, but inside, they are actually very strong and powerful. I selected hairclips as the main concept of my collection because it's something that women use daily; they are sturdy and don't break, echoing the female character. I group together hairclips to build a form similar to an armour, balancing the form with a feminine cut.

What did you take away from your time at HKDI?

In these two years, I acquired a strong basis in sewing and drawing. Before I studied here, I thought making clothes was very easy and instinctive, but actually drawing and preparation is an important process. Now I know how to make many types of clothes. Another thing is all the great teachers I've met. In my final year project there were times when I felt lost, and they guided me, encouraged me and shared their experiences with me. So I really have to thank them.

Where are you planning to go with your sponsorship?

I haven't decided yet. I want to go to Central Saint Martins in London to study a Masters in Women's Fashion, but that's just an initial plan. I'm also thinking about being an apprentice or intern because practical experience is also essential.

FASHION DESIGN MICHELLE LIN

Awarded the Young Design Talent Special Mention Award in the Design Graduates category, Michelle's deconstruction of faces, layering of colours and experiments in materials pushes her design into the realm of art.

What were your inspirations for this collection?

My collection is called "Distortion" and is inspired by different lines and collage. I play with the print and texture in my collection. My tutor inspired me lots as she suggested that I explore different materials.

Your works have a striking play with colours. How do you select the colours you use?

Since I was focussing on prints, I selected primary colours – red, yellow and blue – because I feel they make the prints stand out more. Also, mixing those colours with black and white make the collection more casual and stylish. I designed the prints using Photoshop, separating some pieces and adding in some lines, which also creates a sense of distortion. First, I printed gradient colours on the transparent plastic sheets and cut them. Then, I cut pieces of neoprene and played with layers. Finally, I stitched the organza on top of the prints. This process helps the prints become 3D and vivid.

What did you take away from your time at HKDI?

At HKDI I learnt important fashion design techniques such as garment sewing, illustration drawing and pattern drawing. I also met some of the nicest tutors and classmates, who have inspired me lots. In my graduation show, I also won the Best Print Award and the Best Contemporary Award.



Distortion



SWIFT

PRODUCT DESIGN CYRIL LEE YIK CHING

Winner of the CreateSmart Young Design Talent Special Award in the Design Graduates category, Cyril's winning piece is a sculptural sock and shoe aid. With an eye for beauty, he transforms an ordinary tool into a contemporary gadget that is as nice to look at, as it is to use.

Tell us about your winning piece...

SWIFT is a sock and shoe assistant that helps senior citizens, injured people or pregnant women to get ready effortlessly. The streamlined form and the use of colours are intentionally designed to be abstract, in order to improve user experience and the emotional association of assistive products by eliminating the labelling effect.

What were your inspirations for this piece?

The form is inspired by the "crane flying over the silver lining", which symbolises auspiciousness and longevity in the Chinese culture. However, the idea comes from a discussion with some senior citizens during a co-design workshop called What the Health? in which they complained, "Why there isn't a thing that can help me put on my socks easily, like a shoehorn that helps me with shoes?"

What did you take away from your time at HKDI?

In a world flooded with information, any one of us can learn the basics of design simply from books or online. Opportunities, however, are not a thing that we can just get ourselves. The opportunities to communicate with world leaders in the design industry and the space to daydream with other designers are the two best things I took away from HKDI.

Where are you planning to go with your sponsorship?

Scandinavian countries, probably Stockholm in Sweden. Mainly because Stockholm is a truly international city and a creative hub packed with forward thinkers. I would also like to learn more about inclusive design and how it is practiced in real-life.

Far from useless

Ma Ke, China's most celebrated fashion designer, has been creating haute couture for her brand, Wuyong, for nearly a decade. She speaks to Tom Pattinson at her Beijing studio

Tucked away, just north of Beijing's Forbidden City, is an old print factory. It takes a second for your eyes to adjust to the low lighting as you enter the cavernous room. The red, bulbous faces of spear-carrying door gods loom out. Woodcut prints hang from a maze of dangling light boxes, where previously they would have been pasted to the front doors of rural homes in 19th century Hunan to keep out evil spirits.

Those who have an appointment can weave past these gatekeepers and enter the studio of China's foremost designer, Ma Ke.

Born in 1971 in China's northeast city of Changchun, Ma Ke graduated from the Institute of Silk Technology in Suzhou – a city long famous for its production of the finest silks and dresses. By 1996 she had established her ready-to-wear retail brand EXCEPTION de MIXMIND and in 2006 launched her haute couture line Wuyong – meaning 'useless' in English.

"About 10 years ago, I was travelling around rural China looking for traditional craftspeople and artisans and the word I heard most often was 'useless'," explains Ma. "They would ask me why I had come all the way from the big city to such a rural place to see these handmade items, which were already of no use. Handmade products had been discarded and just weren't desirable any more. These artisans were very pessimistic that their items had no future."

Ma explains that the last decades of China's scientific and economic growth have made it very difficult for these rural minorities to make a living from producing handmade items – but for her these items are anything but useless.

"I know it doesn't sound like a good name for a fashion brand, but the word 'useless' is used ironically, as I think they have a huge value and, over time, they will be recognised for how valuable they really are. Not the financial value but the cultural value," she says.

Ma has worked with some of the biggest names in China, designing costumes for the singer Dadawa and starring in *Wuyong*, the Jia Zhangke documentary on fashion named after her brand. However, it was her first show in Paris, in 2007, that really made the international fashion world take a close look at Chinese haute couture.

Ma's Paris show was more an art installation than fashion show, eschewing the traditional catwalk format and instead having models standing stationary on plinths, allowing the audience to have close-up looks as they walk among the 'art works'. The line between fashion and art is very fine for Ma Ke, a woman who is often regarded as 'anti-fashion'. "I am not really a designer who works within the fashion industry," she explains. "I don't really take part in fashion shows and I don't go to fashion weeks. I just do my own thing."

And this is clearly visible in the Wuyong studio. Past the glowing door-god bouncers it feels like you have been transported through time and space into an era without high technology, where walls have been made from mudbrick and



Clockwise from left: Ma Ke; a simple and natural-toned piece of clothing; dyed fabrics drying

reclaimed wood. Industrial meets rural with the feeling of being in an ancient provincial village. The walls in the bedroom are made from reclaimed wood from old Italian boats and the former lift shaft has been turned into a meditation space, where Ma sometimes sits under a single dim light. Each room in the preposterously large space is

allocated like that of a house – the sitting room, kitchen and bedrooms each displaying handmade clothing and furniture pieces. Bed linen and winter jackets, kids' shirts and wooden glasses cases (on display in the library), every item is unique, exquisite and handmade.

Handmade is a term that is all too often used for products that are not factory made. But Wuyong products are not just stitched together by hand, every element is created manually. White clouds of raw cotton sit in baskets next to bags of stringy raw silk. Old wooden looms from south China stand waiting to turn the puff balls of cotton into strong, clean material. Every step of the process is done by Ma's team of experts, including creating the material, the weaving process, dyeing the materials and sewing the final products.

"Dying this jacket takes about 30 days," explains Vito, one of the staff who has worked for Wuyong for six years. All the dyes are made from natural plants and materials and created in the same way they have been for centuries. "The drying time depends on the amount of sunlight and heat though," he says.

Due to the entirely natural materials, dyes and methods used, earth tones dominate the clothing, but there is a clear Sinocentrism in both the clothing and furniture on display.

"I'm a designer who is very passionate about traditional Chinese culture," Ma adds. "I have always been very proud of our country's minorities, so when I was studying, I intentionally moved away from popular Western trends to do something for myself that was related to Chinese culture."

And it is this passion for her own heritage and culture that has made Ma's work stand out on a global stage.

"Our own culture is where we stem from, so we are more sensitive to it," she says. "We absorb the culture we have grown up with. To use symbols and references from other cultures is just a visual aesthetic. To use your own culture is to use your own inner spirit."



DETOUR 2015

By Mat Gallagher

When it comes to art and design in Hong Kong, deTour is the heart and soul. Originally launched in 2004 as a side project to the Business of Design Week, the 10-day show now stands very much in its own right, celebrating the city's creative talents as well as those from across the globe. In its run so far it has been hosted in a prison, a police station, it has created a beach in Wan Chai and even turned the city's trams into mobile galleries. In 2014 it returned to PMQ, where it will host once again this year.

The theme of this year's festival is connection, so expect collaborations with various design organisations, including BODW, and a range of special events, from the city's first-ever LEGO workshop to an exhibition with the world-famous charity project The Poverty Line.

Started in 2010 by Stefen Chow and Hui-Yi Lin, The Poverty Line seeks to show in photographic form, the amount of food you can afford per day if your income is on the poverty line. The figures vary between the countries, as does the food on offer – Hong Kong's income level is \$109.65 per day, with \$44.96 available for food, and the photos show a range from roast pork and flower tea to egg tarts and pizza. For this exhibition at PMQ, the entire archive of 1,600 images, from

all 28 countries in the project, will be available to view.

There's a range of interactive experiences on display, including the "Cotton Run". Created by LAAB this is a human-sized hamster wheel for the audience to run in and earn a reward of a candy floss. The Symphony of Sound installation by Allen Ng provides visitors a chance to talk and listen to others through its series of pipes that cross and weave through each other, like a railway network.

On more of a traditional product side, "Sifu of the Day", curated by Micheal Leng, is a directory of Hong Kong's craftsmen, or sifu, created by students and is accompanied by a series of products and furniture, all built in our SAR. "MUJI Compact Life in Hong Kong" is a series of set-ups that explain the company's philosophy and design concepts, while the Europop! pop-up store presents products from Europeans designers and entrepreneurs based in Hong Kong, with the aid of the Dutch, French, German and Swiss chambers of commerce.

As always, all of the exhibitions are free to enter. Some special events and workshops may require reservation.

deTour 2015
November 27th to December 6th
PMQ, 35 Aberdeen St, Central
detour.hk/2015



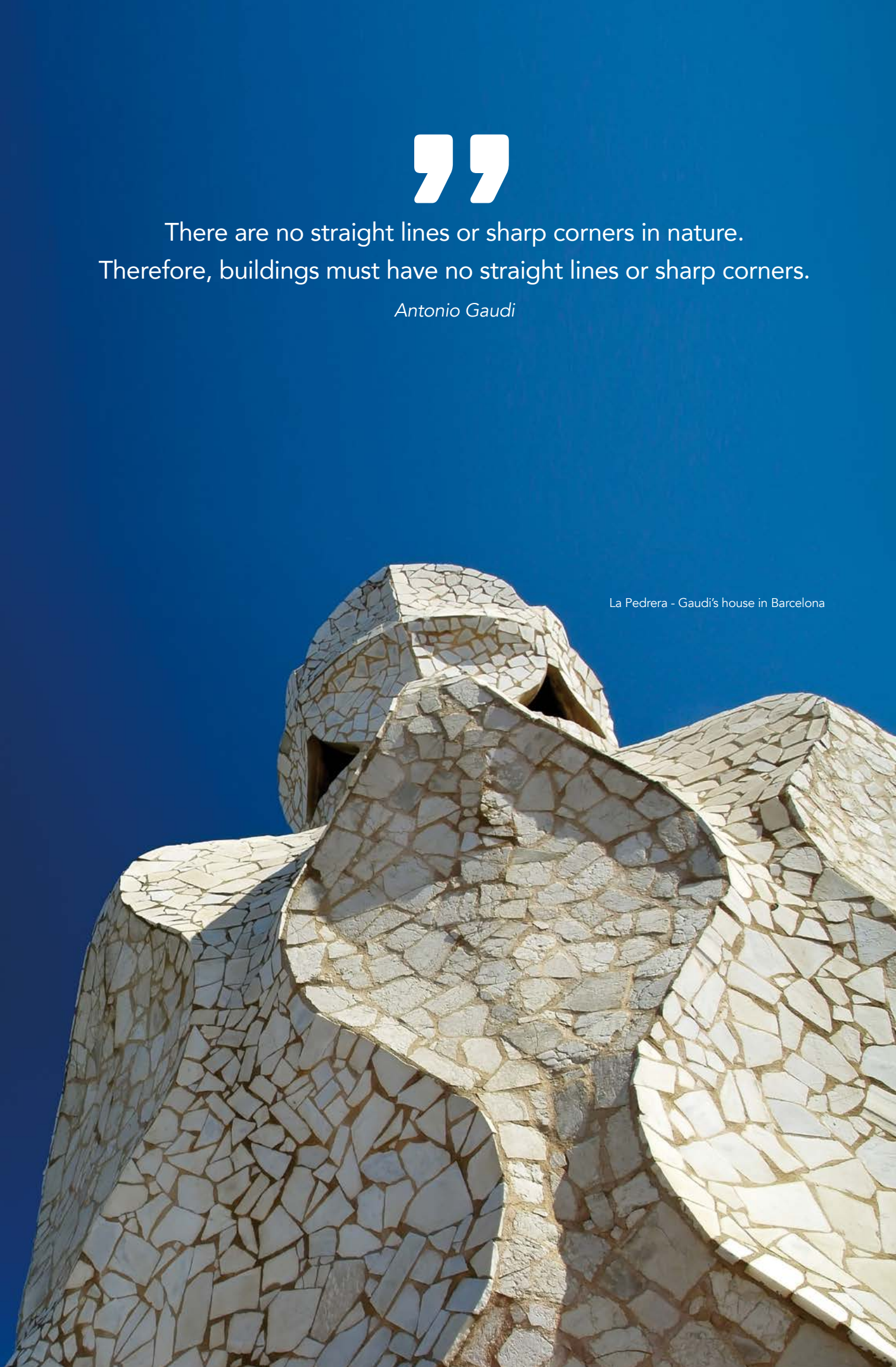
DETOUR

”

There are no straight lines or sharp corners in nature.
Therefore, buildings must have no straight lines or sharp corners.

Antonio Gaudi

La Pedrera - Gaudi's house in Barcelona





HONG KONG
DESIGN
INSTITUTE
香港知專
設計學院

Member of VTC Group
VTC 機構成員