

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HONG KONG DESIGN INSTITUTE

# SIGNED

ISSUE NINE 2014



SEIZE  
THE DAY

FRESH VISIONS  
FROM YOUNG  
DESIGNERS

CAPABILITY TOWN  
SOCIAL CREATIVITY  
FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

ANGEL'S SHARE  
SUPPORTING A NEW  
GENERATION OF STARS

THE ITALIAN MODERNIST designer Massimo Vignelli, who died earlier this year aged 83 was a prolific creator who applied simple geometric forms to an astonishing range of design problems. He was responsible for the New York City subway map, he made an acclaimed documentary called *Helvetica*, and he designed furniture, invented new forms of packaging and worked as an architect. Vignelli is celebrated for the expression, "If you can design one thing, you can design everything," but equally intriguing is his belief that "There is no design without discipline. There is no discipline without intelligence." This statement is a manifesto for elegant design, or the belief that the forms and products we create should avoid superfluous artistry and have an empathetic regard for humanity. Thus we have chosen "elegance" as the theme for this ninth edition of SIGNED, in order to celebrate what design can achieve when it's restrained and meticulous. These days the word "elegance" is most often associated with celebrities and fashion models, but its roots are much more meaningful. The word emerged in the 15th century as a derivative from the French "*élégant*", which had its roots in the Latin terms *elegantem* meaning "choice, fine, or tasteful," and *eligere* meaning "select with care". Its use in the 16th and 17th centuries suggests that the word was associated with activities that required "training and cultivation through the study of models or

ideals of grace" especially when craftsmanship was involved. This makes "design" and "elegance" a pair of close relatives who should properly be regarded as members of the same family, with the same bloodline. A design that has no elegance is unlikely to have much impact, and to say that something elegant has no design values is an offence against logic. The stories in SIGNED IX explore the power that design and elegance have when they work in tandem. In *Seize The Day* the work of graduates from HKDI's programmes are showcased and the pieces that most powerfully strike the eye are those that have the discipline and intelligence that elegant design requires. In *Picture This* and *Moving Images* we see how the visual arts rely upon an elegant selection of angle and editing to produce the most powerful photographs and films. In *Capability Town* we see how Patricia Moore uses design to create elegant solutions to make the lives of elders more comfortable and productive; *Angel's Share* tells the story of the Muses Foundation and the elegant simplicity of its mission to support young design talents that might otherwise miss their chance to shine. Everywhere in this edition design and elegance are combined. Design and elegance flow together like drops of water in a river, one where the currents of culture combine to make new forms, elevating and refreshing humanity. As Vignelli observed the seeds of one design has the fruits of many. And thus do designers make the world a better place.

**DANIEL JEFFREYS**  
*Editor-In-Chief*

«ELEGANCE IS USUALLY CONFUSED WITH SUPERFICIALITY, FASHION, LACK OF DEPTH. THIS IS A SERIOUS MISTAKE: HUMAN BEINGS NEED TO HAVE ELEGANCE BECAUSE THIS WORD IS SYNONYMOUS WITH GOOD TASTE, AMIABILITY, EQUILIBRIUM AND HARMONY.»

PAULO COELHO

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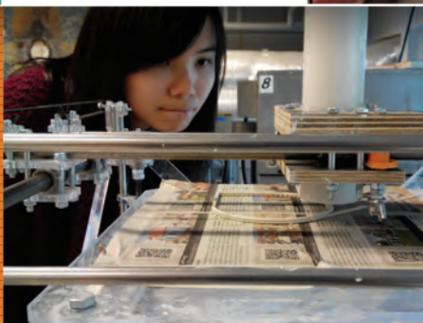
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The Hong Kong Design Institute is a member institution of the Vocational Training Council. For more information about HKDI, please check our website on [www.hkdi.edu.hk](http://www.hkdi.edu.hk), or email us at [hkdi@vtc.edu.hk](mailto:hkdi@vtc.edu.hk)

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# SEIZE

THE DAY



*We have entered a new era, when taste and appetites are in flux and opportunities can evaporate in seconds. To triumph, designers need to think with creativity, deploy craft and technique, step forward with passion, and diligently observe the market. The work unveiled at the HKDI's annual design show had all these elements.*  
**LIBBY ZENG** reports.



ALL IMAGES: HKDI



Colourful lights danced to the rhythm of stirring music as professional models walked the runway to showcase exquisitely stylish designs. An ecstatic audience held their breath, while still managing to take photos with cameras and cell phones. It sounds like an international show in one of the four fashion capitals, but in a way, this was something better. When the young student designers took their richly deserved curtain call this June after “New Fashion Force”, the annual design show of HKDI’s Fashion and Image Design Department (FID), the audience could believe they had seen the talents who will help Asia take its place as a leading force in the global fashion industry.

“The students’ work was truly brilliant and a testament to the determination and dedication of the fashion team to provide quality education,” says Elizabeth McLafferty, Head of the Department of Fashion and Image Design.

Thirty-two students presented their exceptional work to the public this year, with a special emphasis on texture, as part of “Emerging Design Talents 2014: New Voices”, which featured projects from students of HKDI and IVE (Lee Wai Lee).

“They adopted various techniques such as print, laser cutting, embroidery and 3D effects with great attention to detail,” says Portia To, Senior Lecturer and leader of the Higher Diploma Fashion Design Programme.

This year’s show ratcheted up the excitement a notch

with the inauguration of an Accessories Show, which introduced intriguing works from the first cohort of graduates of Accessories Design. Every student was tasked with designing full sets of works including garments, hats, bags and shoes to create a symphony of fashion and style.

This new course was created to meet a new trend in the fashion industry, in which clothing and accessory collections are inspired by the same theme. “We want to have designers with these skills and mindsets to satisfy the market demand in Hong Kong,” said To.

HKDI has always celebrated a market-focused passion for creativity and innovation. The first cohort of graduates from Architectural Design provides an illustration. Comix Home Base, a beautifully revitalised historic building in Wanchai was chosen as the venue for FORM/SHIFT, an exhibition that displayed the outstanding student designs.

Weaving creative imagination and solid skills into unique Hong Kong streets and spaces including Hollywood Road, Pound Lane, Po Hing Fong area and the coastline of To Kwa Wan, the students succeeded in unfolding the city’s fascinating stories with design projects that included underground

rock climbing, an interweaved tower art school, and a get-fit park for the elderly. The topics “highlighted the students’ own interest in architectural exploration and discussion, and of course their passion,” says Carol Leung, Visiting Fellow of HKDI Architectural Design, who says that one of the most positive aspects of the



« WE WANT TO HAVE DESIGNERS WITH THESE SKILLS AND MINDSETS TO SATISFY MARKET DEMAND IN HONG KONG. »



work was the students’ positive attitude toward learning from industry professionals.

“We invited experienced architects to conduct a public review of the projects during the exhibition. I was impressed by the active engagement of our students during and after the review,” says Leung.

If the Architecture Design Graduation Exhibition was a sunrise, indicating a bright future for the architectural education and design scene of Hong Kong, then the well-crafted works in the iConique - Jewellery and Lifestyle Design Show were a sparkling constellation, imbuing a sultry summer’s eve with twinkling romance and elegance.

“The show has been a complete success. The fabulous and exciting atmosphere can be seen in the wide eyes, giant smiles, and nonstop flashing of cameras,” remarked Bill Chan, Course and Stream leader in Jewellery Design.

More design approaches were pursued in this year’s exhibition covering new forms, topics, materials and styles. Chan believes it proves the students’ creativity and dedication to the design process.

The ability to innovate has always been considered a key factor for success

PREVIOUS PAGE FASHION COLLECTIONS FROM HKDI’S “NEW FASHION FORCE 2014”  
OPPOSITE PAGE TOP WORKS IN HKDI’S ARCHITECTURE DESIGN GRADUATION EXHIBITION  
OPPOSITE PAGE LOWER LIEW WAN SING’S DESIGN FROM “ICONIQUE - JEWELLERY AND LIFESTYLE DESIGN SHOW”  
THIS PAGE TOP TWO WORKS FROM HKDI’S FASHION IMAGE SHOW “THE REVOLUTIONARY IMAGE OF THE NEW GENERATION”  
THIS PAGE BELOW A PARTICIPANT ENJOYS A GAME AT THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION DESIGN AND DIGITAL MEDIA EXHIBITION



LEFT PERFORMANCE FROM MUSIC IN MOTION  
OPPOSITE PAGE TOP  
A SCREEN CAPTURE FROM MICRO FILM SCREENING  
OPPOSITE PAGE LOWER  
PERFORMANCE FROM THE MULTIMEDIA ENTERTAINMENT SHOW

in the design industry. However, Chan believes a good designer should also have a keen awareness of the market. “Our society needs change and enhancement every day.” Says Chan.

For Chan, listening to the voices of the industry plays an important role in a designer’s development. Only when designers understand an industry’s values can they capture trends and make successful innovations.

The same spirit was observed in “Music in Motion”, vibrant concerts presenting diverse music genres offered by students of the Higher Diploma course in Digital Music and Media. From composing, writing lyrics, arranging, to live shows, the students showcased remarkable ability.

“The abundant opportunities available through the Internet and social media have made it much easier for a fresh graduate to publish their work, showcase talent, and get great exposure nowadays, compared to the past when releasing music to the public would cost a large amount of money,” says Shirley Cheung, Senior Lecturer, Department of Communication Design and Digital Media who leads the programme for the Higher Diploma in Digital Music and Media.

However, chance still favours the prepared mind. That’s why this programme covers all necessary techniques, integrating education and training in both music production and audio technology, so that students can adapt themselves to the industry’s intense competition, and some even received contract offers from music production companies before graduating from HKDI. Lil’Ashes, an emerging folk-pop duo being one example.

The Music industry is not alone in confronting both the opportunities and challenges of the digital era. The movie industry is also going through great changes with the birth of microfilms.

“Microfilms have become popular and our department has a corresponding module, so we decided to hold a screening to test our students’ skills,” says Peter Si, Acting Principal Lecturer, in the Department of Multimedia and Internet Technology, IVE (Lee Wai Lee).

The Micro Film Screening was jointly held by the Department of Communication Design & Digital Media (CDM) at HKDI and the Department of Multimedia & Internet Technology (MIT) at IVE (Lee Wai Lee). According to Si, students’ performances were more mature than last year, with advanced techniques and storytelling skills.

Most of the works presented were creative advertisements and animations. The nature of the microfilm genre requires students to master the skills they have learned and display them in a confined time limit, ranging from 30 seconds to three minutes.

Versatility is one of the most important traits for students to meet the ever-changing market trends and the graduates from Fashion Image Design are well acquainted with this principle. This year, students from two streams worked together, combining make-up styling, hair styling, fashion styling and stage costume at the Image Show.

“Throughout the preparation they learned the importance of team building and understood that arguments and compromises are inevitable to achieve satisfying outcomes,” says Shaun Cheung, Programme Leader of Fashion Image Design. He also emphasised that in this industry, creative stylists are expected to have a well-rounded set of skills.

The stories narrated at the Multimedia Entertainment Show offered a sensational journey fused with laughter and tears. Students ingeniously blended stage setting, music, lighting, and visual effects



with their distinctive storytelling skills and valuable life experiences with a positive attitude towards the city’s prospects under the theme “Our Happy Days.”

Steve Leung, Lecturer in the Department of Multimedia & Internet Technology and Creative Director and Production Manager of the Multimedia Entertainment Show, believes it’s the keen observation of life and the in-depth portrait of human nature that resonated so much with the emotions of the audience.

“Real life is the source of their creativity. It’s not about acting, but about being human,” says Leung, who believes this pursuit of human nature’s peculiarities will never be outdated, since it’s deeply rooted in everybody’s heart.

New Voices was the theme of this year’s graduation show. Passion, creativity, perseverance, diligence and determination were the key words used by HKDI’s lecturers – all of which should be based on a solid foundation of proficient and comprehensive skills.

HKDI strives to bring voices from the industry to their students through seminars, lectures and exhibitions in order to ensure they understand market values and current trends. For the same reason, HKDI works closely with host companies, providing internship opportunities to prepare students for future employment in the Student Industrial Attachment Programme.

“Students of the Higher Diploma Programme need to complete a period of Industrial Attachment, which allows them to step into the market place,” says McLafferty. “Without this, their education is incomplete and too abstract.”

The Industrial Attachment provides the perfect platform for students to practice their skills, gain insights into the industry and learn from experienced professionals. “Fashion Design attracts a lot of industry projects, so students have the chance to work alongside local and international designers such as Barney Cheng, Yohji Yamamoto, Stanley Wong, Mao Jihong and so on and so forth,” says McLafferty.

Denis Diderot, the prominent French philosopher, art critic and writer once said, “There are three principal means of acquiring knowledge... observation of nature, reflection, and experimentation. Observation collects facts; reflection combines them; experimentation verifies the result of that combination.”

HKDI successfully combines these three principles to get the best from its students. With a solid foundation of skills, great personalities, and a keen observation of market principles, graduates are well placed to seize the opportunities of the industry, establish their own style, and be inspiring new voices on the local and international stage. 

# PICTURE THIS

*Hong Kong photographers Leong Ka Tai and Tse Ming Chong discuss the skills required to create an image that is both elegant and powerful. SUMMER CAO reports.*

**M**aster chess players choose their brilliant moves intuitively from a board full of chaos. For these geniuses, creativity is instinctive, like breathing or walking. According to Leong Ka Tai and Tse Ming Chong, two of Hong Kong's most accomplished photographers, their discipline needs a similar kind of subconscious spontaneity.

"It is a very straightforward feeling," Leong says. "The way you realise the image is interesting, and the moment you want to capture it are all subconscious." Leong is known as Uncle Tai, an alias that signifies his seniority and excellence in the field as well as his role as an avuncular mentor to budding photographers.

Leong is the founding member of Hong Kong Photographic Culture Society, and served as its chairman from 2009 to 2013, during which time he organised the Hong Kong Photo Festival 2010 and Hong Kong

International Photo Festival 2012. He is also the winner of various prestigious awards in Hong Kong, New York and Leipzig, and his work is included in the permanent collection of Hong Kong Heritage Museum, Museum of Fine Arts in Guangzhou and Leal Senado in Macau.

"I don't know how to teach a photography class," says Leong, who, in conversation with Tse revealed that he cannot explain why a photograph is good, or describe what constitutes mastery of the photographic arts, but he offers powerful advice, "I once told someone that they should take a roll of film everyday for 3 months, and show me those photos," he says. "There would bound to be some good ones. If you immerse yourself in photography enough and have enough discipline you will start to be a good photographer."

For Leong, making photos is an effortless feat achieved by subconscious coordination between eyes and hands, in response to various triggers in the environment. And in order to sharpen one's sensitiveness towards those triggers, he recommends to "read more books, walk more roads, look at your surroundings, understand the world, and then you can take good photos."

Tse shares Leong's view that the reasons why a photo is good or bad is

OPPOSITE PAGE FROM LEFT  
TWO PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE CITY VIEW  
COLLECTION BY TSE AT AN EXHIBITION;  
NEW CALEDONIA - CLUB MED BY LEONG FOR  
AMERICAN EXPRESS MAGAZINE  
THIS PAGE FROM LEFT  
NAKO MONASTERY BY LEONG;  
A PHOTOGRAPH FROM  
THE MOVING HORIZON COLLECTION BY  
LEONG





beyond description; he says that for the experienced photographers, capturing images is more of a habit than rational thinking, a matter of instinct rather than meticulous framing.

“As a teacher I can only teach students the techniques,” says Tse, who has taught at various local universities and schools including the Hong Kong Design Institute. “But ‘how’ to take photos I cannot teach...I cannot answer my students when they ask me why a photo is bad.”

Tse confesses that he was not a good student by conventional standards, having passed only one Hong Kong Certificate of Education course. He first worked as an in-house photographer at a hotel while moonlighting in fast-food chains.

After saving some money, he spent two years travelling to China, Russia, the Middle East and Europe. At 28, he came back to Hong Kong and published the work that he produced during his trip in two pocket-sized books. Working different jobs to stay solvent, he never gave up on taking photos.

During the Tian’anmen Square Incident in 1989, Tse went to Beijing and took a famous photo of Mao Zedong’s portrait being removed because someone had covered it with ink. When he came back, he held an exhibition featuring photographs that depicted Hong Kong society and the way it was influenced by the political turmoil in the north. Before long, he found a position at *Next Magazine* as photographer.

Leong also found his way into the photography

profession through travel. Despite studying mechanical engineering at a U.S. university, and working for a company creating computer operating systems in England, he had been a keen amateur photographer since high school. However, in 1973 he quit his job and went to Paris to learn more about his art, although he hardly spoke a word of French.

“I was really bored working in an office,” he recalls. “I thought that I might commit suicide if I found myself working there when I was forty. So I thought about my future for several sleepless nights and decided that it was with photography.”

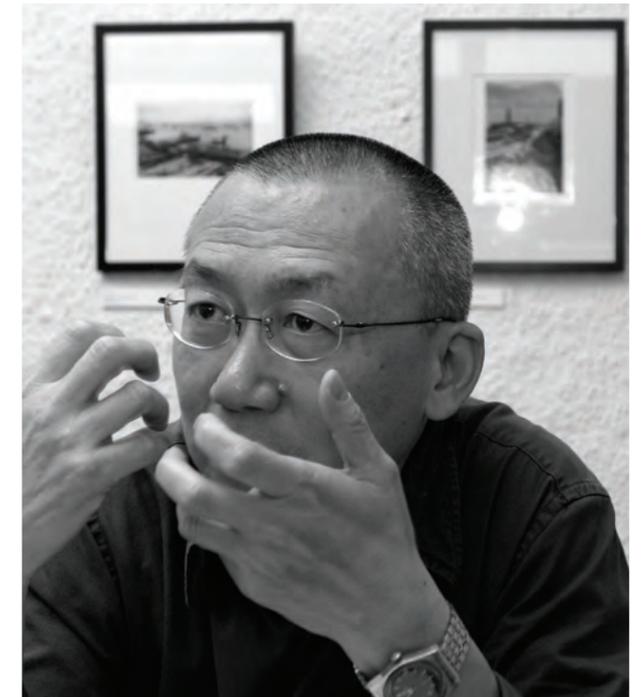
“The day I quit my computer job was the happiest moment of my life. At that time the French were famous for their photography. A lot of masters were there. So I went to Paris.”

Leong was soon hired to work as an assistant at a photography workshop, and he took the opportunity to learn the technical skills that a professional photographer requires. Although he was living in a laid back European culture, he had a disciplined approach. While others were drinking coffee and beer, he used every chance to go out and take photos. After nine months, he presented his work to his boss, who was very impressed. Before long, he was no longer an assistant.

After three years in France, Leong came back to Hong Kong feeling ambitious, with enough confidence to establish his own studio. “Doing photography is a cruel job - but a happy one,” he says. “When there was no



PICTURES TSE MING CHONG AND LEONG KATAI



OPPOSITE PAGE PHOTOGRAPHY OF A TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE SHOP IN HONG KONG BY TSE MING CHONG; THIS PAGE FROM LEFT TSE MING CHONG; LEONG KATAI

«DOING PHOTOGRAPHY IS A CRUEL JOB BUT A HAPPY ONE.»

business, you had nothing to eat. When there was a lot of business, you would have to do everything by yourself.”

However, after six years, Leong realised that having a bigger business doesn’t lead to happiness. As the number of assignments increased to two or three per day, he found himself sacrificing everything for his customers and his art suffered.

“I was so busy taking photos that I didn’t have any time to consider what I wanted to do,” he says. “So I shut down the studio and went travelling in China.”

During his 1980s odyssey on the Mainland, Leong discovered his cultural roots and created some of his best work, including the pieces in the collection *Leong Ka Tai on China: One to Twenty Four*, which won the silver medal at the famed Internationale Buchkunst-Ausstellung competition in Leipzig, Germany.

In the 1990s he started to play with techniques and produce images that were free from restrictions imposed by clients. One of the many fruitful results of his increased freedom is *Moving Horizon*, a series of distorted landscapes that evoke the feeling of Chinese ink

THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT  
TSE'S EXHIBITION *HONG KONG '94* AT CENTRAL  
PLAZA; ERIC FUNG KING HEI BY LEONG;  
OPPOSITE PAGE: A PHOTOGRAPH FEATURING THE  
PORTRAIT OF MAO ZEDONG BEING TAKEN DOWN  
IN TIANANMEN SQUARE (1989) BY TSE



and water paintings as well as the work of Zao Wouki.

The talent that freedom unleashed soon began to attract magazines such as *National Geographic*, *GEO*, and *Stern* and various book projects came his way. He was given more space to create and work on his own ideas for these projects, which still constitute a major part of his work today.

The turning point of Tse's career came as he started to explore the philosophy behind the lens. He decided that if photography is analogous to art, then he needed to be an art critic as well as an artist.

"I did a lot of photography and it was meaningful," he says. "But I didn't think about what photography is for and what it brings to people's lives."

In 1994, Tse used the construction of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre as a subject to explore the relationship between himself and his work. "I lived in Peng Chau at the time," he says. "When I took the ferry to Central everyday, I would photograph the progress of the construction."

The series of photos were featured in a 1995 exhibition called *Hong Kong '94* at Central Plaza. "I tried to reveal what I thought about photography in the exhibition," Tse says. "I was fascinated by the relationship between reality and my photographs. So I made the images transparent, and hung them on



PICTURES TSE MING CHONG AND LEONG KA TAI

«IT'S ALL ABOUT PAYING ATTENTION.  
ATTENTION IS VITALITY.  
IT CONNECTS YOU WITH OTHERS.  
IT MAKES YOU EAGER.»



windows that had a view of the city's landscape."

The experimental exhibition was a success and many photographers in Hong Kong including Leong started to notice Tse's work. What's more important, it gave Tse more confidence. In 1997, he quit his job and focused on using cameras to develop his own ideas. As his thinking on photography deepened, he enrolled at Hong Kong Baptist University to study Journalism, and latter took a one-year graduate study programme in Image and Communication at the University of London.

Having explored more of the theories behind photography, Tse was able to look at his art from a new perspective, and he became determined to bring changes to the way photography is approached in Hong Kong. In 2007, Tse established Lumervisum, a platform for photography enthusiasts to showcase their work and exchange ideas.

"These days the thinking is more important than the

image because the technology is so advanced," says Tse. "Most don't think about what they want to do through the lenses. It is very hard to find a good image that is full of content, rather than just sharp colors."

Susan Sontag, one of the world's most renowned photographers and photography critic ones said, "Do stuff, be clenched, curious. Not waiting for inspiration's shove or society's kiss on your forehead. Pay attention. It's all about paying attention. Attention is vitality. It connects you with others. It makes you eager. Stay eager."

Whatever the differences in Tse and Leong's careers and approach to photography, they both have a practice that Sontag would admire, being artists who pay extreme attention to detail. A photograph may be static but its content must be emotionally compelling, it must move somebody in their spirit as well as their intellect. Unless a photograph is a moving image, it is nothing. 

# MOMING IMAGES

A

If the seats were occupied at the HKDI's auditorium in May for a screening of *Aberdeen*, the latest movie written and directed by Pang Ho-cheung. The audience was totally absorbed by the images on the screen as they laughed and cried over the engaging storyline. The film was presented as part of the HKDI Presents Film Series and was followed by a sharing session with the director.

As one of the most popular Hong Kong directors in the past decade, Pang is well known for creating films infused with authentic Hong Kong flavours, and *Aberdeen* is no exception. The movie is an intimate portrait of a modern Hong Kong family that gradually discloses their secrets. As the film unfolds conflicts among three generations of relatives are resolved.

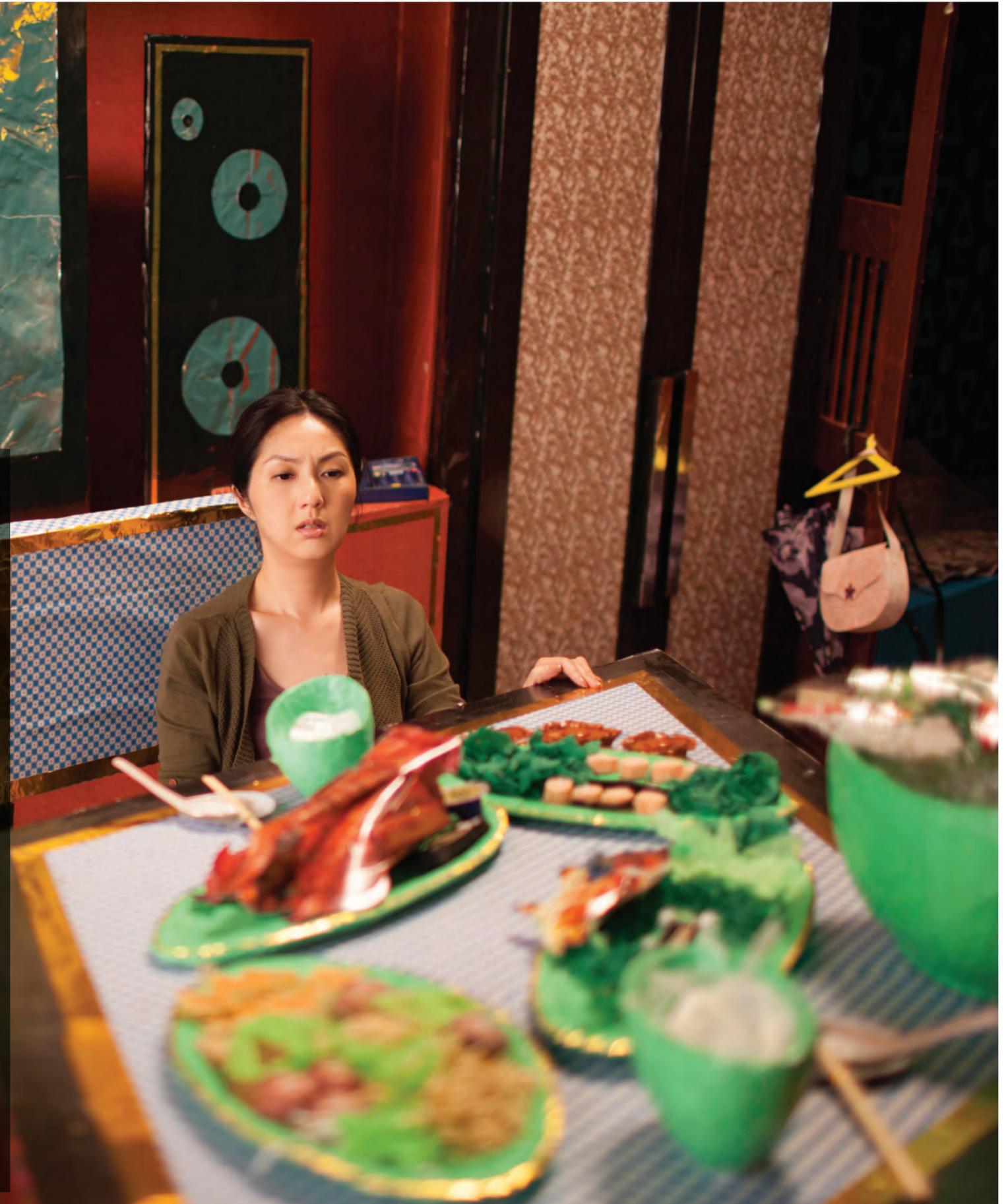
The name of the movie, *Aberdeen* is suggestive and eloquent. Aberdeen is the place where the British forces first landed in Hong Kong in 1841, marking the beginning of Hong Kong's modern history. In Cantonese, Aberdeen is known as "Hong Kong Tsai", which means "the son of Hong Kong" or "little Hong Kong".

There are many Hong Kong signatures ingeniously woven through the movie, which represents a microcosm of the city's society. *Aberdeen* depicts controversial family issues with keen observation and local audiences have easily found emotional resonance in the film, which reflects a sense of collective confusion that Hong Kongers sometimes have about their own identity.

"There is a traffic sign indicating 'All Destinations' in Connaught Road and it haunts me every time I see it," says Pang. "Is there really a road that can lead to all destinations? What are the destinations for us Hong Kongers? Where do we want to arrive and where are we going exactly?"

He resolved to use the traffic sign in the film to induce reflections among the audience. "To me, the journey might be much more important than the destination."

*The golden age of Hong Kong cinema may have passed but several productions with a local focus have recently received critical appreciation and good box office results, suggesting an important revival is under way. LIBBY ZENG met the talented directors behind two projects to explore their exceptional success.*



PICTURE: BRAVOS PICTURES LIMITED



PICTURE: BRAVOS PICTURES LIMITED



PICTURE: BRAVOS PICTURES LIMITED



When filming *Aberdeen*, Pang used a large number of out-of-focus shots in order to create a sense of fantastical reality.

“Normally in a movie, every shot is clear and an out-of-focus shot might be considered unprofessional, but the world we see in real life is not like this,” Pang says. “I wanted to illustrate family life in a real and authentic way, like a documentary. What happens next in life is always unpredictable, so the out-of-focus shots bring a natural beauty to the film.”

*Aberdeen* is one of the two opening features at this year’s Hong Kong International Film Festival. The other one is *The Midnight After*, a sci-fi movie directed by Fruit Chan. Adapted from a popular online novel, *The Midnight After* depicts a disturbing journey in which a group of passengers on a minibus discover that Hong Kong has become an empty, lifeless city.

Chan also came to HKDI to share his valuable insights with students in the *Successful Branding Journey* seminar. *The Midnight After* offers a captivating visual and spiritual feast for Hong Kong audiences, fusing popular social issues with Chan’s iconic black humour. Although some critics said the movie dwelled too much on politics, Chan believes his production is a precise reproduction of current

Hong Kong society.

“Hong Kongers are more concerned about politics now. Political issues have become a common topic at the dinner table,” he said.

Famous for his handover trilogy, the multi-award winning *Made in Hong Kong*, *The Longest Summer* and *Little Cheung*, Chan has always been dedicated to capturing the “real” Hong Kong by bringing to the screen stories of ordinary citizens combined with intense social commentary.

Co-productions are very common in today’s Hong Kong film industry, mostly with funding from Mainland China and talents and ideas from Hong Kong. Some people think this kind of production deprives Hong Kong movies of their strong indigenous flavour because filmmakers have to pay attention to the tastes of Mainland audiences as well.

Although *The Midnight After* is not a co-production, Chan believes the trend toward movies that rely on Mainland funding is inevitable.

“The local market is saturated and it’s hard for filmmakers to survive,” says Chan, who sees nothing wrong with co-production if it is handled correctly.

“I think co-production has been politicalised by a lot of people,” he says, claiming that what really matters is the way a director deals with his sources of funding. Chan believes a co-production doesn’t



PREVIOUS PAGE & OPPOSITE PAGE ABOVE & BELOW SCENES FROM *ABERDEEN* DIRECTED BY PANG HO-CHEUNG  
THIS PAGETOP & BELOW PANG HO CHEUNG (FRONT ROW CENTER), GIGI LEUNG (LEFT OF PANG HO CHEUNG) AND KEARAN PANG WITH THE AUDIENCE AT THE FILM SCREENING AND SHARING SESSION

PICTURE: GOLDEN SCENE CO. LTD & FRUIT CHAN



have to mean sacrificing the interests and tastes of local audiences. “Filmmakers should not refuse good resources or great stories as long as they stick to their principles and consciences.”

Pang also shares Chan’s view about cooperating with Mainland China. He believes it’s beneficial and inspiring for the Hong Kong film industry to join hands with different countries and cultures.

“Every place has its advantages and disadvantages. For Mainland China, the disadvantage is its existing censorship which discourages variety, but the advantage is that it has a huge market to support productions with large budgets.” As Pang said, a good director should always strive to find the balance point.

Pang and Chan have a lot more in common than a shared view of co-funding. Both of them are versatile, have a good sense of humour, laugh a lot, play multiple roles as film director, producer and screenwriter, use Hong Kong as their main subject but have also explored the Mainland market. Last but not least, they both have a down-to-earth attitude towards filmmaking.

However, this doesn’t mean they are conservative or reluctant to innovate. Creativity is one of the most important ingredients in their recipes for excellent movies. They always think outside the box, spare no efforts to transcend themselves and bring excitement and surprises to their audience.

“The independent film directors in Hong Kong are too ready to forgive themselves. They always think it’s acceptable for an independent film to be low quality with simple and crude settings because its budget is

ABOVE & OPPOSITE PAGE  
TOP SCENES FROM *THE  
MIDNIGHT AFTER* DIRECTED  
BY FRUIT CHAN  
RIGHT AND BELOW FRUIT  
CHAN AT HKDI

PICTURE: GOLDEN SCENE CO. LTD & FRUIT CHAN



limited. But that idea is totally wrong,” says Chan.

Chan believes it’s important for directors to overcome budget restrictions and try every means to convey their ideas. There are dazzling fireworks in *The Longest Summer*, which Chan inventively “borrowed” from the opening ceremony of Tsing Ma Bridge in 1997. He also “borrowed” the scenes of Hong Kong’s handover ceremony in the same year, when vehicles of the People’s Liberation Army rolled into the city.

“Even a high budget movie can’t afford such splendid scenes, but I managed to do it,” says Chan.

To Pang, it’s a different story. He innovatively broke the traditional concept of family movies by adopting several magnificent and eccentric scenes in *Aberdeen*, including a life-sized mechanical blue whale (around 30 feet long), a human-sized chameleon model and a large paper-made architectural model of Hong Kong.

These peculiar scenes capture the absurd in the mundane realities of our everyday life, leaving a strong impression on audiences that make *Aberdeen* stand out from other family movies.

Good stories are always deeply rooted in our daily life. If you take a look at the work of these two directors it’s easy to see that the stories they narrate are part of our world. We are all familiar with them and that is why we relate to them and are touched by them. It is the particular twist of creativity and personal traits they add to the stories that make their films remarkable, and that draw us, enchanted, into their frames. ㊦

# SO COOL SO HOT

Hong Kong's SoHo, the area south of Hollywood Road, between Aberdeen Street and Queen's Road, has become a desirable destination for aspiring creative entrepreneurs and their clientele. With the new PMQ in the mix, and HKDI alumni becoming involved, the city may finally have a design district that's worth the name. DANIEL JEFFREYS takes a look.



PICTURES PMQ, Konzepp and squarestreet

Four years ago I wrote that Hong Kong's SoHo neighbourhood had become "the Montmartre of Asia", and people laughed. They are not laughing now. With the opening of PMQ's Great White Whale on Aberdeen Street, the area is now awash in new design talent, designer boutiques and a mix of locals and expatriates shopping for everything from jewellery to couture and home furnishings. With Vivienne Tam, Agnes B and a Jason Atherton restaurant in the mix, SoHo has become the hot place to shop and a cool place to hang out.

The HK\$400 million renovation of PMQ (the former police married quarters) has been the area's premiere event, but the true nativity of SoHo's design quarter may have been last December. That's when Droog opened a store on Square Street, between Hollywood Road and Tai Ping Shan Street in Sheung Wan, close to Blake Garden, where the world's last bubonic plague outbreak began in 1894.

As a result of its 19th century epidemic, the Tai Ping Shan Street area of SoHo has long been home to coffin makers, funeral homes, paper offering workshops and tailors who specialise in clothes for the dead. Square Street, a quiet backwater behind the Man Mo temple, once had all four merchants of the afterlife, although sadly its paper offering store is now gone.

For Droog to choose what might be truly called a dead-end street for its second store worldwide is miraculous. Co-founded and directed by curator and author Renny Ramakers, Droog is an internationally renowned design company with its base in the heart of Amsterdam. The Dutch HQ includes its own

revolutionary hospitality concept Hôtel Droog, which has only one room.

Ramakers has been designated by *Newsweek* magazine as one of the "150 women who shake the world" and she has been pioneering new directions for design since the early nineties, with an emphasis upon "finding new ways of weaving precepts of luxury" into everyday objects like chairs and kitchen equipment.

The entire building on Square Street is dedicated to Droog, from ground floor to the rooftop terrace. Next to the store, Droog Hong Kong offers a gallery, dining room, outdoor kitchen, rooftop terrace and The one and only bedroom number #2, an extension of Amsterdam's Hôtel Droog concept.

Before Droog's arrival, Square Street and its surrounding environs had already seen signs of SoHo's design revolution. In 2010 Konzepp set up on Tung Street, dedicated to hatching new ideas and providing a space where the artistic and creative community could come together. In the same year, David Ericsson and Alexis Holm from Sweden decided to share an office at 15 Square Street, with David working on his VOID Watches brand and Alexis on gram footwear. They took the name "squarestreet" and their space has evolved into an open environment mixing showroom, office and workshop.

All squarestreet products are designed and developed by the Swedish founders, thus granting the store a natural integrity and a touch of Scandinavian aesthetic. Apart from watches and footwear, the duo offers high quality leather goods, eyewear and jewellery.

"We firmly believe that simplicity, functionality,



OPPOSITE PAGE  
THE OPENING OF  
PMQ'S "1600 PANDAS  
WORLD TOUR IN HONG  
KONG: CREATIVITY  
MEETS CONSERVATION"  
EXHIBITION IN JULY 2014  
THIS PAGE  
A DESIGN AND CAFE  
ALLEY OFF TAI PING  
SHAN STREET

quality and pricing are all vital components,” says Holm. “They are the pivotal point around which squarestreet spins.”

Design spaces like squarestreet have effectively cut out wholesale and retail middlemen, shortening the supply chain. “This generates closeness to the brand and ensures good service,” says Ericsson. “The shop in office environment creates a link for the customers between the end product and its origin, inviting them to take part in the creative process.”

The squarestreet philosophy is one that has been adopted by many other new design stores and art galleries in SoHo, an area that allows for intimate strolling. The district’s many coffee shops with outdoor seating offer the closest thing Hong Kong has to European café society, something which plays a key important role in inspiring creativity in countries like France, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands.

“There is a design atmosphere here,” says Manuel C.S. the Founder and Creative Director of Lines Lab, a design and fashion company based in Macau. “Any ‘design capital’ must have a place where creative entrepreneurs can introduce their work to the public in a relaxed atmosphere, without paying ridiculous rents.”

Manuel was at PMQ on August 24, when the facility held its second Design Market of the 2014 summer. The event was for designers who have no permanent space elsewhere in Hong Kong and have not yet taken space in PMQ. Two dozen designers participated in the open-air bazaar and sales were brisk.

“There is great traffic here,” says Manuel, who had just sold a dress for HK\$5,000. “PMQ provides the city with a destination where people know they will see design work that’s out of the ordinary. For design

companies like ours, who don’t want to be pigeonholed, it’s a valuable point of contact with our market.”

Like others, Manuel observed that the clientele at PMQ seemed young, sophisticated and curious, willing to explore all the spaces in the seven-storey structure and meander around the stores in the nearby streets.

“We have seen a lot of customers who have a very good awareness of design,” says Zoe Li, the designer for Chew the Cud. “We sell unisex clothes that appeal to people who are cool and fashion forward. This is great place for that group. It’s a fashion magnet.”

The Design Market will return for two Sundays in October and two in November. The markets were created to make PMQ more attractive. Foot traffic has already been strong, not least because of the major names that have become part of PMQ, including Joyce, Vivienne Tam and kapok.

Joyce’s project is Joyce|Cares, “...a unique sustainability platform that aims at nurturing upcoming artists and designers... for the betterment of the community.” The latest Joyce|Cares initiative has been a collaboration with HKDI. Members of HKDI’s faculty shortlisted four existing ready-to-wear labels, designed by the institute’s most promising and talented alumni including A Tentative Atelier, MODEMENT, The World Is Your Oyster, and Wan & Wong Fashion.

The works were collectively called “Talent Shop” and each of the designers has been given HK\$10,000 worth of financial sponsorship and an opportunity to retail their collections at Joyce Cares PMQ unit from August to October 2014. Joyce will further extend its support in all areas of retail, including visual merchandising and marketing.

“All major cities that are renowned for their design



OPPOSITE PAGE  
POUND LANE IN  
SOHO  
RIGHT VISITORS AT  
THE KAPOK DESIGN  
STORE IN PMQ

« ANY DESIGN CAPITAL MUST HAVE A PLACE WHERE CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS CAN INTRODUCE THEIR WORK. »

creativity have design laboratories that nurture fresh talent,” says Liz McLafferty, the Head of the Department of Fashion and Image Design. “The PMQ initiative gives students something to aim for, a place where they have a realistic chance of seeing their work on sale. If designers feel they have no chance of an audience it makes it very difficult for them to be sufficiently motivated. PMQ helps solve that problem.”

The Musketeers Education and Culture Charitable Foundation executed the conservation and transformation of the PMQ site, with support from Hong Kong Polytechnic University, HKDI and the Hong Kong Design Centre. When PMQ opened its Chairman, Stanley Chu, said that it is “...a place where creative talents cluster and grow through networking and the cross-fertilisation of ideas and concepts.”

Chu’s description could serve as a good motif for the entire Soho district. The neighbourhood has become a fertile field for new designers, and a magnet for those who cherish and appreciate good design.

It’s inevitable that many of the new boutiques, galleries and workshops that open in SoHo will fail, but many will not, and the area now has the true atmosphere of a design community, drawing established Hong Kong designers like Tina Liu, who opened her Tina’s Choice Pop Up Shop at PMQ on September 1. “SoHo is important because ‘togetherness is strength!’,” she says. To have a

lively, big space at a prime location with convenient transportation designated for creativity and design is rare and precious. It will be a platform for exchange, exposure, experience and growth.”

Although it’s unlikely that Parisians will start calling Montmartre, “Paris’s Sheung Wan”, many French residents of Hong Kong and their visitors will be relieved to find the city now has a district that has all the important aspects of a “design *quartier*” where creativity and innovation feel at home.

SoHo’s future as a design hub has been given a significant boost by the arrival of PMQ, and that’s precisely what it hoped to achieve. The next step is to make the process more interactive.

“PMQ is not an incubation platform but an accelerator – all tenants are ready for retail,” says William To, PMQ’s Creative & Programme Director. “Offering support is important, but we will also ask them to take part in our development. At the end of the day PMQ aims to establish a platform for co-creation to enable community involvement.”

And that’s the principle on which SoHo will stand or fall. If the community is fully involved, finds inspiration and value, then SoHo will take its place along New York’s Soho and Milan’s Brera as a neighbourhood that the whole world wants to visit in search of the newest, hottest and coolest examples of design-based creativity. ☺

PICTURES PMQ, Konzapp and squarestreet

# THE MESSAGE IS transmedi@

You've heard all about multimedia, but what in the name of all that's digital is transmedia – and what are the reasons for the excitement behind it? JEREMY PAYNE went along to a symposium at HKDI with a mission to find out from this discipline's leading lights.

ransmedia is a new buzzword but the principles behind it go back decades. Arguably, Disney was one of the first proponents of transmedia by creating storybooks, toy characters and board games to enhance the appeal and ubiquity of its films. Consider the *Star Wars* franchise; the toy figures, model spaceships and spin-off Boba Fett cartoons (and soon to be a new Hollywood movie) all contribute to a whole that is undoubtedly greater than the sum of its parts, a completely coherent alternative universe and timeline. But today, from movies to marketing, we're seeing more and more content creators adopting transmedia practices: creating stories, characters or themes that arc over various platforms, providing consumers with multiple entry points – and deeper product engagement. After all, transmedia responds to cultural shifts not with a passive reception of content but through interactive and participatory storytelling.

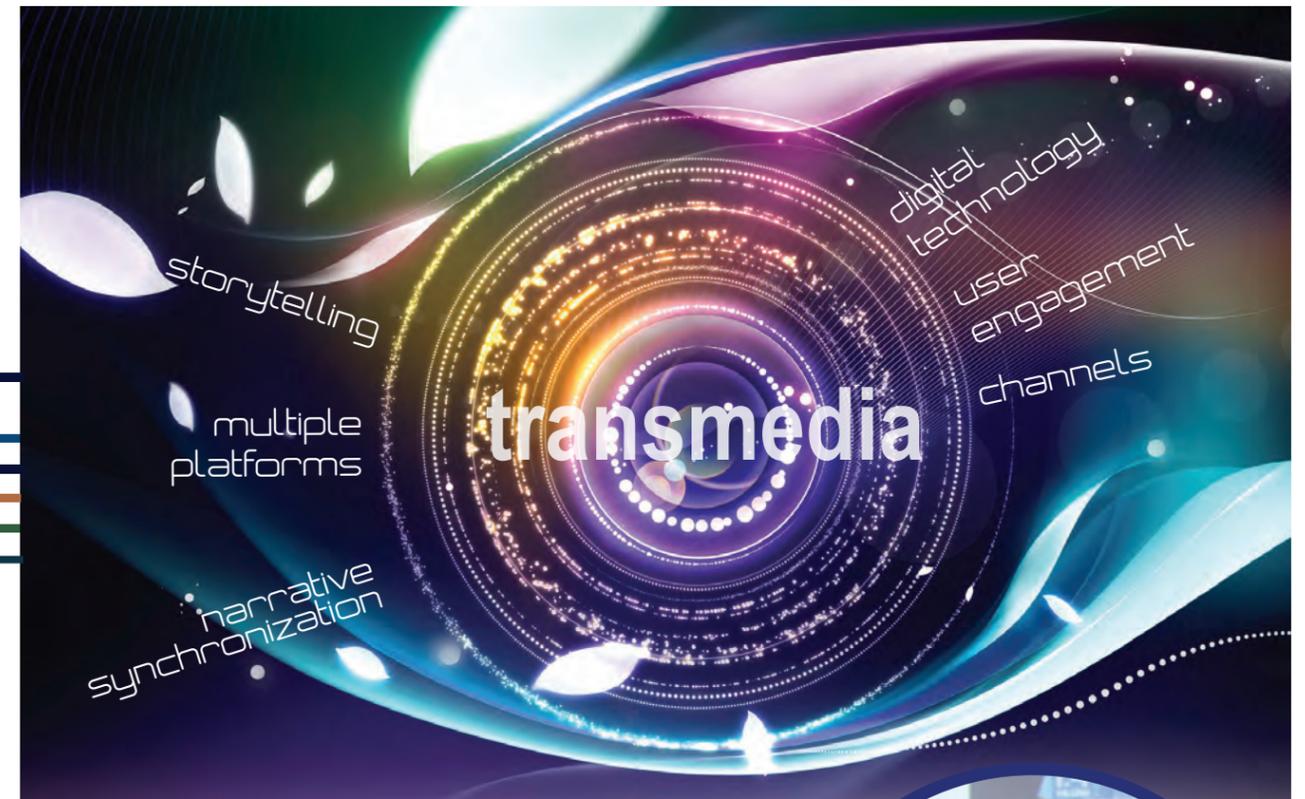
Typically, a transmedia initiative could include film, video, online, numerous social media platforms – and even have staged “real” live action events. This mosaic of separate disciplines can create not just a bigger picture but a richer, more personalised experience for consumers. For marketers, transmedia presents

a new opportunity for engaging audiences at a less superficial level – with potential to enhance brand mythology and create more brand evangelists.

The origin of the word transmedia is generally regarded to date back to 2003, when it was coined by Professor Henry Jenkins of the University of Southern California. He described transmedia stories as those which “unfold across multiple media platforms with each new element making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole”.

But how has this phenomenon crystallised and why is it relevant now? You just need to understand why, in the digital age, conventional advertising and marketing solutions are losing the ability to genuinely stand out. People have access to such an abundance of content that they are filtering or skipping commercial messages. Except, of course, the things they are passionate about.

They are consuming media through multiple platforms: phones, tablets, apps, TV and blogs – and their attention span is becoming increasingly fragmented and short. At the same time, those same audiences who used to just be consumers are now acting as curators through social media, commenting



and recommending what they like, and creators of content – adding to the content they consume and creating non-linear story worlds that grow through their personal participation.

But why is this trend emerging right now and why is it suddenly on the radar for marketers and students? Quite simply, transmedia is still in its infancy – it's an undiscovered country somewhere between digital media and film (yet including both disciplines), and that's what makes it so attractive to creative individuals and marketing professionals alike.

This is why, in January 2014, HKDI sponsored the first transmedia seminar in Hong Kong, and almost the first in the Greater China region. Attended by luminaries from marketing departments of big brand names such as Apple, Lane Crawford, Universal

Music, TVB News, Maxim's and agencies such as JWT, PixaPunch and PacificLink, the event provided a mouth-watering taste of transmedia possibilities.

Vladan Nikolic, Associate Professor of Media Studies and Film at The New School in New York, and Rong Sheng, Transmedia Consultant from Leaven Media in Shanghai gave the January keynote seminars. Nikolic is something of a pioneer in the field, as creator of the 2010 dystopian psychological thriller *Zenith*, which utilised film, video, online and an Alternate Reality game to take forward the labyrinthine plot and a BitTorrent promotion for distribution. Rong Sheng impressed the audience



« THIS FIELD IS STILL NOT ESTABLISHED – SO IT’S ABSOLUTELY THE RIGHT TIME TO GET INVOLVED. »

with her emphasis on making the digital interaction as user-friendly as possible, and creating bespoke solutions for consumers of all ages.

The focus of the January seminar was transmedia in the commercial world. Drawing examples from major brands worldwide who are active in the field such as Coca Cola, Tao Bao and Autoliberté from France, it’s apparent that a major new discipline is emerging, and gathering momentum fast. Similar sentiments were expressed at the March 2014 Transmedia Seminar at HKDI, given by Anita Ondine of Transmedia Next, who operates in the UK, US and across Asia.

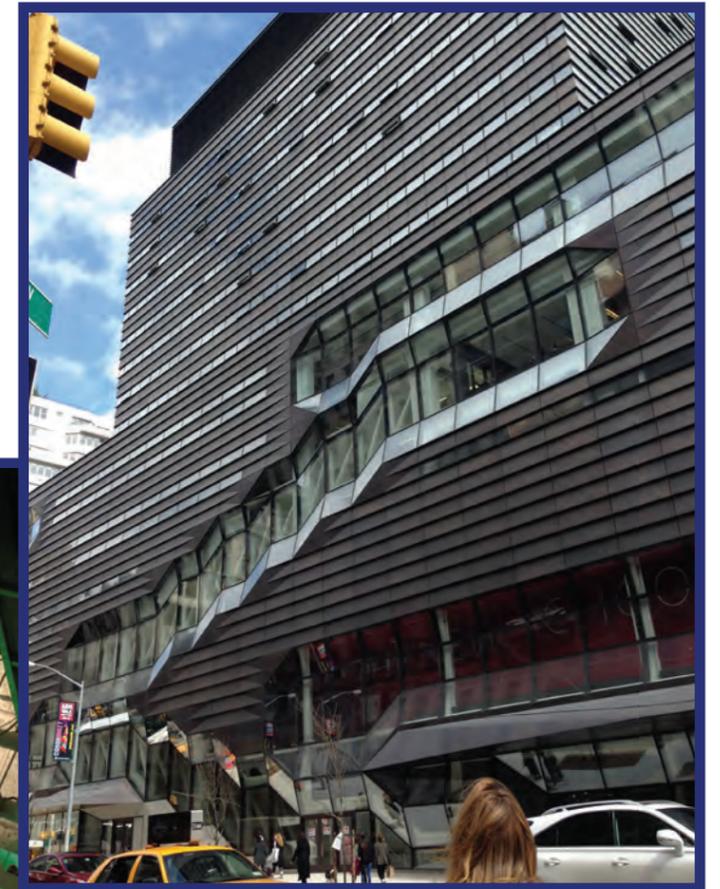
She stressed that although regions where transmedia had developed fastest were Europe and the US, Hong Kong is a particularly fertile prospect. With a highly educated and tech-savvy workforce plus a long tradition of high-quality publishing and storytelling, the ground is ideally-prepared for both creativity and commercial growth. Says Ondine, “This is the next wave of how stories get told, using media that are more relevant to today’s societies. There has been a shift from passive experiences such as film and TV to the new participatory ones. In film, stories have become just ‘content’; however, transmedia brings stories back to the people themselves, and they become active participants.” With the ability to integrate locational awareness, gaming and numerous other digital assets, the ability to create immersive experiences in stories and

brands sets up endless possibilities.

There is little doubt that Ondine sees HKDI’s position in the development of this field as central. “I applaud HKDI’s decision to take a leadership role in this new medium – it’s essential that a major organisation establishes itself and takes responsibility for the educational resources that are required.” This is a commitment that could pay rich dividends to the territory, “Hong Kong has the ability to leapfrog the rest of Asia, who have not been as quick as the West to pick up on the possibilities of this new medium.”

To this end Terence Wong, Head of Department for Communication Design and Digital Media at HKDI, made an exploratory trip to New York to check out the transmedia scene at the epicentre of design innovation. He met with executives from MTV, who showed how transmedia was being used to promote upcoming episodes of blockbuster TV series and also exchanged experiences with the academic staff at Parsons in Greenwich Village. In the autumn, the top-ranked design institute in New York will have

PREVIOUS PAGE VLADAN NIKOLIC IS GIVING KEYNOTE SEMINAR AT TRANSMEDIA SEMINAR IN JANUARY SPONSORED BY HKDI  
OPPOSITE PAGE & THIS PAGE BELOW PRATT INSTITUTE  
THIS PAGE RIGHT THE NEW SCHOOL IN NEW YORK CITY



some of its brilliant minds pay a return visit to Hong Kong and deepen their understanding of HKDI’s potential of being a leader in the field’s development in Asia. Other exciting initiatives have also been set up, such as a recent address to the Entertainment Expo and an ongoing partnership with Nicholas Tse’s Post Production Office, one of Hong Kong’s leading post-production houses. By the end of December, Jeff Gomez, CEO of Starlight Runner Entertainment, will come to HKDI and offer insights on how to employ the techniques of transmedia to promote businesses in a summit organised by the Hong Kong Printers Association.

What can students of the new discipline expect? The answer, from the history of the industry so far, is a new world in which the full power of new technologies is harnessed for narrative effect. Transmedia has the ability to appeal directly to the new interactive environment in which designs and ideas are communicated being, in essence, branded

storytelling. A new breed of agencies have been created which are solely dedicated to transmedia; one of the best-known is Starlight Runner Entertainment in New York, which “creates and expands fictional universes in the form of elaborate intellectual property bibles and story and style guides.” These guides are almost inconceivably complex, covering all major characters, story arcs, world details, weapons, vehicles, technology, magic and even insignia. This bedrock of content provides the raw material to allow multiple franchise extensions into traditional, interactive and advanced media.

The value of this is illustrated by the fact that transmedia adopters include some of the most talked-about movie franchises: *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *TRON*, *Halo* and *Avatar*. However, while transmedia is a natural fit with the film industry, complementing its innate narrative qualities, it’s in the broader commercial sphere that we’re now seeing some of the most exciting new initiatives.

One of the best-received transmedia campaigns

《THOSE WHO MAKE THEIR NAMES IN TRANSMEDIA IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS WILL BECOME HUGEY INFLUENTIAL IN DIGITAL MARKETING.》

THIS PAGE: MTV OFFICE IN NEW YORK; MADE IN NEW YORK MEDIA CENTER BY IFP; OPPOSITE PAGE: TOP: MISS RONG SHENG, TRANSMEDIA CONSULTANT FROM LEAVEN MEDIA IN SHANGHAI

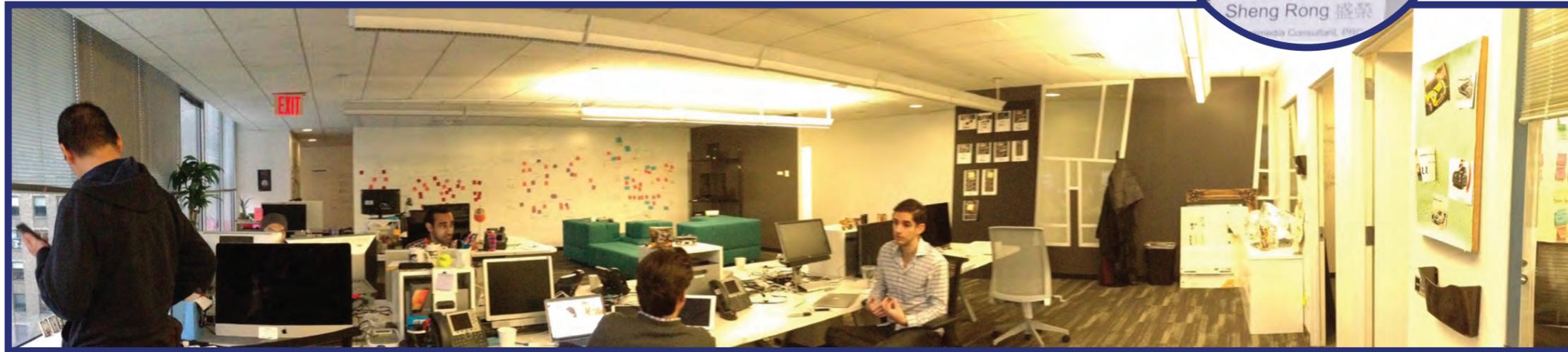


was devised for the Audi A3 launch in the US, “THE ART OF THE HEIST”. It embraced the target audience’s need for control over their environment and invited them into an immersive and intriguing alternative reality. The story blurred fact and fiction by creating a mysterious narrative that involved potential buyers in the recovery of an A3 stolen from Audi’s US headquarters. At the centre of the story were six new A3s containing coded plans for the largest art heist in history; however, one car also contained the key to decrypting the information hidden in the others, and the mystery behind the heist unfolded in real-time nationwide over three months. The final chapter was staged before a live audience at a luxury hotel in LA, where the ultimate villain was finally revealed.

Another genre-busting transmedia campaign was “Why so serious?” devised to promote Christopher Nolan’s then forthcoming *Dark Knight* Batman film. The multi-channel assault started with direct mail and messages on social media and mobile phones. These led users to websites that created an immersive world, a canvas on which Gotham City promoted itself brightly with friendly restaurants, helpful public transport timetables and clean-living politicians.

However, in the run-up to the film launch, this perfectly ordered world was disrupted by the arrival of Batman’s nemesis, The Joker. All the websites for these imaginary companies and individuals were defaced with The Joker’s bloodstained taunts against Gotham’s hapless citizens, suggesting an insurgence of evil in the troubled metropolis was imminent. This, of course, was true – but only in the context of the new Batman film.

Followers of the campaign took to the streets to declare their support for Gotham



City’s “Assistant District Attorney”, the fictional Harvey Dent, while other groups took to dressing up as The Joker. The initiative occupied 10 million participants across 75 countries, hundreds of web pages, interactive games, real world events video and numerous unique collectibles. And it contributed to the *Dark Knight* scoring the biggest opening day of all time, with opening night, 3am and 6am showings all sold out. The film went on to become the biggest grossing film of the year.

Nokia’s 2010 “Conspiracy for Good” transmedia campaign also broke down walls between separate media and conventional product promotion. This “alternate reality drama” was spearheaded by *Heroes* creator Tim Kring and sponsored by Nokia. Players used free mobile games from Nokia’s Ovi Store to join a mission “Conspiracy for Good”, a fictional organisation that actually contributed real benefits to the cause of literacy in rural Africa. The promotion involved mobile games, links to websites that continued the drama, and climaxed after four months with events featuring actors on the streets of London playing characters from the story. Participants needed the AR (augmented reality) capability installed in the new phones to allow them to play. More than half a

million games and apps were downloaded, and over 4000 dedicated players joined the global movement!

Thus far, much transmedia content has targeted children through cartoons or geeks through science fiction, horror, and fantasy franchises. This shouldn’t be surprising as it has a natural resonance with early adapters, digital-savvy 18-27 year old males with disposable time and income. But, there are plenty of signs that transmedia experiences may appeal more broadly. For example, some believe transmedia strategies may be key to the survival of soap operas. It will take time, but as HKDI’s planned foray into the field suggests, there will be rich opportunities to influence the shape of the industry.

As Vladan Nikolic remarked in January, “This field is still not established – so it’s absolutely the right time to get involved. At this moment, anyone can become one of the leaders of the future.” There’s little doubt that the individuals who make their names in transmedia in the next few years will become hugely influential in this revolutionary incarnation of storytelling and digital marketing. And for fans of great shows and brands, there will be the opportunity to interact with, drill deeper into and even contribute to the stories and products they love.



At the third Successful Branding Journey seminar held at HKDI on June 6th, I.T and POSH, two of Hong Kong's strongest design-based brand builders explained the secret of their success to SUMMER CAO.



chosen to integrate. The company puts emphasis on the whole by establishing I.T as a multi-label boutique brand; its DNA is created from its vibrant variety of labels.

"We want to send out messages and visual images of what I.T is really about," says Cheng. "We don't have active advertising campaigns for I.T, but we have been investing a lot in our biannual magazine, I.T Post."

In terms of the mature labels in the I.T circle, I.T Group's overall strategy is to complement the brand images that their headquarters have already established and interpret their existing brand DNA in a creative fashion to customers who are not yet familiar with them.

"We have a very tailor-made approach for each brand and for each season," Cheng reveals. "To give you an example, for Maison Martin Margiela, a brand that never does advertising, we held photo exhibitions for their AIDS tee, as well as creating local adaptations of the brand's products such as the Margiela mahjong set."

In contrast, I.T Group does invest in above-the-line advertising for their in-house label

divisions. For example, for b+ab I.T Group has been working with a cohort of local celebrities, and even asked Hong Kong starlet Angelababy to be their image girl and co-designer of some collections.

"When it comes to private labels, we go for volume," says Cheng. "We employ a mass-market approach, which means we need freestanding stores to express the brand's DNA. It's very difficult to present it with just two racks of clothes. Space, collections, visuals and music – we have to make everything count."

However, the mass-market approach does not imply that these private labels are positioned to compete with fast fashion brands. These brands are enjoying a rapid expansion in Hong Kong and have put pressure on various local brands and boutique shops.

"Every market has room for local brands and we don't see Hong Kong as an exception," remarks Cheung. "Consumers will still need quality garments, individual designs and better shop services."

It is this confidence, along with meticulous planning and efficient organisation in terms of branding that has made I.T Group a true fashion giant. Its offerings range from high-end luxury products to mass-market items, enabling it to attract fashion lovers of all levels and tastes. Careful planning and a demarcation of brand positions and market forces have become a reliable system for I.T



**B**ack in 1988, I.T's forerunner, Green Peace, was a small 200 square-foot shop, serving a niche market by selling brands that were not readily available elsewhere in Hong Kong. Today, I.T is a publicly-listed fashion powerhouse that features the newest collections of the world's top brands, as well as designing its own eclectic range of fashion items via its in-house labels.

According to 2013 figures, the Hong Kong-based fashion conglomerate extends its tentacles across Mainland China, Taiwan, Macau, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, France, England and Canada. It manages 760 stores, sells over 300 brands, and employs 6,300 people.

To facilitate the management of each brand, I.T categorises its extended family into two groups: Multi-label boutiques such as I.T, i.t, double-park, and etc! form one group while in-house label divisions such as

tout à coup, :CHOCOOLATE, b+ab and izzue create another. "It is like a complicated matrix," confides Deborah Cheng, Head of I.T Group's Marketing & Communications and Vice President of International Business for I.T Limited.

Furthermore, based on their price ranges and prestige, brands managed by the multi-label boutique group are further categorised into one of its four divisions. "If we have brands that are doing fashion weeks in Paris," says Cheng, "these are the brands that will sit together and they will all belong to one of the I.T boutiques." Therefore, each multi-label boutique division is able to form its own circle, with each circle needing different kinds and levels of support.

Each label sold at I.T boutiques has its own unique identity. To tackle the diversity of styles, prices, and pre-existing brand identities, I.T Group has



PHOTOS: I.T GROUP & POSH

OPPOSITE PAGE  
I.T'S MINI CREAM SUIT  
THIS PAGE FROM  
TOP: I.T'S WHITE  
CHOCOLATE;  
I.T'S DEBORAH  
CHENG



Group to achieve constant growth.

Just as certain styles suit certain people, a certain branding strategy does not suit every company. Unlike I.T Group, POSH, the renowned Hong Kong office furniture designer and manufacturer, has achieved success by utilising a charismatic and visionary leader who is a firm believer in being flexible and highly responsive to the market.

Holding a graduate degree in Architecture from Cambridge University, Eric Yim took over his father's furniture workshop and established POSH in 1992, after practicing as an architect for four years. Under his leadership, the company has developed a series of office furniture systems, and successfully mastered the contract office furniture market.

"We have retail stores but our primary sector of business is from contract," Yim says. "We propose office furniture solutions that will fit a certain company. We work with designers and architects to do space planning and provide comfortable workplace designs for customers."

Yim has also managed to partner with various

international companies such as Herman Miller, Samas, Trendway Corporation and FANTONI, and led POSH into various collaborations including dealership, manufacturing under license and co-design arrangements. With 1,200 employees, over 60 million US dollars in annual sales, and more than 30 franchise dealers, POSH was acquired by Herman Miller in 2012 after a 4-year alliance relationship.

"Obviously, they value what we could contribute during the alliance period," says Yim. "I believe it's our product range, which is well suited to Asia's market, and our established franchise network in China."

Yim believes that having been in the global market for 22 years, and in China for 16, POSH knows the needs of its customers better than some European or American companies. One of the examples he provides is that customers in Asia don't necessarily need a typical 12-year-warranty that Western markets require because the Asian market is so fast moving.

"It's what we call 'mis-match'," Yim says. "If



PHOTOS: I.T GROUP & POSH



customers use a product for only five years, you don't need to develop products that can pass a durability test which is the equivalent of 12 years use. I'm not saying that products have to be of second-class quality, but you don't need to over-engineer a product."

In fact, according to Yim, at the heart of POSH's strong brand identity is quality. This is achieved not only by thorough market research but also by a quick response to research findings.

"We are much more flexible and agile compared to multi-national listed companies," Yim says. "Their design procedures could be so rigid that it takes three to five years to do research and get approval. By the time they launch the product, the market needs might have already changed."

Brand positioning and character are other key elements that constitute good branding strategies. In order to succeed, Yim's recommendation is to "be what you are and do what you love."

"You can try to position yourself, but in the end branding is the perception of your customer," Yim says. "If you try to fabricate your company to be an environmentally friendly company, it will be difficult if it's not in your genes. So it's more about how you want to do things naturally. That leads to the character of your brand."

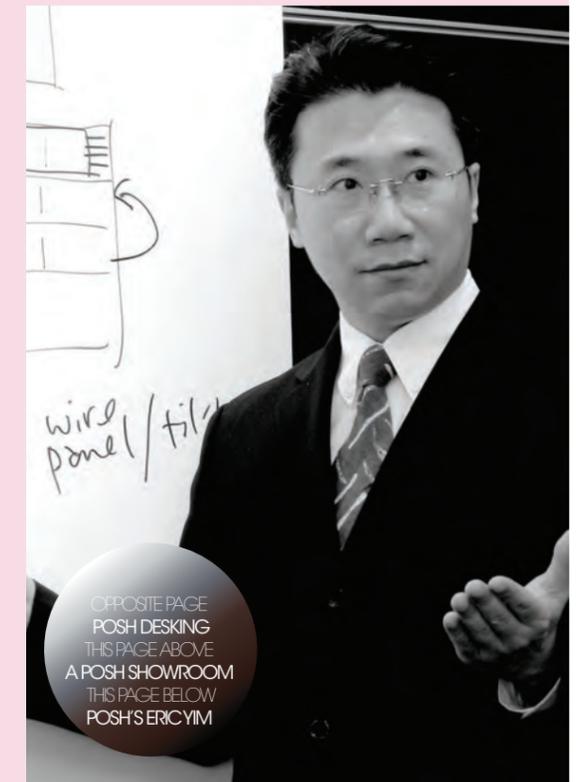
POSH's tagline is "better design, better environment", and both goals are what Yim has set out to accomplish, and they are ingrained in the company's green credentials, design principles and brand identity.

"A brand is basically what it does," Yim says. "To care about the environment is not just about using environmentally friendly material, but also keeping in mind the end of product life, and how it will be disposed. If you don't design for a product to be disposed of easily, even if it is made of environmentally friendly material, no one will actually bother to dismantle it, and it will only go to the landfills."

Yim has the luxury of being able to lead the company precisely in the direction of his creative

vision, generating a tangible brand identity: "I've been running this company not as a businessman, but as an architect," Yim says. "So not everything is from a commercial point of view, and sometimes financial managers might not like it. It is not a real business mind that's running the company. This actually makes us different from the other companies. This is probably how we have made POSH so successful."

A brand's efficacy may be determined by the killer commercial application of a corporate giant, or the creative vision of a family-owned company, but we see from the success of these two design businesses that, despite the rapid evolution of their markets, flexibility and stability are both prerequisites for success. Ultimately, the key to good branding is to create true value based on passion and commitment. **ED**



OPPOSITE PAGE  
POSH DESKING  
THIS PAGE ABOVE  
A POSH SHOWROOM  
THIS PAGE BELOW  
POSH'S ERIC YIM

# CAPABILITY TOWN



*Patricia Moore is one of the world's most accomplished industrial designers. As SUMMER CAO reports, the American polymath uses socially conscious creativity to improve the lives of those who might otherwise be neglected.*

**P**atricia Moore instantly captured the audience's attention when she walked onto the stage at HKDI this spring to address HKDI students and staff on the topic of how good health and sensitive design goes hand in hand.

Now in her 60s, Moore looks young and fashionable and has a charm that many Hollywood stars would envy. She is blessed with a warm and soothing smile, the kind that is often worn by citizens of the world who have seen too much in their lives to be perturbed by daily trivialities.

But it is her melodious voice that

seems able to grip people from the moment she starts to speak. They become transfixed, like children listening to a favourite bedtime fable, although the story Moore tells in her lecture is more troubling, focusing on how we design our cities for a narrow range of citizens without thinking of how our towns can be built to enhance capability for all.

These qualities of care and engagement have served Moore well since her 20s, when she decided to devote herself to the needs of the elders. As a young designer, Moore was a prodigy who worked with Raymond Lowey, the father of American industrial design. Moore was constantly told to design for

people under the age of 40, and that their typical consumer was a Caucasian man who has one wife and 2.3 children. Nonplused by the company's tenets, she asked Lowey if she could be given time each week to study how to design for older people.

"I wanted to design for people who saw with their fingertips to read Braille, who heard with their eyes because they read lips, who didn't put one foot in front of the other to walk but rather used wheeled conveyances," Moore said during her session for the HKDI DESIS Lab for Social Design Research. "I wanted to understand how life was for all the consumers

who are ignored."

Carrying this "eccentric" goal to her heart, Moore decided to become an elder. From 1979 to 1982, she dressed up as an elderly woman wearing her grandmother's clothes, uncomfortable shoes to increase difficulty in walking, plugs for her ears to distort her hearing, and thick glasses that significantly distorted her vision.

Disguised in prosthetics and movie makeup, Moore travelled to 116 cities in the U.S. and Canada, where she lived as an 80-year-old. "My arms and legs were bound with bandages," she recalled. "I couldn't walk fast or climb stairs easily. When I boarded buses, men would often just pick me up and push me inside because they were tired of waiting for me to do it by myself."

Moore created 9 different perso-



OPPOSITE: MOORE AT HKDI CAMPUS  
CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: MOORE GIVING A LECTURE TO HKDI STUDENTS; PARTICIPANTS AT THE "WHAT THE HEALTH" CITIZEN WORKSHOP

nas with different levels of income and health so she could explore how society treats those who are considered "too old, too weak, too frail, too unimportant or too much trouble." She was dismayed at some of the treatment she received.

"It still haunts me how cruel and mean people can be," Moore said. "When I was crossing the streets and wasn't going fast enough, taxi drivers would say 'hurry up you old bag!'" Beside verbal abuse, she was mugged and beaten on two occasions, which left her with permanent injuries and made her unable to have children.

Moore's determination to design for vulnerable members of society was inspired by the heart-wrenching story of her grandma. She believes her grandma, who suffered arthritis, died with a broken heart because there were no means to

compensate for her incapacity and she felt worthless.

"I remember the day that my grandmother was cooking for the family and couldn't open the refrigerator door," she recounted. "I saw her go to that refrigerator and reach for the door and then I heard a sound. It was a crying pain but she was quiet about it because she didn't want to frighten me. Then I saw her take her hand and put it under her arm and then I saw the door to her bedroom close."

Her grandma never finished cooking the meal, and one year later she was dead. "She no longer felt she was contributing to the family and this was enough to make her simply fade away," Moore said.

The childhood memory of her grandmother's demise remains vivid and was something she occasionally thought about when she entered

PICTURES: PATRICIA MOORE and HKDI

BELOW LEFT MOORE WITH A STUDENT AT THE WHAT-THE-HEALTH WORKSHOP  
 RIGHT: MOORE AS AN 85-YEAR-OLD ELDER  
 OPPOSITE PAGE ABOVE: THE LAUNCH OF THE DESIGNAGE HK CLUB AT SENIOR EXPO 2014  
 OPPOSITE PAGE BELOW: SCENES FROM THE SENIOR EXPO 2014



the product design industry. Then one day it struck her that she had become the kind of designer who made products like the refrigerator that had frustrated her grandmother. She embarked upon a graduate degree in psychology and social gerontology before returning to design with a fresh and more empathetic perspective.

“All of us want the same valuable things in life,” she said. “We want pride in ourselves because when you have pride in what you can be, you can share with others. This then gives us the design agenda of our time inclusivity.”

After this revelation, Moore has sought to create designs that include all people as equals. “No matter what their circumstances, they should feel welcome in their daily lives, feel a part of a whole, and know their place in their community. They shouldn’t feel lost in the crowd, but rather, they should recognise they are acknowledged, loved, understood and cared about.”

Moore’s humane approach toward

design has made a difference to the lives of many, and won her wide acclaim. She has been recognised by ID Magazine as one of the “40 Most Socially Conscious Designers” in the world. She was also selected as one of the “100 Most Important Women in America” and one of “50 Americans Defining the New Millennium.”

Moore has demonstrated the inclusiveness of her beliefs in many arenas. When she was asked to visit the USSR during the Cold War, she participated in a two-year project that was part of the “détente and rapprochement” period. She designed consumer products for a country that had few, having directed so much of its creativity and treasure to producing a nuclear arsenal that could match that of the USA.

“I learned that by design we were making the Soviet people happier by improving the quality of their life,” she said. “Imagine how wonderful it is you were making peace by design. Design is so powerful. Maybe we need to use design

initiatives in our current diplomacy with Putin.”

With this level of belief and enthusiasm for design, and care for every potential end-user, Moore visited HKDI in March as the mentor of HKDI DESIS Lab for an initiative called “What the Health”, to remind students of their responsibilities as future designers and encouraging them to use design to make a difference. Inspired by Moore’s vision of ageing and design, in July HKDI DESIS Lab launched the DesignAge HK Club.

“Over 200 seniors have joined this program after experimenting various design activities such as ‘Design your Bag’, ‘Design your Meal’ and ‘Design your Death Diamond’,” says Dr Yanki Lee, Director of the lab. “They will work closely with our students in the coming year in a series of design studies.”

It is hoped that by working closely with the elders, students will undergo a series of transformations that are critical to shaping the future practice of business and design.

As Moore has rightly pointed out, understanding is of paramount importance. “If people were raised without having elders in their family and without understanding the needs of the elders, they are unlikely to care for them,” Moore said.

“Nobody should be called disabled or handicapped. You don’t design for a disability but for someone’s capacity. This is a change in thinking that allows us to see people, not patients. You must focus on giving them compensatory tools by means of which they can do all things they want to do. It’s a matter of design that will make people more able.” Further debate on this subject will be part of the 1st Open Design Forum at HKDI in November 2014, where Moore will be one of the keynote speakers. ①



PICTURES PATRICIA MOORE and HKDI

# DISTANCE



# LEARNING

*The Travelling Fashionistas arrived in Hong Kong this summer to present their novel approach to design education, based on a mixture of international awareness and a hands-on approach to tools and materials. PUI WONG reports.*

In the 21st century, there has been a ceaseless advance of technology and electronics infiltrate every part of our lives. It sometimes seems as if technology is pushing humanity to the margins of the creative process as Computer Assisted Design (CAD) and 3D printers fed by algorithms take over production.

When everyone is racing to abandon the old, fashion educators Natalie and Brodie Gibson have distinguished themselves by calling for a retrograde approach to making fashion and educating fashion designers. Ironically, their insistence on sticking to classic principles is beginning to be seen as a relatively progressive wave in an increasingly mechanised fashion industry.

Natalie and Brodie are no strangers to the intricacies of fashion manufacturing. An eminent textile designer and instructor at the world-leading design institute

Central Saint Martins, Natalie has instructed and mentored many who became prominent fashion icons, including John Galiano and Sarah Burton. As for Brodie, Natalie's son, his interest in fashion developed early, under the influence of his mother who has an immense talent and passion for her work. In 2012, Brodie started the group "The Travelling Fashionistas" with the aim of introducing a new concept to fashion education.

The pursuit of higher qualifications has always been costly, and even more so for aspiring fashion students, with most of the prestigious fashion schools located outside of Asia. This is why The Travelling Fashionistas hopes to offer an alternative solution to students who wish to learn first-hand from superb teachers with an international base and reputation.

The Travelling Fashionistas consists of three established fashion professionals: Natalie Gibson, Elisa Palomino and Carol Morgan, who tour together to lecture fashion students all over the globe. The Travelling Fashionistas came to the Hong Kong Design Institute on June 10 and 11, with the mission of expanding the minds of local students by introducing them to unfamiliar ideas about design and encouraging them to experiment more boldly.

"The goal of The Travelling Fashionistas is to make learning from proven inspirational lecturers more accessible. We know there are many talented people out there who are constrained by the monetary side of things, and it would be wonderful to offer them an opportunity to join us and have an equal chance to benefit and be successful," Brodie says.

A crash course that The Travelling Fashionistas held recently offers us a glimpse of the creative and flexible teaching method it promotes. For a week, they rented a house on the south coast of England and stayed with ten students, who spent all day learning and receiving critiques from their instructors, as well as eating with them and engaging in casual conversation. This immersive approach was designed to transform the young designers' approach to their work. Several of those who attended the course were later accepted to Central Saint Martins at the University of the Arts, London.

There is something special about the way the Gibsons and their colleagues teach that distinguishes them from other forms of fashion education. Instead of emphasising the use of the latest technology, Natalie and Brodie prefer students to learn the old-fashioned way. "The students had no computers but used arts materials like sketches and garments to create their ideas," says Brodie. "The key element to fashion design is initially learning and mastering the basic art of drawing, painting and drafting your ideas. You don't need technology to be able to make a sample or show your thoughts.

"Without technology, you can still do everything if you know the basics. If one day there was an electrical blackout,



we could still teach you all the essential skills for design."

The Gibsons say that as the residential course proceeded, the rooms in the house became buried in papers, designs and crayons as testimony to the power of their take on creativity, the scattered materials becoming a physical representation of the creative process.

Stressing the importance of a traditional fashion education, Natalie and Brodie expect their students to have a comprehensive understanding of the various production phases, and the skills required to make a piece completely by hand. "If you are a fashion design student you should have experience of each step of the design and manufacturing process, and many don't. You should know how to, even if you don't end up doing it."

The Gibsons' proclivity is perfectly understandable. In this digital age when most designs are done on computers and garments are mass-

LEFT NATALIE GIBSON WITH (FAR LEFT) ELISA PALOMINO OF THE TRAVELLING FASHIONISTAS AND STUDENTS ABOVE A DRESS DESIGNED BY NATALIE GIBSON

produced, designers rarely participate in the production of their creations, which often come to life in factories thousands of miles away. However, the success of a design often requires a designer's thorough knowledge of materials and techniques used in production, for his familiarity with them helps him envision the entire project and greatly impacts his choices, thereby contributing to the overall quality of the design. Sometimes the slightest details that weigh in a designer's consideration can make or break a design. In these

circumstances a designer's first-hand connection to the production process can have a powerful impact upon the success or failure of the design.

As staunch believers in tradition, the Gibsons have an inclination towards non-digital research. Whether an answer comes from books or people, they emphasise the need for one to find it personally

« BEAUTIFUL THINGS ARE OFTEN VERY SIMPLE THINGS. WE HOPE TO SHOW PEOPLE THAT THEY CAN CREATE A WONDERFUL IDEA FROM VERY LITTLE. »



and manually instead of relying on the Internet. "If you use the Internet, it'll often come up with the same pictures everywhere. Just do your own research in the right way."

When it comes to making fashion, Natalie likes to derive inspiration from the world around her instead of a computer screen. Her inspirations come from daily life, including her garden, cats, parrots and the miscellaneous old things in the house that she has lived in since the 1960s. In short, anything but electronics can be a source of delight for her.

Natalie frequently travels for inspiration and to collaborate with other artists. She visits India every year to teach Dabu (mud resist printing), a historical art that is slowly disappearing and involves various methods for preventing dyes from reaching all parts of a piece of cloth. "There are many ancient skills around the world that are dwindling and, once gone, will be very difficult to revive." For this reason, Brodie says that The Travelling Fashionistas is interested in doing projects that preserve the skills of local cultures, like Dabu in Jaipur, India.

"It is a strange juxtaposition that people generally love and admire handcrafted things but are rarely willing to pay for them, though they are willing to pay big money for a 'brand'," says Brodie. "We want to show people that with brands 'ruling the world' in all aspects of life, creative individuals can and do make their mark by bringing a touch of personality, fun, inspiration and style that the world really needs. You don't need to be in London or any specific city to learn these things,

LEFT EXAMPLES OF HAND-CRAFTED WORK BY NATALIE GIBSON; NATALIE AT HOME WITH HER CHILDREN ABOVE (CLOCKWISE) GIBSON AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE TO RECEIVE THE MBE FROM QUEEN ELIZABETH II; A FABRIC THAT GIBSON DESIGNED FOR TWIGGY, ICONIC BRITISH FASHION MODEL OF THE 1960S

but you do need the right group of people to learn from. That is what we bring to wherever we go."

Though still rather new, The Traveling Fashionistas has already laid out a bigger scheme regarding its future development. "Our ideal would be to run longer courses within each country that we go to, giving us more time to interact with each local project. This is a very different scenario with many challenges to set up, but one we would love to try," says Brodie.

"Beautiful things are often very simple things, we hope to show people that they can create a wonderful idea from very little and have fun doing it." 

# ANGEL'S SHARE

*The Muses Foundation for Culture and Education is a low-profile organisation founded by May Koon. It has a simple ambition, to provide funding for creative people that will help them realise their potential. DANIEL JEFFREYS reports.*

The strongest growth comes from the most profound experiences, and so for two HKDI students, Cheng Wing Chun and Wong Tsz Wai, 2014 is likely to be one of the most important years of their lives.

Cheng, a higher diploma student in Architectural Design, and Wong, a year 2 student in Product Design, spent the first part of the year in Copenhagen, as exchange students at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, courtesy of funding from the Muses Foundation for Culture and Education, founded by May Koon.

The Foundation first worked with HKDI in 2013. The collaboration with the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts was developed by HKDI Principal Leslie Lu with the blessings of Vocational Training



PICTURES VANESSA KO & HKDI

Council's Executive Director, Carrie Yau.

The Royal Academy was founded in 1754 and was originally dedicated to educating artists and craftsman. The admission standards are stringent and the cost of studying in Denmark is high. And yet the potential benefits of the Academy's programmes are enormous, helping students to expand their understanding and launch successful careers. Past students of the Academy include Henning Larsen, who designed the Copenhagen Opera House and Verner Panton, a product designer known for his iconic Panton Chair.

In the arts, theatrical productions are often made possible by "angels" who provide funding for plays, which are usually written after the playwright has been visited by a literal or metaphorical muse, who implants the seed of a new drama. These two ideas come together in the Muses Foundation for Culture and Education, which provides funding for artists, designers and performing artists to reach their dreams. For Cheng and Wong the news that they had been awarded funding by the Foundation was like a scene from a movie.

"When I got the phone call I was punching the air like I had scored a goal and silently saying 'yes!, yes!'," says Cheng. Wong heard the news on her birthday and she had a noisier celebration. "I was shouting and running around. I am so glad that I got a full scholarship."

The Muses Foundation was founded four years ago by May Koon and is supported by a Board of Councillors, which includes her sister Professor Mayching Kao. For

two decades Koon had a successful career in the financial markets, rising to be Co-Head of Institutional Equity Sales at Morgan Stanley and Head of Asian Equities at Credit Suisse. She is now President Emeritus of Global Sage, a privately held executive-search firm, where she acts as Senior Adviser of the Pacific Region.

Professor Kao is the former Professor of Fine Arts and Director of the Art Museum at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her research focuses on Chinese painting from the Ming dynasty to the present day. She is currently the Museum Expert Advisor of the Hong Kong Leisure and Cultural Services Department, she chairs the management committee of the Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre and is an advisor of the Hong Kong Society of Education through Art.

Kao and Koon, whose younger sister Grace Kao is the former Head of the HKDI's Design Section and its Professional Engagement and Education Centre, remember their family hosting artists and performers at "elegant gatherings", where a passion for Chinese culture was the main reason to draw them together. The aesthetic experiences they had in their childhood has had a profound influence on their later lives.

"I am from the financial world," says Koon. "I would get up at six to go to work, and work late, all of our energy was consumed by the markets. Eventually you feel there must be something more than selling. I credit that to my parents. My mother and father put together a huge art collection, but they didn't do this for monetary

THIS PAGE MAY KOON, THE FOUNDER OF THE MUSES FOUNDATION FOR CULTURE AND EDUCATION (RIGHT) AND HER SISTER PROFESSOR MAYCHING KAO (LEFT), A MEMBER OF THE FOUNDATION'S BOARD OF COUNCILLORS OPPOSITE PAGE A WORK BIKE BUILT BY CHENG WING CHUN, WHO WON A MUSES FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP TO STUDY IN DENMARK





reward, they did this for their artist friends, to promote artists whom they admired for their enormous talent. As children we moved in circles with artists and musicians, movie stars and media people. We had this atmosphere around us. My sister spent her career in the arts. With the Muses foundation I have made a return to that world.”

The Foundation devotes its energies to supporting creative people who are not obvious candidates for support from conventional funding. An excellent example is their support of soprano Yuki Ip, a graduate of the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts. Ip was introduced to the Muses Foundation by a member of its Board of Councillors, Dr Betty Wei. Ip was already performing; singing operas in English, French and Italian, but German seemed to have eluded her.

The angelic muses stepped in. They provided funding for Ip to spend a year in Germany, gaining proficiency in the language, having voice lessons and attending auditions. When Ip returned and performed the German language opera *The Creation* by Haydn in Hong Kong, she received critical acclaim. The notoriously difficult oratorio features, appropriately, three angels and Ip played Gabriel, the soprano role.

“Yuki Ip typifies our initiatives to help artists who aspire to advance to the next stage of their development,” says Koon. “We provide them with a financial award to go for an opportunity that hopefully will open new doors for them.”

The Muses Foundation devotes resources to individual scholarships and programmes that enable educators to give a more rounded education to their students and emerging artists. It has sponsored exhibitions of students from the Fine Arts Department, The Chinese University of Hong Kong and from the Academy of Visual Arts, the Baptist University of Hong Kong.

The Foundation’s relationship with HKDI was further developed through the work of another Councillor, Sandra Lee Suk-ye. Through the scholarships for Cheng and Wong, the Foundation was able to provide access to a world class programme and the chance to study overseas, which is invaluable for developing creative talents. Both students say they returned with a deeper understanding of design.

“Meeting and seeing people working on a different

《THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I DISCOVERED IS TO TREASURE EVERY CHANCE TO LEARN.》

scale of works with very diverse dimensions was very inspiring and encouraging for me,” says Cheng, who was enrolled in the Academy’s design school. “For every project we did I had to prepare a report and I realized how important writing is for the design process. It’s a new discipline for me and helps to organise my mind.”

During his time at the Academy, Cheng collaborated on designing an exhibition and a bike and he was able to work with a design collective in the city centre, where he perfected his bike project and learned the benefits of an “open source” approach that allows other users to modify the bike to suit their own needs.

“The bike was a start from scratch project,” he says. “I learned how to build a cargo bike from anodised aluminium tube using the xyz-system. The properties and details really determine how it looks and how it works. It was a great experience of how materials and construction influence the design process.”

During her time in Copenhagen, Wong was able to find an internship with the jewellery designer Karen Fly. She learned about the Danish sense of humour, experimented with 3D printing and attended lectures that were outside her main field of study.

“The most important thing I discovered is to treasure every chance to learn,” she says. “The Academy has a lot of lectures that everyone can join. I attended one about lighting and architecture that I found very inspirational. Expanding the scope of your learning is fun.”

Both Wong and Cheng returned from their time in Copenhagen with enhanced skills and a more profound devotion to their careers. In the future both students plan to launch their own businesses. Their successes in Denmark are precisely the kind of result that the Muses Foundation is looking for.

“We want to attract the smartest and most eligible candidates, those who have the most to offer and will make the best use of our awards,” says Kao. “We then want them to share their experiences.”

The Foundation makes sharing experiences with other students a condition of the award. This is designed to inspire other students to apply and encourage more people to follow the foundation’s example and support emerging talent in Hong Kong, where the creative industry is becoming increasingly important.

In recent years Chinese design has seen a revival and the Muses Foundation sees it has a role to play in rejuvenating China’s reputation as a place where craftsmanship and creativity are beyond compare.

“There was a rush to learn about western things when China reopened its doors in 1978 but that passion is slowing down,” says Kao. “The creativity of the Chinese people is being stimulated by new things and knowledge, giving birth to new Chinese brands and ideas, but it’s important for people to be reconnected to their own traditions.”

Kao sees China going through a process of double discovery, exploring foreign cultures and

rediscovering its own.

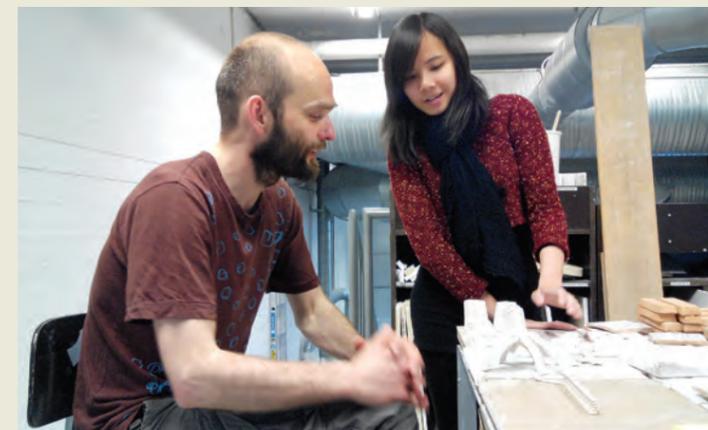
“This is opening new channels to propagate creativity, and when creative efforts are recognised there is a strong possibility of becoming successful,” she says. “This is a broad field in which to prosper and emerge.”

There are other large foundations and institutions that recognise these trends. The Foundation’s goal is not to compete with them, but to occupy a niche, helping to make a creative career something that parents look at more favourably and providing artists with a ladder that takes their careers higher. They have plans for future growth, including continuing to fund HKDI programmes and increasing the number of international exchange programmes they support.

“We have a personal approach and find people who need a push but would not get conventional funding,” says Koon. “We hope to be there at the right time, to help emerging or aspiring young artists or designers realise their full potential.”

As Ip, Cheng and Wong can testify, making the best use of a talent sometimes requires a muse and an angel. In May Koon and Mayching Kao they found both. ☺

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP  
WONG-TSZ WAI'S CLAY STOOL  
THIS PAGE FROM TOP  
CHENG WING CHUN WORKING ON  
EXHIBITION PRODUCTS AT THE ROYAL  
ACADEMY  
WONG-TSZ WAI MAKING  
A STOOL WITH A 3D PRINTER



PICTURES VANESSA KO & HKDI

# TALENT CARNIVAL

The WorldSkills talent sharing competition that began in 1950 has proved to be an international source of inspiration and learning for vocational education. This year the WorldSkills Hong Kong 2014 event paved the way for next year's "skill olympics" in Brazil. **DANIEL JEFFREYS** reports.

Mixing mocktails, making LED circuits and changing tires were among the skills that the public could try at the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal in late June, as Hong Kong's latest landmark was transformed into the venue for the WorldSkills Hong Kong Competition 2014.

This year the organisers decided that demonstrations of skills by accomplished competitors would be complemented by "hands-on" opportunities, so that visitors could compare their skills with young professionals. This gave the event a carnival motif, which pointed participants toward 2015, when the 43rd WorldSkills Competition will be held in Sao Paulo, Brazil, the global home of carnival.

The WorldSkills Competition occurs biennially, attracting more than 1,000 young talents from 67 countries and regions to test their skills against international standards. Hong Kong first took part in the WorldSkills Competition in 1997 and has won two Gold, one Silver and 32 Medallions for Excellence.

As one of the organising institutions, HKDI played a significant role in this year's competition, providing venues for two competition trades and hosting a seminar at Kai Tak by graduates from HKDI on product and technology, which helped to draw more than 25,000 participants to the vibrant two-day event.

"Vocational education and skills training plays a significant role in nurturing the talents needed for the development of Hong Kong," says Cherry Tse, Hong Kong's Permanent Secretary for Education. "The WorldSkills Hong Kong Competition enhances the understanding of vocational training, and strengthens the productivity and competitive edge of Hong Kong."

The WorldSkills Competition covers 25 trades in six

major areas: transportation and logistics, construction and building technology, manufacturing and engineering technology, information and communication technology, creative arts and fashion, and social and personal services.

With the theme of "Discover Skills", the 2014 WorldSkills Hong Kong Competition attracted some 300 contestants to showcase their talents and skills, breaking previous records for attendance. The WorldSkills Hong Kong Competition has become a cradle for nurturing young tradesmen, providing opportunities for them to exchange professional knowledge and broaden their horizons. Winners of the competition are undergoing further training, with a view to becoming representatives of Hong Kong in next year's Brazil WorldSkills Competition.

The WorldSkills Competition has its roots in 1940s Spain, where José Antonio Elola Olaso, who was General Director of the Spanish Youth Organization OJE, became concerned about the lack of skilled workers in his country. Olaso believed that "...it was necessary to convince young people, as well as their parents, teachers and employers, that their future depended on an effective vocational training system."

Olaso's brilliant idea was to inspire young apprentices and their families by holding skill competitions, and in 1947 the first Spanish national concourse took place with 4,000 competitors. The event was deemed a success and soon spread to Latin America, and then throughout Europe. It now has over 70 member countries and major international sponsors like Samsung and 3M.

The WorldSkills Hong Kong Competition has become a magnet for attracting potential talents and the 2014 event, with its "hands-on" component was a perfect platform for enhancing public recognition of the role played by vocational training,

"Evolving with the times, vocational skills will become increasingly important," says Matthew Cheun, Hong Kong's Secretary for Labour and Welfare. "Young people equipped with relevant skills will enjoy a head start in the employment market." And maybe even a trip to Brazil, to compete at next year's skills olympics. 



LEFT THE CREATIVE ARTS AND FASHION SECTION AT THE WORLD SKILLS HONG KONG COMPETITION 2014



« ELEGANCE IS ALWAYS IN STYLE FOR MEN. THERE ARE ALL DIFFERENT KINDS OF ELEGANCE. IT CAN BE SILK, IT CAN BE A T-SHIRT. »  
DONATELLA VERSACE

HKDI

HONG KONG  
DESIGN  
INSTITUTE  
香港知專  
設計學院

Member of VTC Group  
VTC 機構成員



《TO ACHIEVE HARMONY IN  
BAD TASTE IS THE HEIGHT OF  
ELEGANCE.》

JEAN GENET