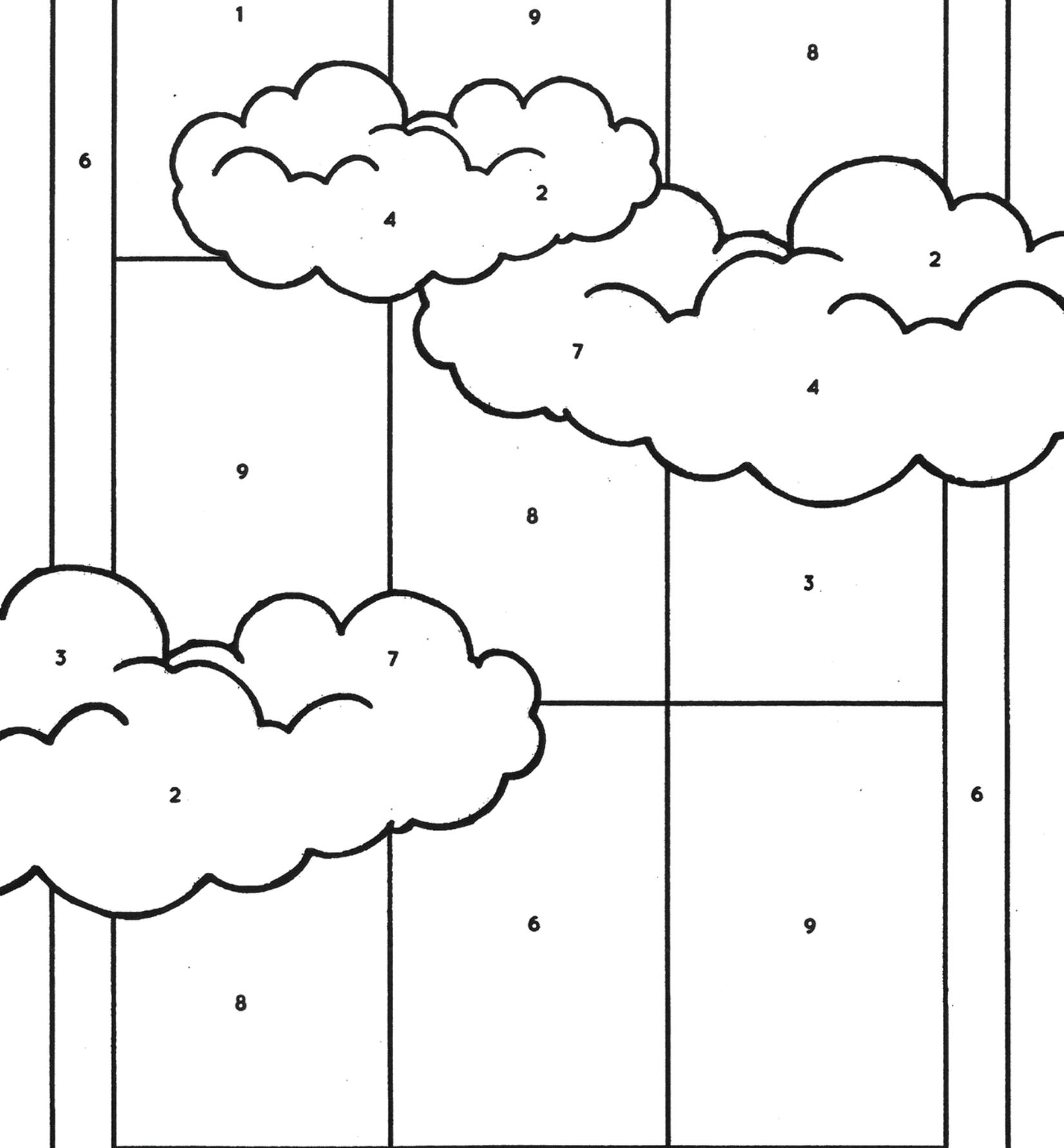


SIGNED

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HONG KONG DESIGN INSTITUTE ISSUE FOURTEEN 2017





- 1  Stripes
- 2  Dots
- 3  Crosses
- 4  Diamonds
- 5  Weaves
- 6  Triangles
- 7  Your Pattern
- 8  Your Colour
- 9  Blank

Design democracy

Art is the most intense mode of individualism that the world has known," wrote eccentric author Oscar Wilde. We would like to challenge him on that notion, though, as in today's society, design is right up there too. Having experienced the industrial revolution, where efficiency, mass production and consistency have been achieved, people are now looking for more self expression in everything they use and touch. Our cover for this issue of SIGNED also takes inspiration from this as we have reinterpreted the popular 'colouring by numbers' game. You see, even something as simple as a leisure activity can have infinite individual expressions, hence we are 'designing' our own destiny without realising it.

It's in this very relationship between designers, products and users that we begin our main feature. In this piece, we explore the consumer trends from bespoke and mass production to mass personalisation and open data. This asks the question, though, 'is everyone a designer?' And, also, 'how does that affect the discipline that is design?' The answers are as socially relevant as they are provocative as we're truly entering a new definition of what it means to be a designer. If technology enables us to be willing and active participants, we must ask if the blurred line between hobbyist and professional is one that should be crossed with caution.

Of course, nothing screams self expression like the fashion you choose to wear and, also in this issue, we celebrate HKDI's own alumni who are blazing a new trail in this competitive industry. At the other end of the spectrum, we also give you a preview of a major retrospective of one of the world's most enigmatic and elusive designers, Rei Kawakubo, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

HKDI is proud to be hosting some amazing exhibitions, with design luminary Konstantin Grcic and Rafael Moneo - which we proudly share our candid chat with this illustrious architect. Speaking of architecture, SIGNED also brings our readers to Rotterdam, a Dutch city where architecture is thriving and driving its future. Look back with us, too, at the amazing Venice Architecture Biennale exhibitions.

In short, we feel there's something for everyone in this issue. Design encapsulates emotions, propels society forward and remains a part of our lives. It's time we sit up and take more notice.

Desiree Au
Publisher

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TECHNOLOGY? DESIGN!

24 D3s!gn <>>#<*&!^<> T3chn0logy

These days, everyone can design, even on their mobile phones, thanks to innovative apps that allow consumers to use handy tools, broadcast their opinions and, more importantly, make purchases online. These technological advances may be assisting all design thinkers but are they changing the design landscape too radically at the same time? What does the future hold in the global design industry and is the new landscape a win, a loss or an own goal for designers?

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Enigmatic fashion designer Rei Kawakubo's spring exhibition at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art is set to become the talk of the fashion world

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

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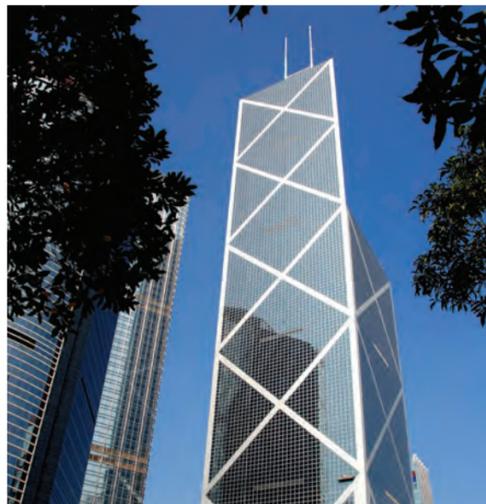
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A WONDER OF ARCHITECTURE



Hong Kong Design Institute by Coldefy & Associés



Bank of China Tower by I.M. Pei



Hong Kong Jockey Club Innovation Tower by Zaha Hadid

It's a time for congratulations! The HKDI has been selected as one of the SAR's top five architectural 'wonders' along with the Bank of China Tower and the Hong Kong Jockey Club Innovation Tower by the city's Tatler magazine. Recognising the school among Hong Kong's finest architectural examples, Tatler has named the HKDI in its recent 'Five Hong Kong Architectural Wonders That Will Make Your Jaw Drop' article. Talking about the structure, the article says: "It is only appropriate that one of the leading design educational bodies of the city calls an avant-garde structure home. Developed by French firm Coldefy & Associés, Architectes Urbanistes in partnership with Hong Kong-based P&T group, the Hong Kong Design Institute in Tseung Kwan O opened its doors in 2010. It features a box-like complex positioned seven storeys above ground level on two lattice-steel towers. The complex is accessible through an escalator on ground level, which also contains a sloped podium that houses event spaces, including an auditorium and three exhibition venues'. The article can be found at hk.asiatatler.com/arts-culture.

COLDEFY & ASSOCIÉS



Recall



Earthcraft



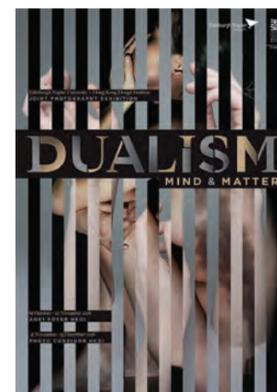
Inclinations



Image

THE EYES HAVE IT!

Students from the HKDI swept the board at the 18th Hong Kong Eyewear Design Competition. Showing ingenuity and originality in their stunning cutting edge designs, three students from HKDI picked up four top prizes at the coveted contest. Better yet, all the winning entries were on display at the HKTDC Optical Fair at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, which ran from November 9 to 11. The winning entries were:
 Champion (Student Group): Chan Wai Mau with 'Recall'.
 1st Runner-up (Student Group): Lee Cheuk Chung with 'Inclinations'.
 2nd Runner-up (Student Group): Ip Lok Sang with 'Earthcraft'.
 The Made-to-Sell Award: Lee Cheuk Chung with 'Image'.



DUALISM: MIND AND MATTER

Bringing together more than 20 photo projects from Edinburgh Napier University graduates and the Hong Kong Design Institute, Dualism: Mind and Matter was a visual exploration of young people's perspectives from two cities, Edinburgh and Hong Kong. The exhibition was a reflection of viewpoints from both cities with regards to habitation and the interplay of the cities themselves, as well as how we interact with them. Hong Kong and Edinburgh are about as far apart from each other as one can imagine, in a geographical, topological and cultural sense, yet Dualism serves to bridge the gap between the two in a visual dialogue with talents from each city. The exhibition ran at the end of the year at HKDI's C005b photo corridor.



STOCKHOLM DESIGN WEEK

Feb 6-12, 2017

Since its inception in 2002, Stockholm Design Week has become the centerpiece of Scandinavian design events. In 2017, the Design Week will include showrooms, galleries and multi-use spaces in the heart of Stockholm featuring the best in functional and aesthetic design concepts with interiors as the focus. stockholmdesignweek.com



DESIGN SHANGHAI

Mar 8-11, 2017

Breaking ground in China's ever-growing design community, Design Shanghai showcases the best design brands and galleries from around the globe over four days. designshanghai.com



SALON INTERNATIONAL DU DESIGN D'INTERIEUR DE MONTREAL DESIGN SHOW

May 4-6, 2017

SIDIM has steadily grown in scope and ambition to take its place among the design event highlights of the year. With a huge number of exhibitions, talks and workshops on offer, SIDIM offers a look into the design trends of tomorrow.

sidim.com



INDEX INTERNATIONAL DESIGN EXHIBITION UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

May 22-25, 2017

The region's largest exhibition for interiors, design and architecture. INDEX has become an indispensable event for those looking to network with their peers and see the latest in cutting-edge design and architecture innovation.

indexexhibition.com

Fashion: the new breed

Three HKDI alumni who are making waves on the style scene

Fashion moves at the speed of light in Hong Kong. A coat or dress can be the hottest thing to own on one day and then become extremely unpopular the next. But these three Hong Kong Design Institute alumni, who all graduated with a degree in fashion design, have each used their unique visions to stay above the quickly changing trends and to stand out in our fashion scene...



It's essential to Modement that every piece of fashion carries a meaning of its own which inspires and communicates

Aries Sin Androgyny designer

Aries Sin has been pushing the gender boundaries in our city with her androgynous clothing designs since establishing her fashion label Modement in 2013, during the Hong Kong Fashion Week of that year. Creating unisex outfits constructed with minimalist stitching, Sin says she finds inspiration in Hong Kong's melting pot of culture. "Most of my collection is strongly influenced by local culture," she says, "ranging from hybridised city landscapes to vernacular food stores. It's of essence to Modement that every single piece of fashion carries a meaning of its own which inspires, communicates and finally enhances the wearers." For Sin, androgynous designs best reflect a multifaceted Hong Kong. While she finds starting up a brand is relatively easy, the difficulty for her is learning how to become visible. She says interaction with the public is key. "We relied on social media and online promotion from the very beginning," she says. "We also joined and participated in different pop-up shops to meet new people and to stay in touch them." Sin certainly succeeded in making an impression in the Hong Kong fashion scene and her collection has since caught the eye of local celebrities like Miriam Yeung and Candy Lo. She says her course at HKDI, which included an internship in Paris, is like 'a key which opened different doors and fields of the fashion industry'. "They gave me many opportunities to show off my talents," she says, "and those experiences were valuable and useful for the industry." Ultimately, Sin says that self-motivation, study and learning in the real industry are the keys to success.



I try not to pollute the environment with my work. There's a social responsibility to consider

Benny Yuen Sustainable designer

Most fashion designers are preoccupied with churning out new designs and collections season after season but, for Benny Yuen, sustainable fashion comes before keeping up with the latest styles. First opened in 2011 in Tai O, Yuen's EARTH.er promotes the importance of sustainability and being environmentally friendly. "Starting a business in Hong Kong can be hard, especially in fashion," he says. "You always have to be creative and non-stop, and it could be a hit or a miss. Trends keep changing and you have to keep chasing them. It's not a healthy environment. What's important for me is that not only are the products new but the whole system as well." Yuen describes his label, which includes bohemian-style shirts, jackets and trendy accessories, as 'city urban wear'. His brand often collaborates with Southeast Asian organisations to work with eco-friendly materials like linen while using traditional techniques such as natural dye and handweaving. He's actually one of only a handful of designers with his own boutique shop in Tai Po, showing how fashion is not only for the style-conscious in Central. On top of that, Yuen's brand is also sponsoring 12 children in need from the proceeds he make. "What I'm trying to do is to see how I can help people," he says. "And how not to pollute the environment with my work. There's a social responsibility to consider." Yuen adds that his time at HKDI helped him form his own identity. He's more than just a fashion designer. "Your job is not only making clothes," he says. "It's about contributing to society and not adding more negative effects." His advice to aspiring designers? He says: "Explore, be aware of current issues and never say it's not my problem because you're just a fashion designer."



I don't want my clothes to be shallow. I want people to look at the themes and learn about history and culture

Chloe Sung Elegance designer

Since establishing her self-titled label in 2013, Chloe Sung has brought glitz and glamour to the Hong Kong fashion scene. With couture being the focus of her label, Sung has been making noises in high societies and with local celebrities. "I really like elegant things," she says, "and I would describe my brand as mostly evening wear and clothes that are a bit more high end." Originally immersed in materialising her vision, Sung didn't necessarily pay attention to the ins and outs of the Hong Kong market. "But," she says, "after two seasons, I began to pay more attention to the things that people buy. I needed to find the balance between what I like and meeting what the market needs to keep the brand afloat. That's how I adjusted to create more ready-to-wear designs instead of just couture." Sung's ready-to-wear outfits are immensely popular in Central. They are perfect for ladies to go to work in and to head off to parties afterwards. But what makes her stand out from the oversaturation of designs in the industry is the way she adds a little culture. "I love exploring different arts and culture," she says. "And, more importantly, I don't want my clothes to be shallow. I want people to look at the themes and learn about history and culture when they see the designs. It's more than just producing a product." Her collections have been influenced by items like Japanese kimonos, traditional Chinese water ink paintings and Chinese opera face masks. Her next line also incorporates Terracotta Army figures. Sung mentions how her time at HKDI has helped her prepare and opened doors to the fashion world, as well as understand how you can't be successful without having passion. "It's a tough career," she says. "There are many difficulties and not necessarily a lot of money. But my motivation is that I truly love what I do."



Voice, vision, Venice: A vista of change

The 15th Venice Architecture Biennale was a spectacular examination of architecture and its role in society and the human condition by looking beyond the horizon. We review some of the fair's highlights as well as visit Hong Kong's special project of urban concern

With a rich history spanning more than 120 years, the Venice Biennale is a global cultural treasure. This biennial festival encapsulates the essence of discovery, innovation and methodology

across the whole spectrum of human creativity, including art, architecture, music, theatre and dance. It's a celebration that's agnostic to race, nationality and creed, paying credence to the inclusionary nature of design and the arts.

The 15th Venice Architecture Biennale opened on May 28 and ran until November 27 at the Giardini della Biennale and The Venetian Arsenal in the Italian city. A total of 88 participants from 37 countries took part, showcasing some of the most cutting-edge, economic and beautiful designs in the architectural space. The world's largest exhibition in the field is so much more than just an exercise in attractive aesthetics, however, with this year's edition, titled 'Reporting from the Front', there's been a strong social, economic, political, environmental and humanitarian message clearly permeating the proceedings.

There's been a clear intimation of distinct elements at this year's biennale. Stark contrasts of the bold, bright and beautiful have been mixed with the sombre, dank and bleak – appropriations of the wonderful spectacle of architecture at its grandest and the areas where it reflects

the impoverished nature of the space it occupies. These distinct elements have also been seen in the biennale's gardens, which contain national pavilions, where countries have been allowed to interpret the directors' themes as they see fit, with many using the opportunity to highlight their own pertinent socio-political issues.

This is not to say that every exhibition has simply intended to display a kind of corrective, utilitarian aspiration or bring attention to historical injustices and humanitarian issues – displays such as Álvaro Siza and Pezo von Ellrichshausen's Vara Pavilion has simply shown how to capture light in creative ways. What made this year's biennale special is the expert way in which it has managed the difficult task of showcasing the best in architecture from two very differing corners – the aesthetic and the actionable. Wait for a special Hong Kong exhibition arm of the biennale to head to our city in the coming weeks.

Building brilliance

Our highlights of the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale...



Droneport Prototype NORMAN FOSTER

Foster unveiled the first full-scale prototype of his Droneport concept at the Arsenale. The project – which aims to employ a holistic aspect of architecture – has been designed to transport medical supplies to remote regions of Africa using unmanned flying vehicles. It serves as a juxtaposition against the widescale use of drones for militaristic purposes, instead utilising the modern technology for real humanitarian needs.



Western Sahara Pavilion MANUEL HERZ

Created in collaboration with the National Union of Sahrawi Women, architect Herz directly addresses the biennale's 'Reporting from the Front' theme with his striking tent-like pavilion, which considers the role of the Sahrawi refugee camps in Algeria. Having resided in such camps for 40 years, the Sahrawi people have developed unique design and architectural methodologies to conform with their transience and lack of resources. As such, the installation draws stark attention to issues such as modesty, permanence and tradition.



Beyond Bending ETH ZURICH

Aiming to demonstrate how modern architecture can learn from techniques of the past, Beyond Bending establishes the notion that aesthetic indulgence and the economical use of materials do not need to be mutually exclusive. Taking the form of a dramatic, expansive stone vault with an aesthetic quality reminiscent of a stone cathedral, Beyond Bending is a masterclass in showing how modern technology can enhance the structural principles established through hundreds of years of architectural development.



Sarcophagus STUDIOBIRD

With an aesthetic quality that would hardly be out of place in a Philip K Dick novel, the 'futuristic sarcophagus' has surely been one of the most unique installations at this year's biennale. Inviting audiences to experience an immersive environment of sleep-state, the multidimensional installation was created to challenge our perceptions of comfort and inhabitable space, allowing participants to find rest in the most unconventional of places. A deeply intimate experience, the sarcophagus inundates users with sound and imagery, offering an abstractly personal interaction.

Full Fill Homes ANUPAMA KUNDOO

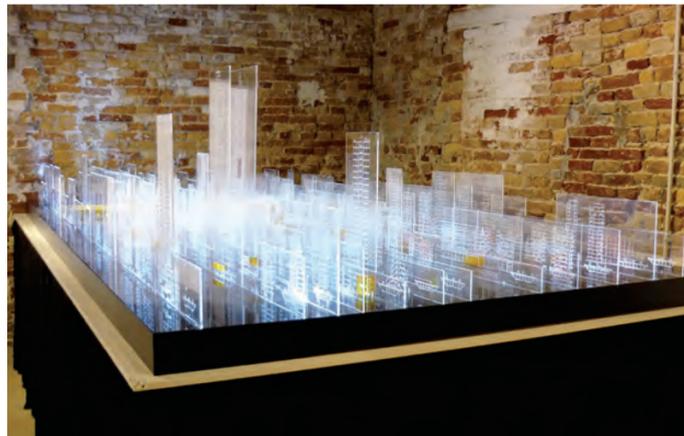
The Indian architect built a mock-up of her housing project that hopes to tackle the issue of homelessness and housing affordability for the biennale. Full Fill Homes are envisioned as a means of easily built housing that have a minimal environmental footprint while stylistically combining sophistication and minimalism. Using specialised hollow blocks, these homes can be constructed in just six days and dismantled in one, while still providing comfort and utility to those in need.

Poverty, density and Sham Shui Po

The HKDI is bringing its own exhibition that focuses on Sham Shui Po from the Venice Architecture Biennale to our city

Featuring the collective works of 40 students from the Hong Kong Design Institute and co-led by lecturers and visiting fellows of HKDI, Julia Mok and Thomas Chan, *Spatial Poverty and Urban Density* is an exploratory piece of visual social commentary that puts stark focus on the idea of poverty – not just in the financial sense but in a spatial, environmental capacity. The display has been turning heads at the Venice Architectural Biennale, with plans to bring it home to the HKDI during the first quarter of 2017.

The exhibition focuses on Sham Shui Po. Hong Kong is a city devoid of space as it is but nowhere is this more apparent than this district in Kowloon, which is arguably one the city's poorest areas. Many of the area's residents live in extreme conditions, however this has, over the years, also given rise to incredible feats of innovation to ease the burden of spatial poverty. This, in turn, has also woven itself into the larger cultural fabric of Hong Kong. If hardship



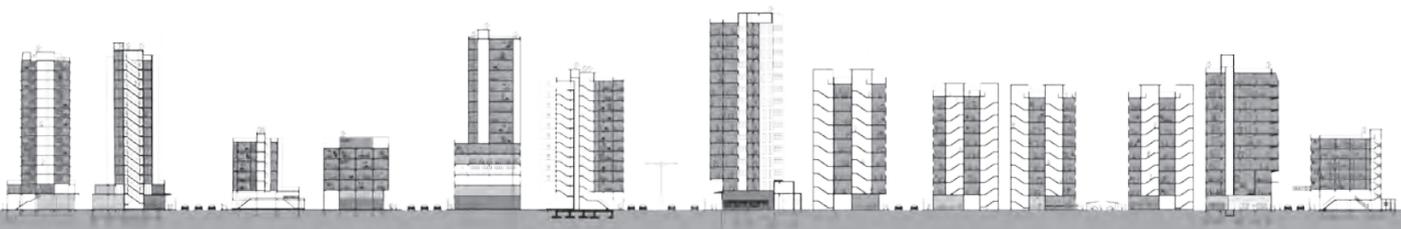
is the mother of invention, then Sham Shui Po is most certainly where mother lives.

Speaking about the aesthetic qualities of the piece and what they subtextually represent, Mok says: "It's an exercise of meticulously dissecting the urban fabric and superimposing the pieces together on transparent acrylic sheets, so that one can really see the intensity and diverse daily activities from inside out. We then reconstruct the space into 3D models coloured in orange, which are spaces that students find unique." The visual effect of the display is striking – familiar to those who have walked among Hong Kong's hyper-dense topologies yet still clean and somewhat avant-garde in its intricacy.

Although it's fascinating to dissect Sham Shui Po as a crossroads of cultural and architectural density, there's an ethical issue to be considered. How best can we all help these people who live in such myriad forms of poverty? "You can see a moment in Sham Shui Po's developed history," says Mok, "when 'urban renewal' projects, sometimes marketed as luxury apartments, moved into this last affordable area in the city centre. This makes you question the value in urban diversity and the basic human right of 'space'. These are the pressing issues because we still have time to rethink the city's strategy of urban renewal before Sham Shui Po becomes another faceless property development."

It's a testament to the quality of the installation that such a broad and contestable societal issue can be so deftly disseminated and observed through a display that's clean, simple and so much more than just the sum of its parts. Although there is a somewhat sombre underlying tone to *Spatial Poverty and Urban Density*, Mok comments on how the piece also exhibits the ingenuity of the city's people. "I think the spirit of Hong Kong is the bottom-up can-do attitude," she says, "which is not bounded by physical limitations. Sham Shui Po has a positive energy much needed by the city right now."

There's much that can be taken away from this exhibition – as an aesthetic piece of design, it's remarkable. But *Spatial Poverty and Urban Density* should be digested as a commentary on where we need to improve and, as Mok notes, a celebration of the ingenuity of Hong Kong's people. "The most valuable information we found is how people adjust their daily activities, be it commercial or ritual, within their own spatial limits," she says. "In this case, space is the biggest limitation in Hong Kong and especially in Sham Shui Po."



Panoramic view

Konstantin Grcic's exhibition *Panorama* is an innovative exploration of different lifestyle modalities and schools of thought

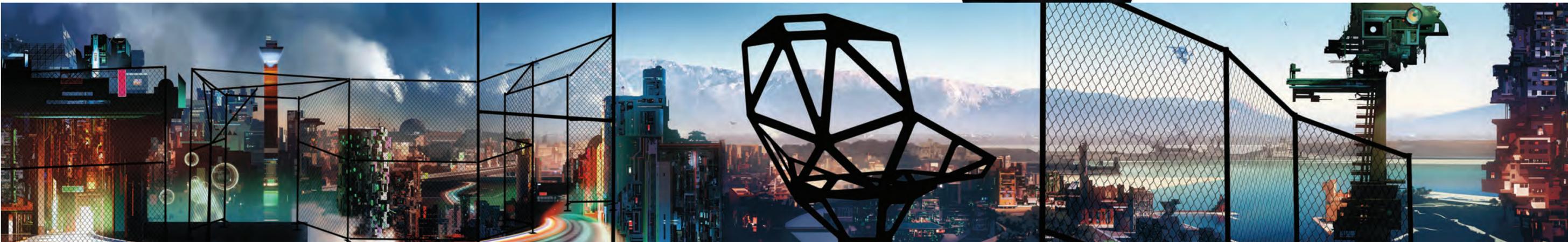
PHOTO: MARKUS JANS



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The furniture I'm using in this space was conceived for use in a public space and I really want people to interact with it and make up their own mind

Konstantin Grcic



Industrial creative talent Konstantin Grcic has earned the title of being one of the most influential designers of his time. And his exhibition, “*Konstantin Grcic – Panorama*”, which was curated in collaboration with Germany’s Vitra Design Museum and launched in 2014, challenges the viewer to consider a positive and negative duality of emotions when interpreting the works. Prepare to witness this incredible installation which arrived in Hong Kong at the HKDI Gallery on November 26.

German-born Konstantin originally studied to be a cabinetmaker, but a cabinetmaker rarely gets to rethink and revolutionise every item stored within his cabinets. In his long, plaudit-filled career, Grcic has designed – or redesigned – a dizzying array of objects, from the simple and mundane to the complex multi-faceted. After working in London for many years under famed product and furniture designer Jasper Morrison, Konstantin returned to his native Munich in 1991 to found his own company. He promptly earned global critical attention for his elegant, deceptively simple designs, a facet of his design approach for which he is now synonymous and is something that can be seen throughout *Panorama*.

It's clear that the process of bringing *Panorama* together has made Grcic almost melancholic in the reflection of his life's work. The German designer says: “I'm 48 years old, I'm not dead and my work is continuing. I see the body of work not as a frozen static thing but as something that's still alive, still being changed and still in use. That is exactly what I wanted with *Panorama*.”

Panorama is split into four distinct sections, creating a modular, well-defined incremental whole that challenges viewers in myriad ways. Director of Vitra Design Museum, Mateo Kries, who helped Grcic realise his vision, speaks

about the exhibition's background: “*Panorama* is a project that we developed over three years. We have always wanted to work with Konstantin on a large solo exhibition. In our discussions with him, we both felt it would be interesting to do more than a retrospective, to go beyond that and show scenographies in the hope we could create worlds that the visitor can dive into.”

The format that the exhibition has taken is something that Grcic enjoys as a different form of expressing his works. “When I was asked to do this exhibition,” he says, “I was as interested in designing the exhibition as the privilege of being able to have it, so the design really became a project and a continuation. It's a format that I really like as a designer.” To get a clear picture of *Panorama* as a whole, though, it must be examined in its four unique, narrative-driven sections:

Life Space

The first space takes something of a socio-economic stance, delving into the ideas of how contemporary living is either restricted or validated from where we conduct it. Grcic says: “The Life Space is quite raw, with built-in elements and a big window looking out on an airport. This is the most controversial element because it could be interpreted in two ways – first of all, the sheer horror of being in a position where you can't afford the rent in the cities so maybe you're forced to live on the outskirts, dealing with the noise from the airport.” Grcic goes on to describe the potential flipside of this, however: “On the other hand, you may enjoy living in this kind of environment so you can benefit from the infrastructure and the convenience. Also, it means you can reach out easily or be reached so you can flip it to something positive. The other thing is that the raw space and elements

that we built, we created an organisation on different levels through certain modules. It's an idea of being able to plug and play. We only use space for a short time.”

Work Space

The second space deals with work in a contemporary setting, not just from a design perspective but how we all go about our work. Grcic says: “In the middle you see a big table. And on this table, there are a lot of objects designed by myself. Many of these are unfinished as I want to inhabit the idea of development and processes.” The second aspect of this space addresses the idea that everywhere is potential work space now with the mass adoption of new technologies. “Communication technologies and computers have enabled a workspace to be anywhere,” says the designer. The whole installation adopts a specific tonality that Grcic is hoping to procure. “The atmosphere of the space was important for me to convey the processes in which people work,” he says. “It asks the question of how we work and how we do many things at the same time, which can be good and bad. It can stretch us thin but it's also rooted in ambition.”

Public Space

In Public Space we're taken out of the museum setting and into, literally, the public space. “How can we recreate a public space in a museum environment?” asks Grcic. “So, our idea was to commission a huge panorama image from a concept artist. This panorama shows a big public space of a possible future. This enters into a dialogue with the objects that I have placed into this space.” The visual effect is striking – a daunting city panorama that's fenced off and creates a feeling of both tension and aspiration. Grcic says: “The

strange, imposing black fence gives the impression that this fence can either protect you from the panorama or it intimates that you can go there. The furniture I'm using in this space was conceived for use in a public space and I really want people to interact with it and make up their own mind.”

Object Space

The final space takes on a much more traditional format of showcasing objects. There's a good reason as to why Grcic decided to take this approach with the final display. “This is a kind of plinth, a showcase,” he tells us. “A linear arrangement of objects in a way that reads almost like a children's game. A domino effect from one object to another that allows me to tell a personal story about the objects and my relationship to them.” It's a much more straightforward display that simply conveys a love for the aesthetic and offers a kind of cleaner palette to the audience. “I think this part is a relief for the visitors,” he says, “as it's maybe less thematically challenging. I'm the narrator telling them a story instead of leaving them to interpret.” Taken as a whole, *Panorama* holds a mirror up to ourselves and makes us address the core aspects of our everyday life. It's a lofty thematic goal but one that has been treated deftly and with thought. Grcic says: “In the sum of it, the exhibition offers a variety of perspectives. I want this to be a trigger and inspiration for people's own ideas. In order to discuss the future, we have to remain very abstract and conceptual. But, the moment you make something real and concrete, you have that discussion and take it away from the abstract. I'm putting some concrete imagery out there to hopefully spark critical reaction and discussion.”

Visualisation featuring the panoramic image in 'Public Space' by Neil Campbell Ross, 2014 (catalogue cover). Montage: Florian Böhm, panorama © Neil Campbell Ross, graphic © Florian Böhm

A look through the years

If we look through some of Konstantin's work chronologically, there is clear aesthetic parity throughout in terms of design – he is the master of the functional, industrial and simple. Many of his products have received prestigious design awards as well as being critically lauded across the whole industry. There are many highlights in Konstantin's back catalogue, all displaying exquisite minimalist design, such as his *Mayday* lamp produced by Flos, which was selected into the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and won the Compasso D'Oro in 2001. This is but one in a series of outstanding products that Konstantin has produced, some of which are highlighted below.



Refolo, trolley, Driade, 1995 © KGID – A less stark, more playful piece as Konstantin integrates a clean design with somewhat juxtaposing bold colours



Mayday, light, Flos, 1999 © KGID – Selected into the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and won the Compasso D'Oro in 2001



Chair_One, Magis, 2004, © KGID – One of Konstantin's most eye-catching designs with the idea of being more space than solid



OK, light, Flos, 2013, © KGID – A striking update on Achille Castiglioni's iconic Parentesi lamp that would be at home in a museum as it would in an industrial factory



3-Bag Large, Maharam, 2013, © KGID – A triangular bag of waxed cotton canvas with contrasting nylon trim. The colour contrast is intended to draw the viewer's eye to the shape of the bag



Coathangerbrush, hangers, Cappellini/Progetto Ogetto, 1992 © KGID – Konstantin displayed his wry sense of humour with this tongue-in-cheek response to the 'Creative Salvage' movement



Relations, glasses, Iittala, 1999 © KGID – Designed with the simple idea of easier stacking in mind, Konstantin was inspired to create Relations after visiting a glass-pressing factory

Monza, armchair, Plank, 2009, © KGID



Parrish Side Chair, Emeco, 2013, © KGID – Part of a collection of furniture designed by Konstantin for the Parrish Art Museum in New York

Bench B, BD Barcelona Design, 2013, © KGID – Based on the iconic Barcelona Chair by Mies van der Rohe. The Bench B features the distinctive crossing legs of the 1929 original but is reinterpreted as a flexible, modular system



Tom Tom & Tam Tam, side tables, SCP, 1991, © KGID – Appealing in its design fluency and pragmatism, a perfect early example of Konstantin's eloquent use of shapes



Pallas, table, ClassiCon, 2002, © KGID – Made with powder-coated steel, these imposing tables have an incredibly industrial presence



Champions, table, Galerie kreO, 2011 (limited edition), © KGID – A run of limited edition tables emblazoned with a graphic language inspired by the sports industry





Portrait of Rafael Moneo.
Photo: Alvaro Felgueroso

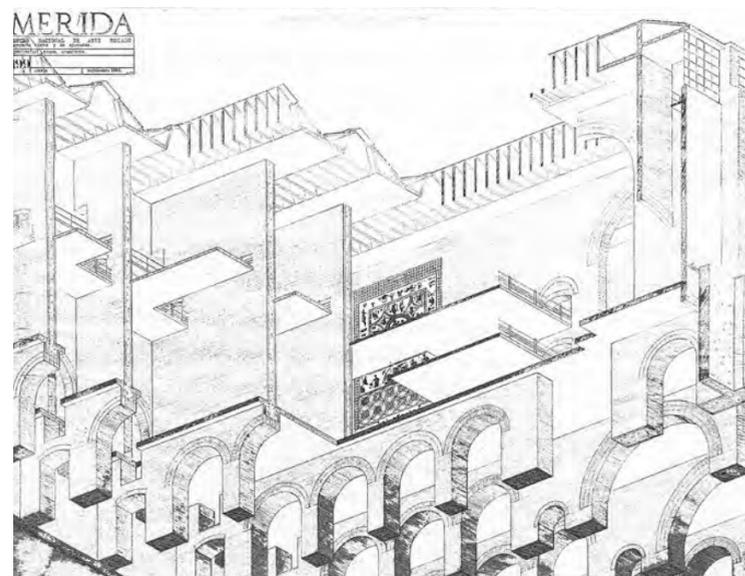
The world according to... Rafael Moneo

One of the biggest names in the world of architecture, Rafael Moneo, talks about his life and works as his exhibition, *A Theoretical Reflection from the Professional Practice. Archive Materials (1961-2013)*, opens at HKDI

José Rafael Moneo Vallés is, in short, one of the most important architects of the past 60 years. His name, more commonly shortened to Rafael Moneo, is synonymous with excellence in the discipline on an international scale. The Spanish savant's seminal presence has been felt globally with works that have challenged our perceptions as to how space and composition can be utilised effectively to make a building so much more than the sum of its parts.

And now his works are being displayed in Hong Kong as part of an HKDI exhibition at d-mart, which runs until January 14. *Rafael Moneo: A Theoretical Reflection from the Professional Practice. Archive Materials (1961-2013)* is an exploratory look at the great man's works over his 60-year career. Featuring around 250 original drawings, photographs and models from 46 projects spanning the 79-year-old's entire career, this exhibition is a unique visual chronology of works from one of the greatest architects of our time.

The exhibition's curator, Francisco González de Canales, speaks at length about the impact Moneo has had on the global architectural dialogue. "He considers architecture as being synonymous with culture," says González de Canales. "The more you know about a place's culture, the better architect you are. Moneo appreciates that the history of architecture is like a collection of examples that has been tested by other architects and, if you experience them, you can use that for your own design. I don't think



National Museum of Roman Art in Mérida, Spain, 1980-86
Photo: © Rafael Moneo / courtesy of Fundación Barrié

any other modern architect knows more than him about the industry." Talking about how Moneo has influenced his own career and architectural mindset, González de Canales exclaims: "I think I've inherited his passion. I try to really follow this path of feeling passionate and learning more and more about architecture."

Moneo touches upon the notion that this exhibition lends him the opportunity to introvertly dissect his life's work when we talk to him. "The exhibition has opened my professional archive," he tells us, "comprising more than 50 years of professional practice. It's quite touching to see how one's practice is embedded in the movements of architectural practice and theory over five decades. It's quite touching to see a life's work as a testimony of an architectural culture, broader than simply the concerns of an individual architect."

One element that's always striking about Moneo's work is his effortless integration of projects that pay homage to the surrounding area and history while being mindful of the culture the buildings will inherit. Despite how difficult that may sound to the layman, Moneo nevertheless offers innovative architectural solutions. "I believe it's natural that most of my work is seen as being respectful to the notion of the historical, traditional European city," he tells us. In fact, it's clear that European culture and architecture will always have a huge bearing on Moneo. "Having lived and developed my professional practice in Europe," he says, "the idea of the European city has always been present. But that doesn't mean that I'm detached from the broader discussion about how architecture has evolved as a discipline. The fact that I've been teaching all my life has kept me alert to all the vicissitudes of architectural theory. Hints of all this are clearly present in my work. As much as I resist the idea of looking at buildings as single subjects,

the engagement of the buildings with the city and this larger scale is always present and so establishes a certain continuity with the beginnings of my career."

Although Europe is obviously a huge focal point in any dialogue surrounding Moneo, he's still extremely cognisant of architecture throughout the world, especially in Hong Kong. "I have been to Hong Kong twice," he notes, "and, each time, I've found myself very taken by the city. There are cities in the world that retain the presence of the geographical accident that characterise them and Hong Kong is, without doubt, one of the most beautiful." This idea of architecture playing with topology is clearly a feature that Moneo finds fascinating. He goes on to say: "In Hong Kong, the geographical condition hasn't been hidden by the architecture. On the contrary, the buildings emphasise these conditions and help to perceive even more powerfully the land from which they spring." It's a topic that Moneo has clearly pondered many times. "What I think is most peculiar about Hong Kong's architecture," he says, "I would have to say, is the unbiased way it tries to solve the problem of collective housing, using towers as a support. To transform the notion of the tower as a building with symbolic content to one which is simply the solution to residential living is, for me, an exciting revelation. One that no other city in the world expresses quite so eloquently as Hong Kong."

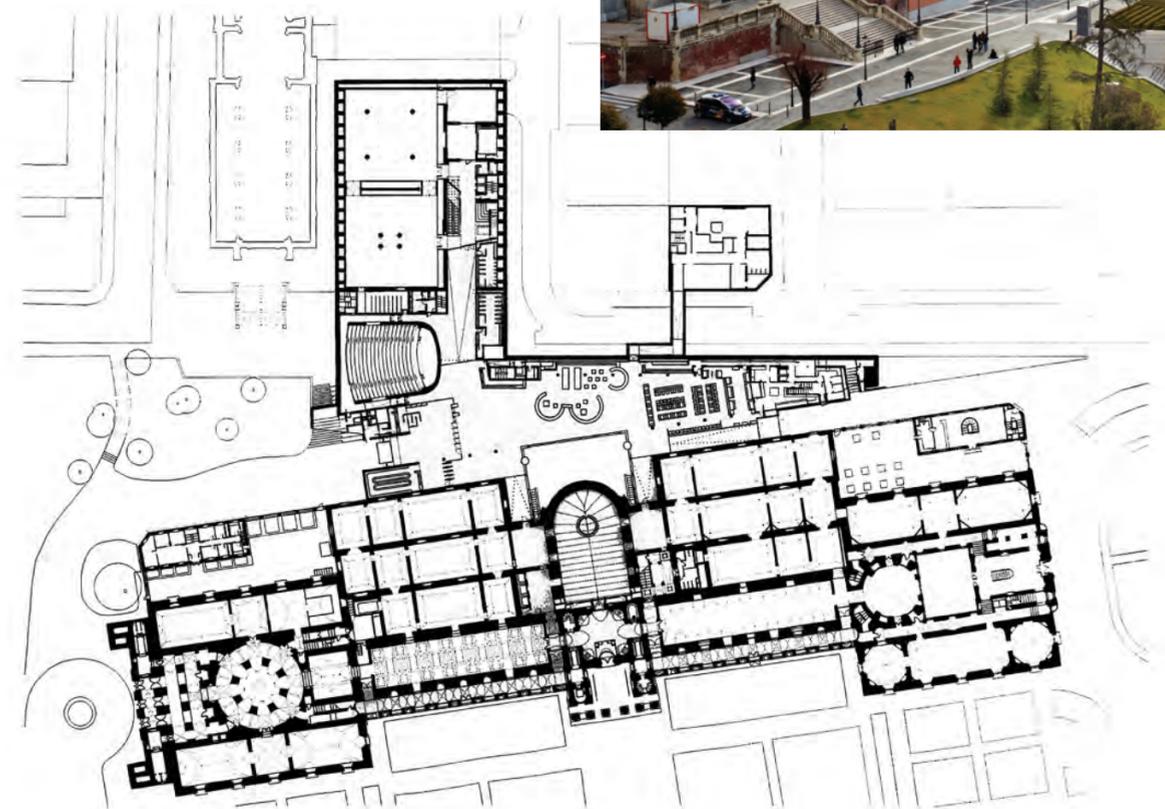
Moneo has witnessed first-hand the shifting trends and practices within architecture. This is not only reflected in the exhibition but it's also something Moneo talks about at length. "Perhaps one of the most remarkable changes is that which is suffered by the role of drawing in today's architectural practice. Drawing has been the driving instrument for architects since the Renaissance and indeed architecture has been conceived with the help of drawings.



The Prado Museum extension in Madrid, Spain, 1998-2007.
Photo: Michael Moran © Rafael Moneo / courtesy of Fundación Barrié



L'Illa Diagonal in Barcelona, Spain, 1987-94

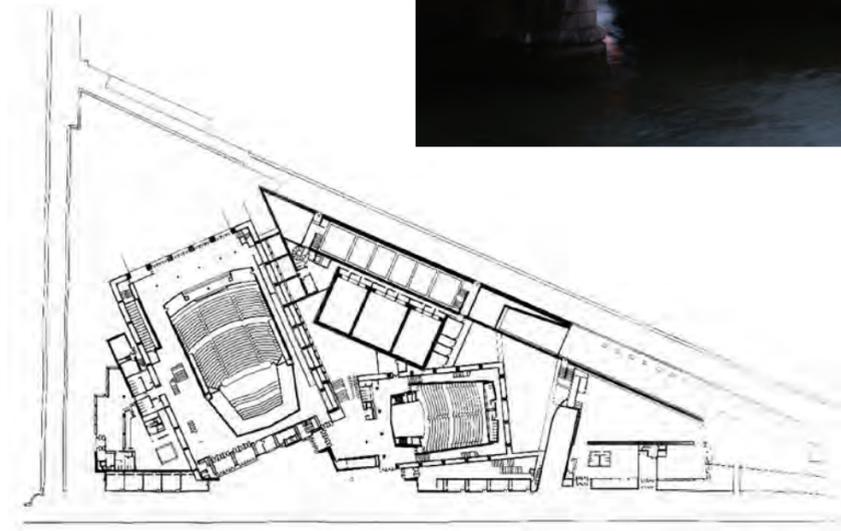


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Moneo considers architecture as being synonymous with culture



Kursaal Auditorium and Convention Centre in San Sebastián, Spain, 1990-99
 Photo: © Rafael Moneo / courtesy of Fundación Barrié



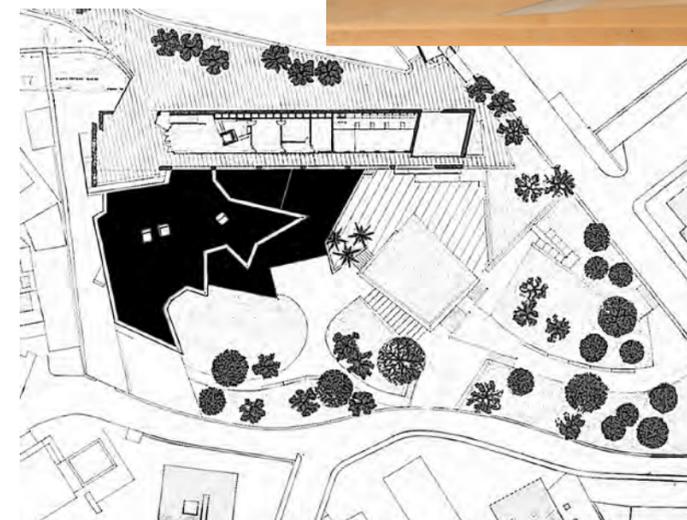
The drawing was, at once, the means of representation, as well as the framework from which buildings were thought about and understood.” The exhibition puts stark focus on Moneo’s conceptual use of drawings, even at their most basic and archaic, still beautiful in that they encapsulate an essence of grassroots architecture, ever fading from the modern lexicon. Although Moneo perhaps laments this loss of the traditional, he’s ever willing to embrace the way of the future. “[Architecture] has changed,” he says, “with the new means of representation and even more with the process of digitalisation that affects both the way of thinking and how we deal with the various elements of construction.”

Moneo’s exhibition is a unique window into the transitional nature of architecture from the old to new. “Renderings today,” he highlights, “are simulations of what buildings will be but are not developed for the benefit or definition of the buildings themselves. Architecture is thought with another logic closer to assemblage, or to the narrative, more than the search for a unifying structure inspired by drawing. The exhibition shows how that has happened in the second half of the 20th century and I believe that my archive offers witness to this transition.”

A Theoretical Reflection from the Professional Practice deals in what has been and what is with regards to Moneo’s work, so it’s fascinating to get an insight from the seminal Pritzker

Prize-winning architect on where he thinks the industry is going. “It’s one thing to speak of what will happen in the next 25 years,” he tells us, “and quite another to talk about what I would like to happen. Since it’s difficult to describe the first one, I will say that I would hope that the evolving practice of architecture doesn’t destroy the city it’s serving and that it finds a certain means of establishing continuity between the old-built world and that of the near future. How this might happen, seems to me, should be a priority for those who think about architecture to describe with all their effort.”

González de Canales agrees and urges the public to visit the exhibition. He describes his modus operandi when approaching the exhibition: “One of the main goals was to show it was possible to have an architect without a set style, so that each of the projects represents its own theory. One of the problems we face in contemporary architecture is that each of the architects are primed to develop a general theory of how he or she does architecture. I think that’s an error. Architecture is complex. You can’t have a general theory, so we tried to put together an exhibition that shows that each of the projects require a different theory. We thought that to show this, we could use drawings because the drawings are where you find these theories. We tried to not follow the idea of replication.”



Pilar and Joan Miró Foundation in Palma de Mallorca, Spain, 1987-1992
 Photo: © Rafael Moneo / courtesy of Fundación Barrié



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These days, everyone can design, even on their mobile phones, thanks to innovative apps that allow consumers to use handy tools, broadcast their opinions and, more importantly, make purchases online. These technological advances may be assisting all design thinkers but are they changing the design landscape too radically at the same time? What does the future hold in the global design industry and is the new landscape a win, a loss or an own goal for designers?

Design is changing. Shifting technological parameters have led us into an age in which consumers have more choice than ever before. With technology as the catalyst, consumers directly contribute to the design process and affect the results. Questions like ‘what makes a designer’, ‘how is design best carried out’ and ‘how does increased public integration in the design process affect the end product’ have become increasingly contested. But with the personalisation of products now no more than just a mouse click away, what are the implications for designers and society at large? In a market which is, to be sure, consumer-orientated, how do we find the true values of designers against the possibly homogenous design with low quality outcomes resulted by consumers’ input? Consumers can change the design of a product or service but, because they’re not trained,

their product can be more naïve or may not be durable or, to a certain extent, even work at all, meaning there is still massive value attached to those traditional, trained designers who can create lasting design, just like Moneo’s architecture and Konstantin’s products, both of whom we feature in this issue of SIGNED. So, who is responsible for the pursuit of perfection in today’s design world and is it important that those accomplished designers still have the commanding role? We investigate...

Opening up

It’s no longer enough for consumers to be told what the best products, best ideas and best solutions are for their needs. Our increasingly connected world means that the conversation is changing – today, the power is in the hands of the consumer to tell others what they want. It

could be argued this new paradigm is symptomatic of a wider shift in cultural design, brought about by factors such as technological integration, changes in design trends, corporate politics and consumer demands.

Given the factors involved and their degree of influence are incredibly varied, it’s difficult to assign a single label that explains why the design model has altered in this way. However, there’s a tangible impact across the spectrum, with open innovation and an array of innovative platforms that modern advances in technology have brought about, such as the idea of ‘mass personalisation’. There are changes in how design is implemented and who is responsible for it. Open innovation, in particular, has seen the consumer become a necessary part of the design process. And as this new model is becoming increasingly popular, it’s seriously impacting the way consumers interact with design today.

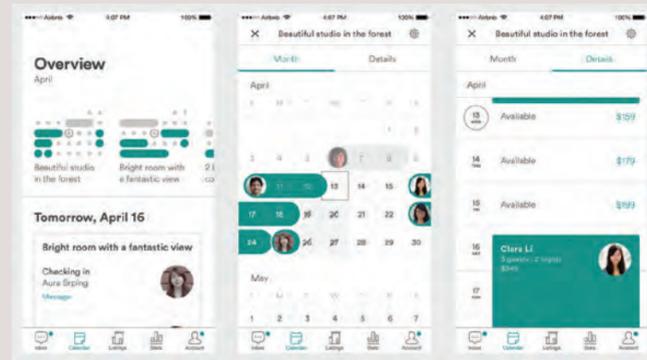
Design historian Paul Atkinson doesn’t sugarcoat it. “Open design will change everything,” he says, “for everyone.” In a nutshell, open design is a model in which a product is curated through user input – Airbnb, YouTube, Uber and eBay are just some of the high-profile poster children of this new movement. In this brave new world, content, and how the consumer interacts with it and reacts to it, is constructed in a peer-to-peer dynamic. Mechanisms like ratings, comments, sharing

and even providing rudimentary design tools to users all encompass the fundamental ideas of open design. A Hong Kong-based spokesperson from peer-to-peer ride-sharing service Uber comments on how the product’s design has shaped the company’s fortunes in the city: “Open design has changed the prerogative in terms of service delivery,” he tells us. “Companies no longer tell the user what they want – the user tells you, as well as their friends and anyone else who has an interest in your services. And if you’re not reactive to that, you’re doomed to fail. You grow and adjust what you’re offering based on feedback and you always have to be receptive of that.” He goes on to specifically describe how open design has changed the business’ operations in Hong Kong. “Earlier this year, we reigned in our taxi and van services and put more onus on our car-sharing services as a direct result of user feedback, demand and input.”





Uber drivers are rated



Airbnb hosts shaped the new calendar views

The Uber example illustrates how the shifting boundaries of the designer-consumer dialogue can affect not only goods and services, but, more fundamentally, the business models behind them. There's also crowdsourcing – an internet-based sourcing model in which individuals or groups (the crowd) contribute to the funding of products and services. Probably one of the biggest examples of this is Kickstarter, the world's largest funding platform for creative projects. This is a perfect example of how the general public is using the tool as many people who want a certain idea or project to get off the ground will willingly put money towards it. This not only eventually sees the project, product or service get off the ground but it also engenders a sense of community between both the startup business and the 'crowd' themselves. Everyone has worked together

to design this initiative.

It's also become hugely successful on websites such as OpenIDEO, which, in one year of operation has seen around 20,000 users share upwards of 1,800 concepts offering actionable, implementable solutions for issues spanning from alleviating poverty to helping cure insomnia. Garth Braithwaite from the Open Design Foundation – an online platform that aims to showcase open design methods and provide designers with ways they can be more open in their own design process – discusses the benefits of a community-led idea design process, the likes of which we see on these types of platforms: "To work on open-source design means to publish creative work with an open licence, giving the community a chance to reuse and rework your content in ways you may not have considered." In this model, then, the design process is not a finite one, but rather necessarily ongoing. An open licence allows anyone to re-appropriate a design to suit their specific needs.

Blurred lines

The cultural intervention of this type of critical design has forced society to hold up a mirror to itself. 'Open innovation' is in itself a conscious recognition of consumer assumptions and behaviour, representing the dissolution of 'consumer' and 'designer' into a singular, albeit fluid, relationship of need and service, creativity and practicality, each integrated. As a society, we are edging closer to the point where consumers are becoming the creators of their own products. In fact, in a lot of cases, they already are. As a result, the consumer is taking an increasingly central role in discussions pertaining to what should be produced and what form it should take. The burgeoning 3D printer industry, for example, illustrates this process. Take Thingiverse, a website with over 14,000 downloadable designs for 3D printers that people can use and share, and which is almost instantly reactive to consumer demand. With a 3D printer, anyone is able to create their own product to meet specific demands, a process facilitated by online communities such as the aforementioned.

Platforms promoting open design have also brought about the construction of an entirely new economic model. The traditionally separate concepts



OpenIDEO helped Glide design a watch band that enables seamless photo and video capture at the wrist

of consumer demand and production supply have now become entirely dissolved and subsumed into a single, conscious, human process. And as such, open design, in conjunction with consumer education – a byproduct of participation in these facilitating online communities – has the potential to emancipate both designer and consumer from their long-prescribed economic roles.

Making it personal

The breaking down of these traditional positions means that the balance of power has tilted, perhaps forever, in favour of the consumer. And as people want their favourite brands to represent who they are as individuals, the new design process has also led to more options for the personalisation of existing products. Of course, the idea of expressing oneself through one's purchases is hardly new. Centuries prior, affluent consumers would visit their tailor to get a new shirt made, or go to a watchmaker for a bespoke timepiece. The industrial revolution and the introduction of the production line resulted in a move that made quality-of-life items such as fashion and homewares affordable to the masses, all the while limiting choice. Something personal was lost along the way.

'Open innovation' means that, in a fundamental way, we're now seeing the consumer process come full circle. Increased accessibility and the breaking down of traditional producer-consumer barriers has led to a fresh yearning to stand out from the masses by owning a product which you know is yours and yours alone. It's about being seen as an individual, moving away from the homogenisation that has resulted from the process of mass production. The consumer is once again at the forefront of mass personalisation and customisation.



Thingiverse offers 14,000 downloadable designs for 3D printers that people can use and share

PERSONAL FIGURES

A Deloitte Consumer Review from 2015 ran a study with consumers on the subject of mass personalisation and customisation...



One in five consumers who expressed an interest in personalised products or services are willing to pay a 20 percent premium.

42%

42 percent of consumers who are interested in customised products or services would still rather be led by brands and choose from a selection of options.

One in five consumers are happy for businesses to use their personal information in return for a more personalised service or product. For the 16 to 24s, this goes up to more than one in four.

48 percent said they are willing to wait longer for a personalised service.

Over 55s are more likely to buy a personalised holiday than the 16 to 24 demographic.



On average, 36 percent of consumers expressed an interest in purchasing personalised products or services.

22 percent of consumers are happy to share some data in return for a more personalised customer service or product.

SOURCE: THE DELOITTE CONSUMER REVIEW, JULY 2015.

And it turns out that some consumers are willing to pay handsomely for the opportunity to express their individuality through what they own.

Building your brand

In our age of integrated media, mass adoption of digital devices and social networking, the self and one's own 'brand' have taken centre stage. Individuality is capital. Purchasing big-name brands like Adidas, Nike, Absolut and Levi's – in the traditional supply and demand model – has long been a way of constructing one's external image through active brand selection and alignment. But this is no longer the case, or at least not as exclusively as it once was. The digital age has bequeathed the consumer greater power than ever before, providing them the opportunity to dictate what they want and when they want it, from customised sneakers and jeans with your name on it, to farming and industrial machinery for optimum crop yield. Utility has made way for engagement.

Mass personalisation is, by nature, adaptable to the product or service to which it's being applied. In 2015, international professional services organisation Deloitte released a consumer review that analysed new trends in the consumer industry. One study in the review described three distinct degrees of emerging product and service personalisation: 'mass personalisation', 'mass customisation' and 'bespoke'. The review's authors describe 'mass personalisation' as taking a product already in wide-scale production and allowing the consumer to add or subtract certain aspects of it. The process can also apply to conducting marketing

campaigns with individually tailored content, such as recommendations based on previous purchases. 'Mass customisation' refers to the notion of taking certain individual parts within a cycle of mass production and allowing the consumer to bring them together in a way that suits their own personal needs. Finally, the 'bespoke' model allows the consumer to be involved in the creation process of a product from beginning to end. The bespoke design process can and does involve anything from having a suit made to building a house.

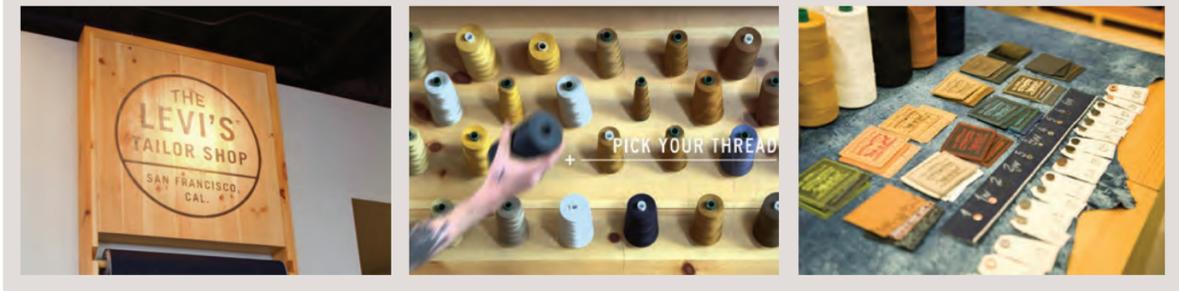
Who produces?

As far as the manufacturing and marketing process goes, new technologies like 3D printing that enable mass personalisation at lower costs are forcing manufacturers to radically rethink their design process and supply chains. Indeed, businesses are now postponing production until the latest point possible to allow for individual customisation.

The Deloitte Consumer Review concludes that 'as society becomes more affluent, the demand for personalised products and services will continue to increase'. It goes further: "While exclusivity has traditionally been expensive, rapid developments in technology have now made personalised communications, products and services more affordable and accessible." This conclusion is shared by experts at the Financial Times newspaper, who recently listed 'personalised production' among six factors which were 'driving the future of manufacturing'. Entrepreneur, author and lecturer James D Roumeliotis was quoted in the piece as saying that 'clients are demanding more

PERSONALISED JEANS: LEVI'S LOT NO 1

If you're willing to do a bit of travelling, then you can own your own pair of personalised Levi's jeans. Levi's Lot No 1 service launched in 2012 in San Francisco, quickly followed by the Meatpacking store in New York and finally coming to the shop in London's Regent Street in December 2013. As it stands, these are the only three locations it's available. They call it 'made to measure' but, in actuality, you're able to choose virtually every single facet of the production, from the seams and the tags to the buttons. Although a range of standard Levi's are used as a starting point (in three rises and one-inch waist increments), the best pair is pinned and chalked, with a unique paper pattern being created just for you.



and don't share the same sense of brand loyalty as previous generations'.

So how have these developments affected production on a manufacturing level? The shift in consumer demand has, in fact, been reinforced by manufacturing technology trends. Increasing rates of investment in advanced robotics, additive manufacturing and advanced digital simulation of manufacturing processes have lent themselves to shorter production runs and more unit-level customisation. BMW, for instance, leads the auto industry in the use of sophisticated factory automation to produce precisely configured individual vehicles on flexible production lines. Companies like Nike and Adidas have similarly employed robotics to enhance flexibility in production. Multi-purpose robots, many of which have been designed to work safely alongside human beings, now make it possible to manufacture unique items at nearly the same pace of high-speed repetitive manufacturing through methods of so-called 'hard' automation, a process suited to mass production of the same product with few, if any, alterations.

A brave new world?

As the public's behaviours and trends change all the time, especially with technology and highly accessible voices and comments, so design becomes more one-off or it only responds to a certain period of time. It seems that only bespoke design products last. Are we entering a brave new world then and forgetting about the importance of traditional design? It could be argued that the 'democratisation in design' should only be allowed to develop in parallel to the works of those traditional designers who can bring their training and experience to projects, products and services.

The new production methods are addressed in a

study by Dimitris Mourtzis, a manufacturing expert at Greece's University of Patras. In the 2013 paper Design and Planning of Manufacturing Networks for Mass Customisation and Personalisation, Mourtzis notes that: "Manufacturers and service providers are called to design, plan and operate globalised manufacturing networks, addressing challenges such as ever-decreasing lifecycles and increased product complexity. These factors, caused primarily by mass customisation and demand volatility, generate a number of issues related to the design and planning of manufacturing systems and networks that have been addressed by shifting technological trends." The study also details a timeline of how mass personalisation has impacted the production process at a factory level: "Firstly, [factories] increased the versatility of the allowable product variety that they produced. This resulted in numerous production innovations and design technology. Secondly, companies have extended factories to better accommodate these tools and techniques." Consequently, Mourtzis discovers, 'factories emerged from firms that introduced a series of products and process innovations that made possible the efficient replication of a limited number of designs in massive quantities'.

This process is slowly but surely changing the entire consumer business model – from conception to production to marketing, across everything from shoes to emails. While bespoke products have always existed in the luxury market, more businesses are now offering personal customisation services across a wider range of products and, importantly, at more affordable prices. Design, ultimately, is solution-driven work. Practicing mass personalisation and open design allows not only access to the right solution, but also allows consumers insight and access to the entire process.

PERSONALISED TRAINERS: ADIDAS AND NIKE

The sporting apparel giants both offer a customisation service with their footwear, with mi Adidas and NIKEiD respectively. Not only do the services provide customers with the opportunity to personalise their own trainers, but they also allow for the dispersal of hundreds of uniquely designed boots across the internet to entice visually addictive fans of the brands.





Alan Chan: a blueprint for design

The Hong Kong designer discusses the changing role and needs of the design industry and offers advice to those who are striking out on their own

With more than 600 local and international awards in advertising and design behind him, there are few experts in Hong Kong who are more qualified than Alan Chan to commentate on the ever-evolving role of designer in society. The designer, brand consultant and artist's philosophy of 'Oriental passion, Western harmony' is almost indicative of the changing design landscape that's been evolving over his 40-plus-year tenure. Chan's in a unique position to comment on the nature of design and how the conditions have changed for those looking to work within it.

Having a real passion for design is one demand for the aspiring talent. However, essentially, it isn't just about enthusiasm. Chan says there are some fairly rigorous requirements that a designer-hopeful needs if they're serious about entering the industry. "Unquestionably," he says, "talent is a prerequisite to becoming a good designer. It also takes everlasting passion and dedication to reach the pinnacle of the industry and achieve your goals. I have stayed inspired and tried to inspire others non-stop for the past 46 years with a play-hard-work-hard attitude."

Social media and the internet's open platform structure have also shaped the new design landscape, according to Chan. "The internet and social media have brought significant influences to the younger generations of designers," he says. "Everyone can easily explore and share ideas to anyone at any time and from anywhere. Resource-sharing is more accessible without the geographical boundary. However, this tends to lead to homogenisation and designs that lack originality."

This all brings Chan on to the issue of mass personalisation and customisation. Looking at the contemporary landscape of design, a raft of shifting trends can be observed, where clients and consumers are moving away from homogenisation across all aspects of design and are actively seeking a more personalised, artistic approach. Chan says: "Technology innovations in the 21st century make the new wave of mass personalisation possible. By fulfilling individual needs and taste, the consumer experience and brand attachment are enhanced. Yet brand owners and designers have to be meticulous and re-think

the creative and manufacturing process, so that the true individualised insights become an integral part of the design." Chan says there's been a marked change of late in consumer demand that has opened the door for individual designers and smaller, more boutique design houses. He says: "The problem – within advertising anyway – is that the industry has become so competitive and the clients have become so demanding. Many agents and designers have worked on the client's side so they know how to bargain between the agency and the client. Also, we must consider that the economy has been slow for the past 10 to 15 years in Hong Kong so budgets are getting smaller – but the requirements from the client have been getting harder, so a lot of designers have been tired of doing competitive pitches day after day."

"As a result of all this," continues Chan, "a lot of the great design talents have left the big agencies to start their own small companies and agencies with a sole focus on design, using design as the tool to create a brand strategy for clients. It's much more satisfying not having to pitch day after day, giving rise to a lot of small design houses. A lot of these small agencies are prepared to work with smaller projects with smaller budgets and are able to create something unique." Mass personalisation or smaller design houses – it all makes for 'something unique' in the late 2010s.

So it's clear from Chan that shifting trends in design and manufacturing has both reshaped the landscape and has caused a change in the role of the designer. But can anyone be a designer? It's clear that Chan doesn't put everyone on the same level-pegging, meaning there will always be a defining line. "I think amateur and professional designers can't be compared as they are of a different nature," he says. But, in terms of a designer looking to start out, he has some pearls of wisdom: "Opportunities are everywhere as long as you are willing to create your own exposure. For instance, jump at any opportunity to enhance your work portfolio, like doing voluntary design work for people you know. That's how you could start your exposure in the industry by giving before you take. Design as a career is like a marathon and the process of learning and creation is endless."



A chair in
The Silkroad
collection



The Way of Life



Above: Le French
Way @ Space

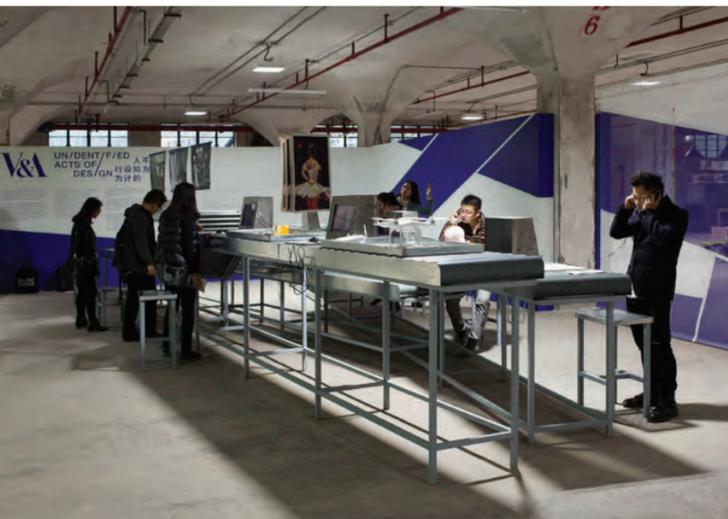
Right: Alessi
'Tea Matter' Tea
Strainer and Tea
Caddy





Going alone

The rise of Hong Kong and Shenzhen's independent design and boutique houses



Unidentified Acts of Design



Interior of Oct-Loft during their last creative festival

With a growing consumer desire for contemporary designs that are uniquely artistic and cater to an individual's whims comes a burgeoning, fast-growing independent industry in Hong Kong and Shenzhen. There's been a distinct movement away from a utilitarian focus within design and towards the boutique and tailor-made across a huge diaspora of creative consumer industries in these two cities.

Back in the 70s, contemporary, client-based design emerged through the advertising

industry and, since then, it's spread into everything from clothing to graphic design. Now, there may be emerging trends like mass personalisation and customisation but one of the biggest is that of the pure personalisation from independent designers and stores. And nowhere else in Asia is becoming a hub for independent and boutique design outlets quite like Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

While foreign and local multi-brand luxury stores such as Lane Crawford, Galeries Lafayette and I.T continue to perform well

in Hong Kong, there has been a quiet-yet-alarming rise in homegrown multi-brand and small-scale design houses and clothing stores which have begun to occupy a large share of the market. And, in some respects, Shenzhen is no different. In respect to this trend, especially in the Chinese city, as the middle classes gain more purchasing power, the consumer market is now undergoing tremendous restructuring. A portion of these strong consumers have started to pursue individualistic and distinctive labels, with their interest gradually shifting

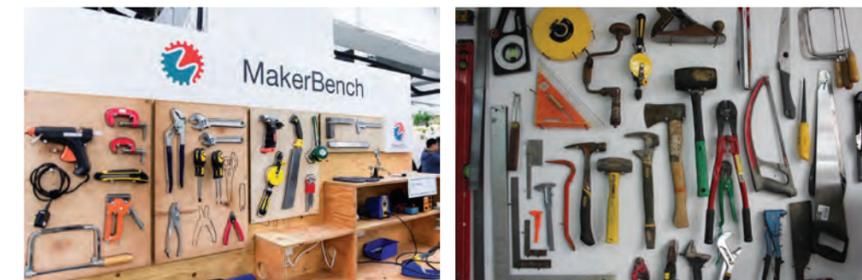
from popular mainstream luxury brands to those that express unique personalities.

Since 2004, when the municipal government of Shenzhen announced its intention to recreate the city as a 'capital of creative design', heralding the slogan 'From Made in China to Created in China', there has been 300 million yuan of investment to support creative startups. As a result, Shenzhen is now home to more than 6,000 design companies, encompassing everything from advertising to architecture and boutique clothing to video games.

One of the great culminations of this investment – showcasing how far Shenzhen has come within the global design dialogue – was in the form of last year's Shenzhen Biennale, with a highlight being the V&A museum's exploratory exhibition, 'Unidentified Acts of Design', supported by a grant from the DesignTrust. Curator Brendan Cormier described the installation as 'an exhibition and research project that seeks out instances of design intelligence in Shenzhen and the Pearl River Delta outside of the design studio'. "In a region of unprecedented growth," he says, "which has long served as the factory of the world, design acts can take on unconventional forms and occur in unpredictable places. By seeking out new definitions of what constitutes design, new actors and new objects are able to enter into the region's design history." Cormier says there were 'inventors, manufacturers, web developers, engineers and hobbyists who are not typically considered in discourses about design' interviewed as part of the project. He said it 'looked at the shifting design culture in what is one of the most fascinating commentaries on the city's changing design perspective'.

If we disseminate and profile cases where design is changing in the region, we can examine their design process. Building on the area's system of rapid growth, ambition, easy access to supplies and the tools to learn, the city itself has become incredibly accommodating to the design process. This can be seen from the work of knitwear technicians to engineers creating build-your-own robots, from anonymous Shanzhai mobile phone production to villagers building their own urban neighborhoods.

Looking to the future, Shenzhen and Hong Kong are symptomatic of the contemporary relationship between consumers and design. They could be seen as lab-rats for the rest of Asia. In the short-term, at least, these cities have become meccas for aspirational creatives working within the design industry and should continue to do so well into the future.



MakerBench

Going further in personalisation

Three Hong Kong and Shenzhen independents who are leading the charge to allow users to create their own design products

Lab by Dimension Plus

An open space of self-fabrication in Sham Shui Po, Lab allows customers to use a variety of tools – including a 3D printer and various production tools to help people bring their own creative visions and designs to life with the guidance of expert craftsmen.

MakerBay

A true open platform, community-led design space in the heart of Hong Kong. MakerBay gives the tools of independent design to anyone with a creative impulse – such as nurturing an invention from concept to fruition, utilising their services like consulting and digital fabrication or attending classes and events.

Oct-Loft

A sprawling cluster of buildings re-purposed from a disused industrial site that offer a pithy insight into the literal and cultural transformation of Shenzhen from the industrial to the creative. Oct-Loft is something of an enclave for local fashion designers, boutique stores and coffee houses.

Double Dutch

Rotterdam is a Dutch city that's often overshadowed by the historically fascinating Amsterdam. But this metropolis is rapidly changing and there's now a huge onus on cutting-edge architecture in both design and technology which is pushing it into the international limelight



Markthal



Rotterdam Centraal Station

Amsterdam is doubtless the architectural capital of Holland's past. But the second biggest Dutch city, Rotterdam, is fast emerging as not just the country's contemporary architectural capital but one of Europe's design cities of the future. Even a cursory glance at some of Rotterdam's awe-inspiring structures, with their cutting-edge design and forward-thinking ideals, speaks to the notion of true architectural aspiration – and all without the self-fulfilling, egotistical whims that conceptual European architecture can sometimes be associated with.

The city itself is in a unique position in that it is not beholden to any kind of cultural blueprint developed over hundreds of years of architectural continuity. Any kind of aesthetic identity it may have held was quickly erased during the Second World War bombings of 1940 and 1943, when it lost more than 26,000 homes and more than 6,000 other buildings. With architectural highlights such as the Markthal, Rotterdam Centraal Station and the De Rotterdam already serving to transform the city, Rotterdam is constantly looking to the future in a bid to reinvent itself and push the boundaries of function and design. If necessity is the mother of invention, then Rotterdam has long moved past that and is now forging itself a new identity as a global leader in design. As well as being on

the bleeding edge of aesthetic design, Rotterdam has also positioned itself as an environmental powerhouse. Last year saw the erection of two game-changing architectural installations, the Timmerhuis and the Smog Free Tower.

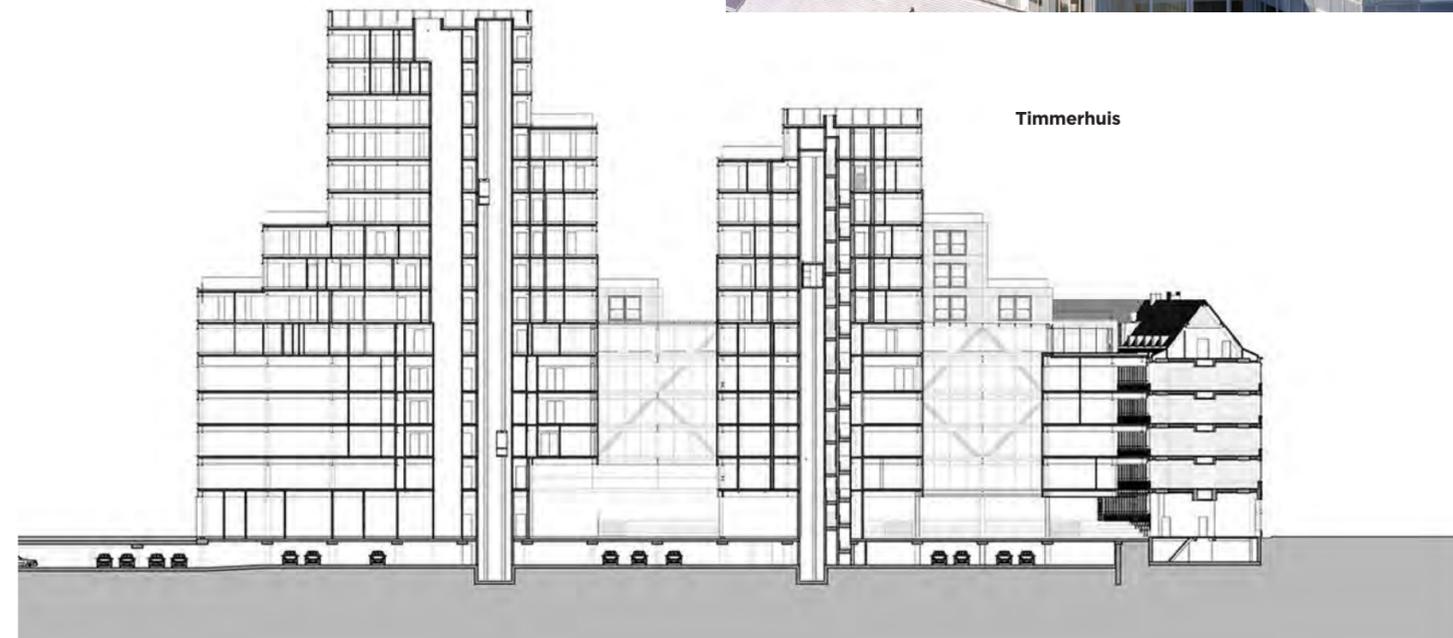
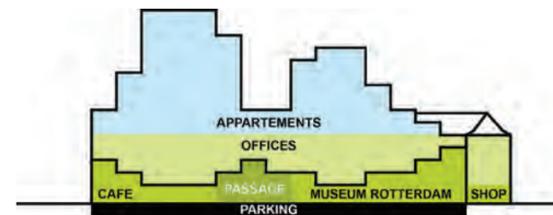
Timmerhuis

A glass-and-steel architectural statement in the heart of Rotterdam. The Office for Metropolitan Architecture completed its ambitious Timmerhuis project in December 2015. It's a modular, mixed-use building that achieves the daunting task of being utilitarian and environmentally sound while still displaying an incredible level of design savvy. Created to be the most sustainable building in the Netherlands, the Timmerhuis includes the latest in energy-efficient technologies and materials – the building's triple glazed curtain wall facade uses hi-tech translucent insulation that allows for unprecedented energy efficiency, and is the first and only mixed-use building in the country to receive recognition from the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method's level of excellence, the highest score of sustainability obtainable. It achieved this through its innovative structural system and spatial arrangement. Two large atriums punctuate the building, much akin to a pair of lungs. They are connected to – as architect and partner at OMA, Reinier de Graaf,



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As well as being on the bleeding edge of aesthetic design, Rotterdam has also positioned itself as an environmental powerhouse



puts it – ‘a climate system that stores warmth in summer and cold in winter, and releases this retained energy as warm or cold air as required’.

Showing that the city’s governing bodies have a real interest in Rotterdam’s architectural future with an aim to elevate it above other ‘green cities’ through forward-thinking architectural implementation, the project was commissioned not by a huge conglomerate, but by the



De Rotterdam

City of Rotterdam itself. “Rather than adding yet another grand statement,” says de Graaf, “Timmerhuis attempts a constructive ‘surrender’ to the city’s present state. The building’s formless, seemingly improvised composition acts as an echo of the city’s mood. It creates the possibility of different experiences: from the Coolsingel, viewed between the Town Hall and the Post Office, the building appears nearly symmetrical, monumental even. On the other side, in relation to the existing monument, the same building appears delicate and accommodating.”

A bright future

Rotterdam is set to host the 2017 Urban Transformation Conference, which is a gathering of some of the finest urban planners, designers and architects in the world. This is key to its plans to become a design and architectural world leader. It’s a testament to where the city’s architectural elite hope to take Rotterdam, moving forward. The conference is a culmination of 20 years of architectural aspiration in the city, positioning Rotterdam as a design and architecture hub that others look to for guidance. Speaking about the ground made by the city and where it hopes to go in the future, Reinier de Graaf says: “The city has had a remarkable turnaround in the last 20 years and architecture is playing a big part in it. The new architecture has been coming a long time but now that things are realised for the outside world to see, Rotterdam is in the spotlight. This is the city of the future and that’s something that we can build on.”



Colourful modern apartment buildings in downtown Rotterdam next to the Centraal Station

The Smog Free Tower



In September last year, designer Daan Roosegaarde installed, in his words, the ‘largest smog vacuum cleaner in the world’ in Rotterdam in a bid to improve the city’s air quality. The Smog Free Tower essentially acts as an environmental vacuum cleaner, sucking up and treating 30,000 cubic meters of air per hour and collecting more than 75 percent of two kinds of pollutants, PM2.5 and PM10, that contribute to smog. Using Rotterdam as a launching pad for the idea, the Smog Free Tower is something of a showcase as to what cities in the future could do to tackle air pollution. It was unveiled at Vierhavensstraat 52 following a successful Kickstarter campaign to help fund the project. The seven-metre-tall structure is designed to create a pocket of clean air in its vicinity, offering a respite from hazardous levels of pollution. According to Roosegaarde, it processes 30,000 cubic metres of air per hour – removing ultra-fine smog particles and pumping out clean air using no more electricity than a water boiler. Talking about his potentially game-changing project, Roosegaarde says: “The Smog Free Tower produces smog-free bubbles of public space, allowing people to breathe and experience clean air for free.”



PICTURE CREDIT: STUDIO ROOSEGAARDE

Generating change

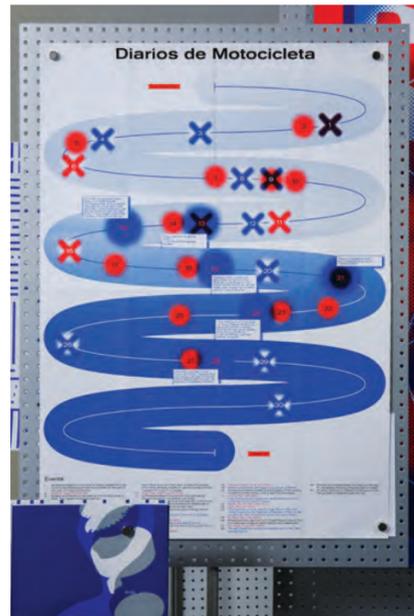
A new HKDI exhibition that showcases some of the best young graphic design talents from Switzerland is set to offer a window into the artists of tomorrow



SCOTTISH ECAL / TANCREDE OTTIGER, DIPLOMA PROJECT BACHELOR GRAPHIC DESIGN, 2015

Swiss design is counted among the finest in the world, particularly as it's home to ECAL/ University of Art and Design Lausanne. This European educational leader produces some of the best young graphic design talents on an international level. So the prospect of a collaboration between the Hong Kong Design Institute, the HKIVE and ECAL in curating an exhibition of works in our city from some of the school's best and brightest is, to say the least, tantalising.

Showcasing some of the gifted students' finest works, the *ECAL Graphic Design* exhibition between November 30 and March 5 at HKDI's Experience Centre offers a window into the future of tomorrow's great designers, a unique perspective within the industry while highlighting the precision and creativity of graphic design in action. The exhibition brings together works of around 70 students of graphic design at the university and is set to take viewers on a journey of the subject, creating something unique for Hong Kong audiences.



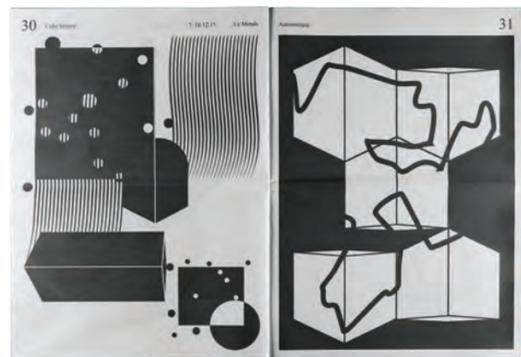
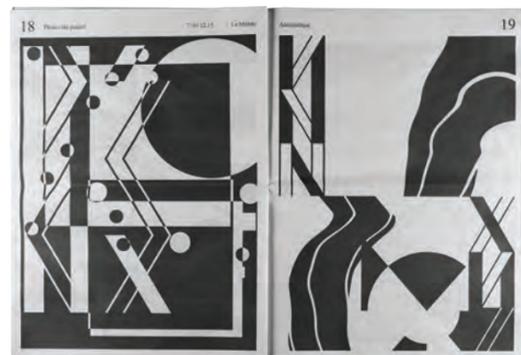
DIARIOS DE MOTOCICLETA, ECAL / YARA VELESO, 2015



GRACIA LUMNEZIA ECAL / DIPLOMA PROJECT BACHELOR GRAPHIC DESIGN, 2011



The aesthetic of Swiss style is the world-famous movement of graphic design in the 50s and 60s best known for its use of sans serif typefaces, grid-based systems, asymmetrical layouts and favouring photography rather than illustrations



Le Monde Automatique

ECAL WORKSHOP HELD BY LUDOVIC BALLAND, BACHELOR GRAPHIC DESIGN, 2015

Head of ECAL's Bachelor Graphic Design programme, Angelo Benedetto, offers some background on the exhibition, which actually started life as a book and soon evolved into an exhibition. "The project started two years ago," he says, "when director Alexis Georgacopoulos asked me to curate a body of work showcasing graphic design projects from ECAL's bachelor's and master's programmes. We asked ourselves how best to tackle the thorny issue of designing a book that retraces teaching practices involving multiple steps, discussions, research and experiments. In the end, rather than arranging the projects by type or in chronological order, we chose a modular, staged layout arranged by colour sequence. The concept worked so well that we decided to present it as an exhibition." The book *ECAL Graphic Design* was launched in March 2016 and the exhibition serves as something of a companion piece to the body of work, making stops all over Asia, with plans to take it to the USA next year.

The exhibition itself is the culmination of five years' work for these students – passion and creative onus for the craft of graphic design literally dripping from every piece. Benedetto shares an insight into the concept behind this as it manifests in the exhibition. "The book and the exhibition aim to show the liveliness and the freshness of graphic design as practiced in our school," he says. "It reveals a wide range of approaches, techniques and media utilised by contemporary designers." Although many of the pieces are contemporary in nature, Benedetto notes that there's still an inherent reverence to the doctrines of Swiss design while simultaneously offering something tangibly new and fresh that isn't beholden to the design manifestos of old. He says: "The aesthetic of Swiss style is the world-famous movement of graphic design in the 50s and 60s best known for its use of sans serif typefaces, grid-based systems, asymmetrical layouts and favouring photography rather than illustrations. The legacy of the legendary pioneers of Swiss graphic design still has an influence on contemporary Swiss designers but design in Switzerland is much more diverse and can't be reduced to those clichés."

The exhibition showcases a broad selection of pieces that use a dizzying array of techniques and composition. Benedetto also considers other highlights. "Among the selected works," he says, "you may get a glimpse of 'Transvercity/跨城市', a typographic project by Yin-Fei Gwee about the cultural desire between the East and West.



© PHILIPPE FRAGNIERE

Also, 'Grischa Lumnezia', a 3D typeface by Jan Abellan, that's specially tailored to contemporary alpine architecture (which is an award-winning project) and, finally, Giliane Cachin's final-year diploma project, 'Extreme Geography', which used new sequencing techniques to reshape the systematics of information typography."

The exhibition is a testimony to the strength of ECAL's design programmes, according to Benedetto. "The courses at ECAL are based on a workshop system," he says, "during which students can work with leading Swiss and international graphic designers and so learn from their experience. Another feature is that graphic design in the bachelor programme is part of the Visual Communication Department together with Photography and Media & Interaction Design. In addition to specific courses and workshops, students share common courses and work together on projects developing both the content and the form, laying down the groundwork for their future professional network while still at school."

The visual impact of the pieces is apparent, although Benedetto hopes that viewers take something more away. "We have had lots of positive feedback so far," he says. "The radical choice to present everything vertically and organised by colour functions exceptionally well." Benedetto says ECAL's aim was to 'forge fresh connections between the projects, opening new perspectives and hypotheses' when it comes to the exhibition. He says: "Rather than inviting individual readings of the works, we aimed to spark dialogue between them and read each work in the light of the others. There's a clear order, however arbitrary, and the visitor can concentrate on the individual characteristics of a project rather than seeing it first as a specific project type. This allows the work to be seen in all its diversity. We try to suggest, in a subtle way, that all different attitudes are presented and present at ECAL." If what is shown here is a small window into the future of Swiss graphic design, then the future is, indeed, bright.



Exhibition at Experience Centre, HKDI

A Rei of light

Enigmatic fashion designer Rei Kawakubo's spring exhibition at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art is set to become the talk of the fashion world

In 1983, the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York hosted a glittering evening honouring the work of the iconic Yves Saint Laurent. It was the first time the revered institution had paid tribute to a living designer. And this spring marks its second. The work of Rei Kawakubo, founder of the Comme des Garçons label, is to be showcased at an exhibition that runs from May to September at The Met and, according to the organisers, it's set to be less a traditional retrospective and more a 'thematic exhibition'. "In blurring the art and fashion divide, Kawakubo asks us to think differently about clothing," says Thomas P Campbell, director and CEO of The Met.



1 & 2 Body Meets Dress-DressMeetsBody, Spring 1997. **3** Not Making Clothing, Spring 2014. **4** Blue Witch, Spring 2016. **5** Ceremony of Separation, Autumn 2015

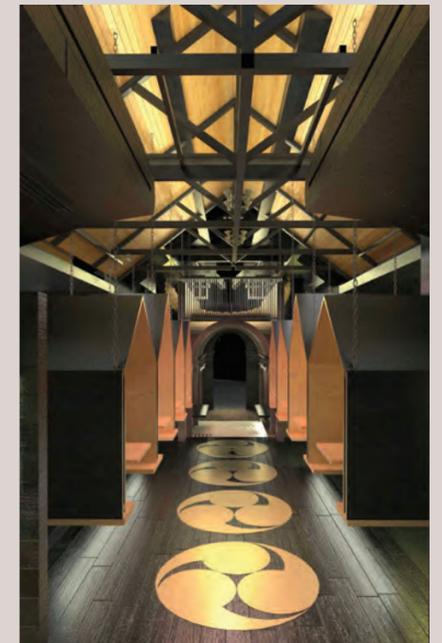
Indeed, while the designer's highly stylised and sculptural pieces have won her legions of devoted fans around the world, her name, and that of her label, are not exactly commonly known. Interestingly, fashion historian and curator Bronwyn Cosgrave says the upcoming show could draw parallels with the Saint Laurent one because of its possibly commercial applications. She says: "At the time, [the YSL] show was incredibly controversial because it was thought that a show would heighten the commercial prospects of [the brand]. This show will substantially elevate Rei Kawakubo and Comme des Garçons, which are by no means household names around the world."

Some 120 examples of the designer's women's pieces are to be part of the exhibition, starting from her first Paris runway show in 1981 to her latest offerings. Expect to see an avant-garde approach, like having the clothes on mannequins arranged at eye level. "It's likely," says Cosgrave, "that the show will focus more on her position in Paris, being at the forefront of a new generation of revolutionary Japanese designers in the early 80s and also her later work fostering a culture of young Japanese designers at the turn of the new millennium. Expect to see the Comme des Garçons label everywhere this summer."



Stress relieving art

H KDI higher diploma graduate in interior design, Cheung Ka Ming, has just won the 'Best of Category' prize in the Student Category (Interior Design) at the A&D Trophy Awards 2016. Cheung designed the interior of a stress-relieving restaurant, using Yuru Monogagari's concept which originates from the Japanese "夜物語" (the Story at Night). Many working people have bitter stories to tell, often about the pressures of family or work. The whole interior of this concept provides silence and relaxation, which helps these working people to feel comfortable after their stressful day. They can also enjoy the tasty Japanese dishes here as they chill out. This is a place that's been created for gathering and for workers to generate their own 'night stories'.



This concept won Ka Ming the 'Best of Category' award in the Student Category (Interior Design) of the 'A&D Trophy Awards 2016'

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