

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HONG KONG DESIGN INSTITUTE

SIGNED

ISSUE TWO 2012 HKDI

JUST DO IT
MICHAEL LYNCH TAKES ON WEST KOW-LOON

TAILOR MADE
FASHION FORWARD WITH LIZ Mc-LAFFERTY



PLAY
BY PLAY

HONG KONG'S
LOVE AFFAIR
WITH TOYS



«THE UNIVERSE
IS  TRANS-
FORMATION ;
OUR LIFE IS
WHAT OUR
THOUGHTS
MAKE IT.»

MARCUS AURELIUS

TRANSFORM

ISSUE TWO

EDITOR'S LETTER

The influential German artist, illustrator and educator Josef Albers spent much of his life studying colour and exploring its use in abstract painting and graphic design. He began his career in Berlin as part of the Bauhaus movement, was forced to move to the US when the Nazis closed Bauhaus and in six decades of work he collaborated with great artists such as Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, and Willem de Kooning and his students included revolutionary painters like Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly, Ray Johnson and Susan Weil. Albers' became head of the Department of Design at Yale University in 1950 and remained an influential figure there until his death in 1976. In 1971 he founded, with his wife, the Josef and Anni Albers foundation, which is devoted to studying art in its social context, based on Albers refusal to divorce art from its cultural consequences. Toward the end of his life Albers wrote, "I've handled colour as a man should behave. You may conclude that I consider ethics and aesthetics as one." In other words, Albers always tried to use his art in ways that would improve the environment in which he lived. For him art and design should serve society and not vice versa. This makes Albers and his fellow theorists in Bauhaus a suitable source of inspiration for this second edition of SIGNED, in which we explore the way that art, aesthetics and design can transform education and how education can, in turn, transform society as much as it serves the needs of individuals. We hear from Michael Lynch, the new CEO of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, who believes the new billion dollar arts and entertainment centre "needs to reflect the art forms people

are interested in." And Liz McLafferty (in *Tailor Made*) plus three influential jewellery designers (in *Shining Stars*) talk about how designing clothes and accessories can both be done in ways that are more sustainable, creating aesthetically desirable objects while protecting the beauty of the planet. This theme is also at the heart of *Change Agents*, which features the work of Professors Helmut Langer and Fumi Musada, who argue that applying the principles of sustainable design is an essential aspect of good aesthetics. In *Play by Play*, the history of Hong Kong's toy industry provides a case study of the way design shapes the lives of those it touches, while *Matrix of Delights* reveals how new curatorial techniques founded on innovative technologies can help preserve and give new life to ancient cultures like the Dun Huang. Art for arts' sake still has a role to play in the aesthetic and creative life of humanity but the crisis facing the environment and economy as non-reusable raw materials are exhausted forces all in the design community to ask if the ecological consequences of their work makes our current lifestyle more sustainable, or less. If ethics and aesthetics are one, then the stroke of a pen, the slice of a chisel and the stitching together of one piece of fabric with another are as much moral as they are artistic acts. Art is transformation, design is metamorphosis, and thus it's increasingly apparent that the changes wrought by the aesthetic arts and crafts have a role to play in creating a world and a society that is both beautiful and sustainable.

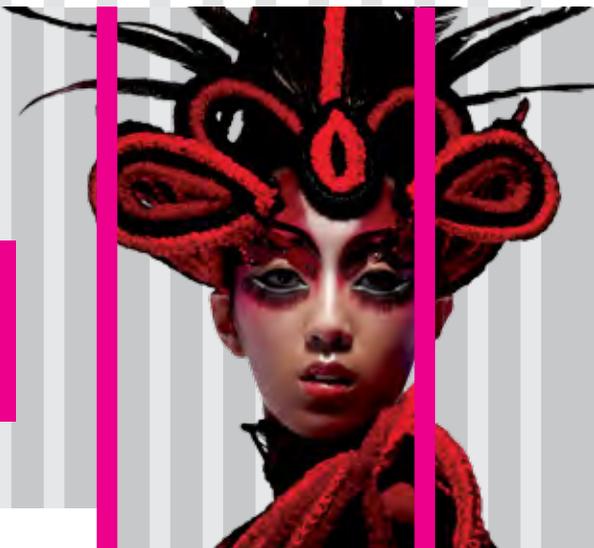
DANIEL JEFFREYS

Editor-In-Chief

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HKDI

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PLAY B PLAY



● **CATAPULT**
Before plastic became popular, the interior lining of worn-out bicycle tires were cut into a piece of sling and tied onto a dry twig.

Hong Kong's toy industry has had a dominant role on the global stage in the past but after a recent exhibition that showcased some of its halcyon days one of the city's biggest manufacturers of playthings says it's time for the region to win back its place in the world's toy box. **DAISY ZHONG** reports.

● **PULL-AROUND DOGS**

Toy dogs, for infants to pull around, have a simple design and streamlined body. What makes them special is that they were one of the few non-household products from Red A, Hong Kong's famous and oldest plastic manufacturer of household products.





C.K. YEUNG,
VICE CHAIRMAN
OF BLUE BOX
HOLDINGS
LIMITED

AN OPERA PUPPET made of pig bristle, clay and cloth. The bottom of the puppet is tied to a piece of pig bristle so that it can move on top of an inverted iron plate. The game works like this: if you tap on the plate, vibrations will move the figure forward. If it falls out of the plate, you lose.

This kind of home-made toy, along with others made from clay, bamboo poles, cloth and paper, were the principle playtime companions for children in Hong Kong from the Qing Dynasty to the early 1960s, as revealed in the exhibition *Toys Paradise – the Creativity & Toy Culture of Hong Kong*, which ran from December 2011 until March 2012 at HKDI.

As a key event in Design Year 2012, the city's largest exhibition of toy culture told the vivid story of Hong Kong's 60 years of toy making. It was organised by the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, funded by Create Hong Kong, and supported by Hong Kong Toys Council, The Toys Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Trade Development Council. Around 1,000 toys made in Hong Kong during different eras were exhibited at the unique show.

"Fifty years ago, when I entered the toy industry, not many people in Hong Kong could afford to buy toys for their children," says C.K. Yeung, the organiser of the exhibition and the Vice Chairman of Blue Box Holdings Limited, one of the leading toy manufacturers in Hong Kong. "We made toys for ourselves. We would use a piece of paper, a frozen ice sucker stick, a piece of wood and bamboo, a soda-bottle cap or a rubber band. We used any materials that we could find to create something entertaining. The element of design was certainly there. Every piece was a unique creation."

These nostalgic items were showcased in the first section of the exhibition titled "Emerald City", where visitors could see how around 100 toys evolved from the early Qing Dynasty to the 1960s and how materials such as clay, bamboo poles, cloth and paper evolved.



● **HUMAN-SHAPED CRICKET CONTAINER**
A dried plant has been hollowed out as a container for crickets. Shaped like a doll, it is both aesthetic and functional as a toy. The figurine's hairstyle was common among children in the Qing Dynasty.

● **MOON MAN 001**
Astronaut toys appeared in response to US astronauts landing on the moon. One of them was "Moon Man 001", a magnet-driven walking astronaut toy.



The second section of the exhibition, "Toy Town" showcased 800 toys made at the pinnacle of Hong Kong's toy industry, including games that specifically targeted boys, girls or both genders together. These toys reflected the widespread use of plastics, the application of electronics and other technological advancements, and how societal developments shaped the city's flourishing toy industry.

"Nowadays 70% of the world's toys are designed, created or processed from Hong Kong," says Yeung. "The city has been one of the world's most important toy towns for the last few decades." That is in sharp contrast with the city's reputation. "Ask anybody on the street about Hong Kong being a toy town, and not many people will know that."

● **DOUBLE-HEADED HORSE**
In the olden days, women farmers made stuffed toys out of old clothes (they normally wore dark colours so that stains and dirt would not be noticed).



Over the past 60 years, Hong Kong's toy manufacturers have become a major toy industry player. Exporting creative local products abroad, the city's toy men created global success stories, including Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles action figures from Playmates Toys, educational electronics products like Lesson One from VTech, the mini Lamborghini series from Maisto and electronic pets from Manley Toy.

To demonstrate these achievements, the third section of the exhibition was called "Toy Legend" and covered dozens of selected toys from representative local toy manufacturers that have been mass produced and sold as award-winning products around the world. This is the section where visitors could recall the glorious days in which post-war Hong Kong emerged as the kingdom of toys.



● **METAL TRUMPET**
Before World War I, Hong Kong's small, primitive toy factories would recycle discarded cans (such as Eagle brand condensed milk cans) into hand-made toys.



● **ROBOT**
The black robot in *Aces To Places II*, the Hong Kong box office hit, was transformed into a plastic toy and became the first action figure derived from a local movie.



● **BLACK DRAGON (YOUNG GANGSTERS) FIGURINE**
Based on a character in the Hong Kong comic *Dragon Tiger Gate*, it is an early version of action figures.

“The toy industry is a cultural industry. It has a close association with cultural and social developments,” says Yeung. Thus, as iPad and iPhone chic swept the globe, they became new toys for kids. “The current trend of high-tech toys has brought a transformation in the way children play, as well as in their behaviour.

“Most of the computer games lack the important element of direct communication or interaction among human beings. I think that’s a pity. By playing computer games, children are more closed in upon themselves. In the past, children played and shared with each other, but today this sort of interaction is less common.”

Yeung believes that playing has a huge impact on children’s growth, and is a form of education. “In playing kids are learning knowledge, and more importantly, how to behave and how to be social.”

For example, says Yeung, a doll is not just for entertainment, but also for a child to show how he or she can care for something other than their own feelings, through actions such as changing its clothes and role-playing. He thinks these actions train a child to express love for other people.

“I believe the most important thing for toy designers is to convey a positive message throughout society,” says Yeung. “Toys should have a social function. Apart from amusement, toy designers should think about how toys can inspire a child or assist their education in terms of moral values, virtues and love.”

« THE MOST
IMPORTANT
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Yeung believes that ongoing themes, such as sustainable development, environmental protection, and social harmony should also become central topics for leaders in the toy industry.

“People are becoming more and more self-centred these days, and the route to becoming sociable again may lie in our toys,” he says. “Kids could learn all these things by playing with the appropriate toys, learning how to live in harmony with the environment and with other people.”

Workshops held during the exhibition offered examples of the way in which children and young people express their care for the environment or society through making their own toys.

“In the workshops, I found that these young designers do care about social issues. One of them designed a series of handicapped animal dolls, conveying a sense of concern about animal welfare.”

The final section of the exhibition, “Return to Neverland”, exhibited 300 new toy creations from teams of inventors who ranged in age from 14 to over 40. These toys blended the creativity of 12 local and overseas artists with over 200 local students, who created many innovative toys after getting inspiration and guidance from a series of workshops that helped them to build a “fun paradise” together.

“The exhibition aimed at showcasing the vibrant history of Hong Kong’s toy development,” says Yeung. “But it also promoted Hong Kong’s toy industry, with a view to nurturing the next generation of local toy talents.”

Yeung adds that although Hong Kong has a splendid past as toy town, not many young talents are joining the toy industry because this career means hard work and perseverance. There is especially a lack of talent in toy design.

“Playing involves lots of creativity and passion,” he said. “And so does design. HKDI students did a great job in the toy workshops. Their designs are professional and inspiring. In the future, the toy industry would be very willing to share its practical experience with the students and assist them in a career full of amusement and fun.”

And once that happens, everything else is child’s play. ①



FEATURE

JUST ...



A BOY RIDES HIS BICYCLE ALONG THE PROMENADE OF THE YET-TO-BE-BUILT WEST KOWLOON CULTURAL DISTRICT

Fourteen years after Hong Kong was promised a purpose-built cultural district the site of the project in West Kowloon remains a blank canvass but the new Chief Executive, Michael Lynch, has promised to break through the inertia and make the dream a reality. He spoke to **DANIEL JEFFREYS**.



DOT



MICHAEL LYNCH GETS used to being asked about his health. His predecessors in the post of Chief Executive at the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) both left their posts early on medical grounds.

“I attended a meeting of the WKCD committee in January and everybody applauded when I came through the door,” says Lynch, an affable Australian who has held senior posts at the Sydney Opera House and London’s South Bank Arts Centre. “I asked why and they said I was the first WKCD CEO who ever returned to his job after Christmas.”

ABOVE THE BOARD OF WEST KOWLOON CULTURAL DISTRICT AUTHORITY SELECTED A FOSTER + PARTNERS DESIGN AS THE PREFERRED OPTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FUTURE ARTS AND CULTURE HUB IN MARCH 2011

It’s not surprising that leading the battle to build a cultural district over 40 hectares has taken its toll on those who came before Lynch. The project is years behind schedule, the initial budget of 21 billion Hong Kong Dollars looks like being too small by a margin of 9 to 15 billion dollars and the project’s name has become such a byword for controversy that Lynch is now seeking a new one. But despite these obstacles the man who revived London’s South Bank arts centre and turned it into a thriving and pleasant cultural destination is undaunted.

“The frustration about West Kowloon is that they had a good idea 10 to 15 years ago but it has taken so long,” he says. “Now I say it’s time to just bloody well do it, get it done. I was at a party to celebrate the 50th anniversary of city hall and somebody told me they hoped WKCD would be finished by the 100th anniversary so I am aware that time is of the essence.”

Lynch says that it’s a good thing that Hong Kong brought “an old man” (he is 62) in to move the project forward because he is “very aware of time passing” and he says that the progress the project makes over the next five years is absolutely critical “to maintain the confidence of the people of Hong Kong”.

MICHAEL LYNCH IN HIS
OFFICE IN KOWLOON



DANIEL JEFFREYS



In practice that means he would like to see construction well under way within that period complete with the emergence of a cultural centre that lives up to its potential.

“We have a 40 hectare blank cheque and no other capital city has that,” he says. “The legacy will be powerful if we get this right.”

There are those who say the slow pace of development at West Kowloon reflects a lack of interest in culture in Hong Kong and that the cultural centre will address the ambitions of politicians rather than the true needs of the people. Lynch’s view is that WKCD is an essential league of global cities.

ABOVE MICHAEL LYNCH AT THE CEREMONIAL OPENING OF THE WEST KOWLOON BAMBOO THEATRE, A TEMPORARY CHINESE OPERA HOUSE THAT WAS HOME TO THE FIRST PERFORMANCES UNDER THE WKCD UMBRELLA

“The great cities of the world create a diversified offer so WKCD is part of the city’s competitiveness,” says Lynch. “The competitive effect is important. The centre can build both local capacity and audiences at the same time as bringing in the best of the world to a venue that will become a global destination.”

The current plan for the WKCD envisages a two-phase development process. In phase one the developers will build a Free Space in the Great Park as a live music venue, the Xiqu Centre consisting of a main theatre, teahouse and art education facilities, a Centre for Contemporary Performance consisting of three “Black Boxes” of 400, 250 and 150 seats, the Lyric Theatre with 1,200 seats that will be “clustered” with an outdoor cinema, Medium Theatre 1 for mainstream Hong Kong theatre and dance, a Music Centre with a 1,800 seat concert hall and a 300-seat space for recitals and the Resident Company Centres with 120,000 square feet of space for administration, rehearsals, partnership development and creative work.

《WE HAVE A 40 HECTARE BLANK CHEQUE AND NO OTHER CAPITAL CITY HAS THAT.》

The second phase will see the construction of the Great Theatre, with 1,600 seats for large-scale opera, dance and theatre, the Xiqu Small Theatre and the Chamber Hall for small-scale musical performances. The plan includes plenty of small-scale spaces that Lynch sees as vital to the long-term development of the arts in Hong Kong.

“We want to give local artists a chance to develop their work and their competitive position,” he says. “Venues will be delivered that create a value chain. Where successful performers can move up the chain of venues as they find success. Somebody who starts in a small Black Box can by stages move up to the Great Theatre.

“And design is incredibly important to the project. It can’t look backward. Making sure that these buildings are future proof will require the cream of Hong Kong’s design talent. And the commercial activity that will be on the site provides huge opportunities for Hong Kong designers to play important roles.”

Lynch sees institutions such as the HKDI as playing a key role in delivering on this objective of a cultural centre with a distinctively youthful and local design flavour.

“I see the necessity for us to be engaged in a dialogue with the young design community,” he says. “And West Kowloon must be at the forefront of digital developments. Young, local designers are crucial here in designing accessibility, sustainability and connectivity. This will be a place for young artists and designers.”

Lynch points to the South Bank project that he led in London as a model for what he will seek to achieve in Hong Kong. Lynch was chief executive of the South Bank Centre from 2002 to 2009. During this period he oversaw the renovation of the Royal Festival Hall, which re-opened to great acclaim in 2007, and was responsible for major improvements to the 21-acre site that allowed for pedestrian friendly access, more restaurants and spontaneous public performances.

“The South Bank site had been a bit of a wasteland before and could feel quite scary after dark,” says Lynch. “The development there since 2002 provides a positive indicator of what can be done. If you aggregate Bankside (home of the Tate Modern), the Globe Theatre and South Bank that gives you the best sense of what WKCD will be – a mix of formal spaces, outdoor space and venues for informal experiences.”

The overall scheme for WKCD includes a large amount of open space and 150 spaces for restaurants, bars and shops. This has led some critics to fear that the WKCD will end up looking like another Hong Kong shopping mall full of luxury goods emporiums. Lynch is committed to avoiding that outcome.

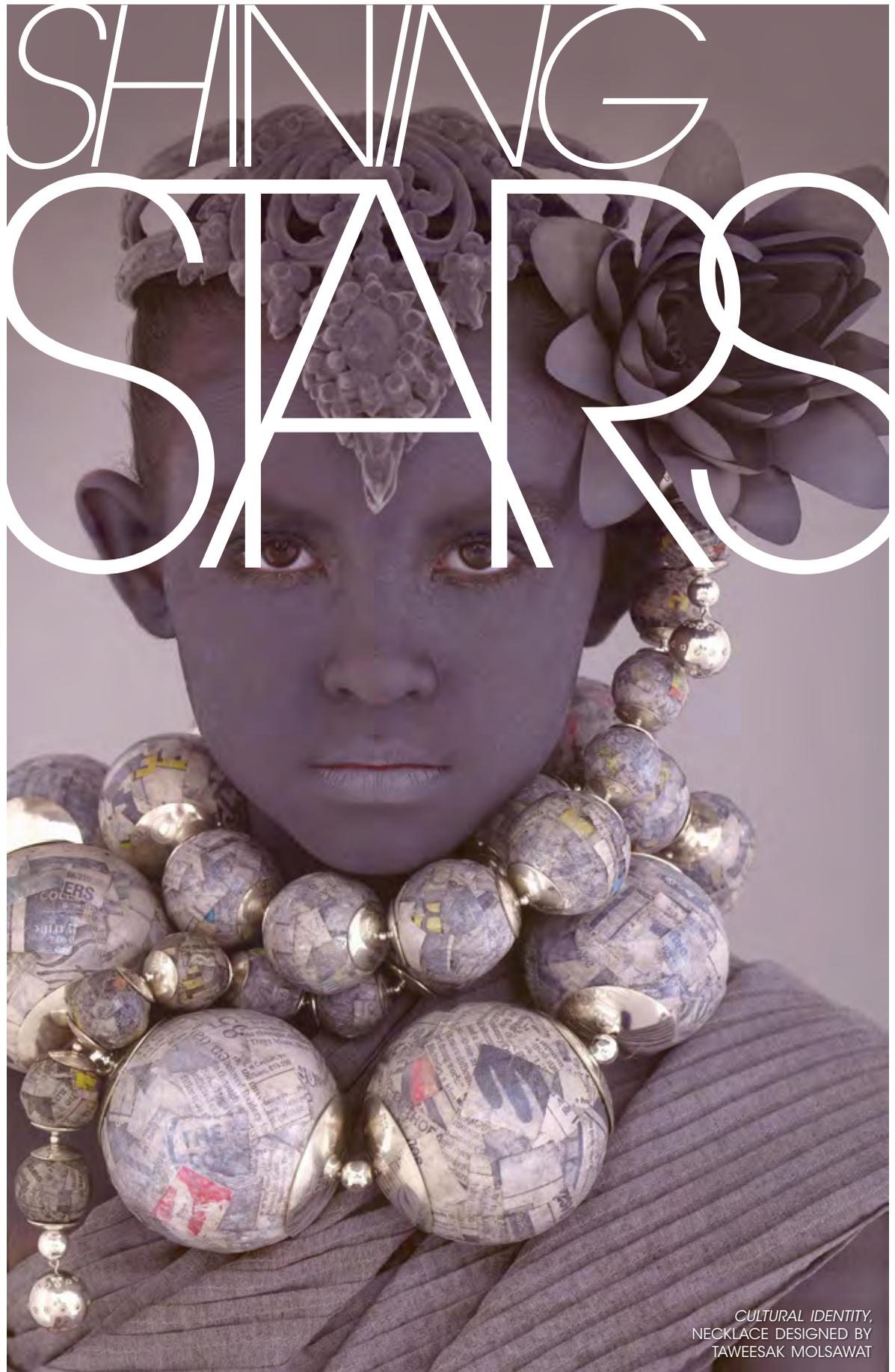
“We will not define the retail space by luxury brands,” he says. “We don’t want it to feel like the rest of Hong Kong. It must feel special and not replicate the shopping centre experience. I want it to be known for the artistic and cultural centre and so I would hope the retail experience will reflect that.”

Lynch sees the WKCD retail spaces as being a good home for the kind of galleries and design stores that have recently proliferated in Soho and Sheung Wan. He believes that having the right design features will enable the area to offer something unique but it must be built to impress.

“It is important that the WKCD have world class architecture,” says Lynch, who is on record as a critic of the architecture of the Hong Kong Arts Centre that currently sits next to the Star Ferry and which will be superseded by West Kowloon. “There are not too many stunning cultural statements in Hong Kong’s architecture. The idea of being able to say that the museum and the theatre and the cultural centre are so much better than the existing cultural centre is important for Hong Kong to be able to strut its stuff internationally.”

And strut its stuff it will, if Lynch can see his vision through to delivery within the five-year timetable he has in mind. And when it’s all finished and ready to welcome its first paying guests Lynch envisages an opening ceremony that has a tightrope artist walking a wire strung between Hong Kong island’s IFC and Kowloon’s ICC.

“It would be an amazing symbol,” he says. “The new cultural district is something that can unite all aspects of this city and make Hong Kong a place apart. It’s the last piece in the puzzle that truly makes Hong Kong into a world city.” 



CULTURAL IDENTITY,
NECKLACE DESIGNED BY
TAWEESAK MOLSAWAT

TAWEESAK MOLSAWAT

TRAVELLING IN MY HEART,
BROOCH DESIGNED BY SUN JIE



Hong Kong has become one of the most important jewellery markets in the world and the region's success has attracted top-designers. **SUMMER CAO** met three of the industry's most charismatic talents to learn what directions it will take next and what role the HKDI can play in maintaining the city's reputation for creativity.

«ALTHOUGH JEWELLERY IS A FORM OF PERSONAL EXPRESSION FUNCTIONALITY IS ALSO IMPORTANT. TO MAKE SOMETHING BASED ON FEELINGS ALONE IS NAIVE.»



CIRCLE, ARMPIECE DESIGNED BY FRANZ BETTE; OPPOSITE BELOW POETIC SPACE, WEARABLE AS A BROOCH DESIGNED BY FRANZ BETTE

“ORNAMENTATION CAN BE something other than beauty,” says Franz Bette, an internationally renowned goldsmith who has been making jewellery for 60 years, the last five of those spent mostly in Hong Kong.

“Asians are very emotional people, and this is sometimes missing in European design,” he says. “But maybe there is too much emotion in Asia. My aesthetic is different, based on geometry and mathematics, which are the basic elements of the universe. Although jewellery is a form of personal expression functionality is also important. To make something based on feelings alone is naïve.”

Bette’s philosophy can be seen clearly in his retrospective show *Ornament without Ornament*, which is a meditation on geometry, kinetics, and the algebra of time and space. The collection proves that geometric design can also be poetic and engaging, especially in works such as *Free Element* from the 80s and *Poetic Space* from the 2000s.

Ornament without Ornament reveals Bette to be a dreamer, with the soul of an engineer and physicist who guides his curiosity with precise analytical rigour.

“I am always curious about why things are as they are,” he says. “For example I like rowing – rowing is like dancing, requiring four people to cooperate with precision – its kinetic progression inspires me, and the movement of the boat is like my nature. I would like to design boats and bikes.”



FRANZ BETTE

Bette became a product designer for Omega in the 70s, and also designed furniture, but his craving for more poetic forms of creation brought him back to jewellery, where his work reveals a unique fusion of art and science in pieces like “Crossing” which features a pair of scissors.

“Children should keep away of scissors and knives, but they like them. So I started to design something that cuts well but without sharp edges,” he says. “This is exactly what true jewellery should be. It’s like a pair of shoes – first they need to be comfortable and then one can add accessories, but in Hong Kong style often comes before function.”

Despite his criticism, Bette is delighted to be part of Hong Kong’s booming jewellery industry because “everything is happening in Asia. Hong Kong is a huge market for jewellery and what is happening here is so exiting for artists.”

He also sees great potential in HKDI’s programme to assemble international design talents to nurture and inspire students. “I like being part of HKDI because the process here is as much about doing as it is about learning. If my students want to make one ring, I suggest they make ten – the more hands-on experience they have, the better. I love physics, and science is all about experimentation.”



Contemporary designers of Chinese origin are apt to have a sharper focus on expressions of feeling. It's not that Chinese designers have fewer scientific urges in their blood, but globalisation and the opening of Chinese society have made them keen to display emotions that have only recently been freed from shackles.

"Chinese contemporary jewellery design has only been developing for a decade, and it has been much slower to bloom than Chinese contemporary art," says Sun Jie, an award-winning Chinese jewellery designer based in Amsterdam. "During this time, jewellery design has ceased to be focused on commercial concerns and now leans toward culture and heritage. It has become more independent and individualistic."

Sun, a Guiyang-born designer, was brought up in an era when human expression was mostly restrained, as depicted in paintings like Zhang Xiaogang's *Bloodline*. He went to Beijing's Central Academy of Fine Arts before being admitted to Amsterdam's Gerrit Rietveld Academy, where his creativity began to blossom.

His latest designs have been suffused with emotion, a love of life and nature plus a hint of license mixed with self-indulgence. Each of Sun's pieces is accompanied by a poem or a short story to ensure its visual impact can sink in and reverberate, a process similar to the ancient tradition that was common in imperial China where text and image interacted in paintings.

In Sun's 2007 *Seed* collection, one poem reads "That day, in the water, I try my best to swim ahead, with the children/What do they think in the water?/I can hear my breathing clearly, just as I can hear the sound of splashing/Like the forests and rainstorms it seems I have heard a supernatural flower swaying in a mysterious garden./And then, I make an emotional splash and as the ripples disappear I discover I am sinking."

Sun believes that jewellery should, fundamentally, be a messenger, a carrier of thoughts and feelings about emotions. Even in his latest work about movements such as *Travelling in My Heart* and *Happiness*, the emphasis on emotion is telltale as suggested by the title. "The function of jewellery is beyond beauty and money, and it has meaning embedded," he said.

Sun arrived at HKDI in February, and under his guidance, students completed a creation titled *The Necklace of God*. "Most people forget to appreciate the rich and colourful world we have," he said. "Through this workshop I hope students can discover the freedom and flair of creativity, try to break some rules and search for the possibility of beauty among many different materials."

The designer was amazed by the students' passion toward jewellery design. "They have so much energy. Unlike students from mainland schools, they are eager to try different materials, and take great efforts to find them. I think this kind of passion is vitally important to succeed as a modern jewellery designer."

HAPPINESS,
BROOCH
DESIGNED BY
SUN JIE





Thai designer Taweesak Molsawat combines social activism, sociology, anthropology and archaeology and his collection *This is Thailand: Thailand from 2006-present*, sought to reflect the ways we have taken advantage of Mother Nature. The collection is made from trash that has been miraculously transformed and given new life in Molsawat's hands.

"Jewellery's cultural function is beyond to decorate, to make things prettier," he says. "My work conveys the message that we need to be more honest with ourselves and each other about the impact we have had on the planet."

He labels the trash he collects from Thailand's beautiful beaches as "cultural leftovers" and says that his work has deliberately lowered the impact on the environment. "I haven't bought anything new, and have not left any impact on the environment in the whole jewellery-making process," he says. "Everything is made by hand. I want to show people that instead of being thrown away, these objects can be made into new objects of value."

ABOVE *THIS IS THAILAND*
NO.16. 11-23-2011.
PIN DESIGNED BY
TAWEEESAK MOLSAWAT

Molsawat has recorded his entire creative process in a film that starts with his picking up trash, to cleaning and categorising it, to the environment-friendly techniques he uses to transform the garbage, such as stamping, drilling, banding, sawing and casting. The film reveals a confident designer who will work with anything put in front of him and is able to turn the most usual items into unique jewellery pieces, as if by magic.

Molsawat derives his Midas touch from his respect for life and nature, and a Buddhist heritage that gives him special insights into the cast-off objects he finds on beaches.

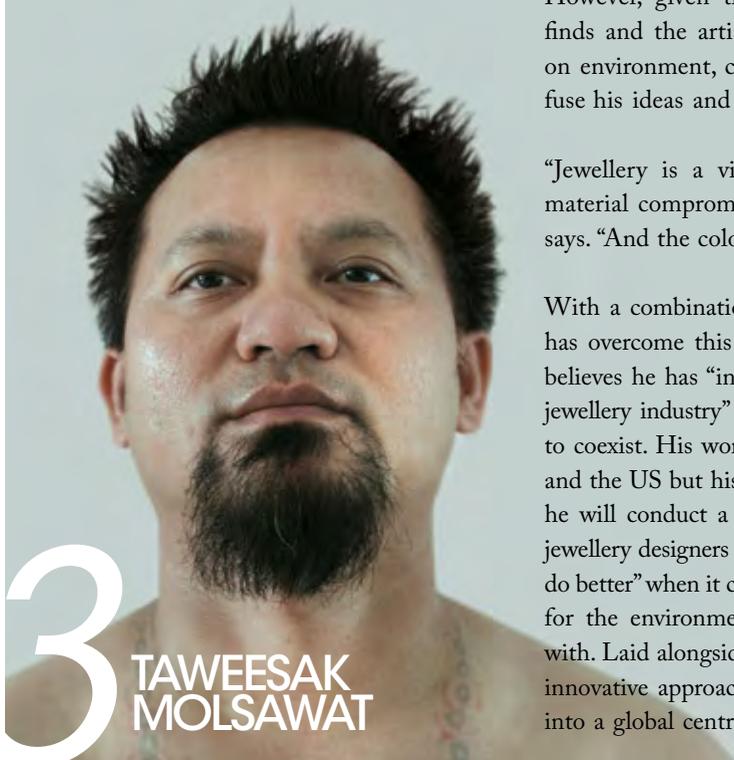
"They speak to me," he says. "I categorise them, examine them, study them and then give them stories. Some of the objects catch the eye easily, and are more recognisable, so I start with the ones that speak to me quickly and most clearly.

"For example, when I spotted a fish lure on a beach near a resort, it started talking to me immediately about the life of local fishing communities before the influence of capitalism became so strong through hotel development and a boom in tourism. Then I combined scraps of old US dollar bills with the fish lure. The dollar is a symbol of the tourism brought by capitalism and it contradicts the rhythm of local life, as expressed by the lure."

However, given the random nature of the materials he finds and the artist's commitment to having zero impact on environment, certain compromises have to be made to fuse his ideas and the available materials together.

"Jewellery is a visual language, besides technology and material compromises, the biggest challenge is colour," he says. "And the colour of trash is mostly dull."

With a combination of genius and perseverance Molsawat has overcome this difficulty by using natural products and believes he has "introduced another way of thinking to the jewellery industry" that allows for beauty and social activism to coexist. His work has won a strong following in Europe and the US but his aim is higher than popularity. This June, he will conduct a workshop at the HKDI to show fellow jewellery designers and students in Hong Kong that "We can do better" when it comes to combining creativity with concern for the environment and the people we share the planet with. Laid alongside the work of Bette and Sun, Molsawat's innovative approach is to help ensure that HKDI develops into a global centre for scholarship in jewellery design. 



3 TAWEEESAK MOLSAWAT

TAWEEESAK MOLSAWAT



BEAR,
DESIGNED
BY TAI-CHUN
YEUNG

TAYLOR MADE

RETRO FUTURISTIC.
DESIGNED BY
RAYMOND
CHIU-MAN LAU



Aesthetics and practicality make fine dancing partners at the HKDI's Department of Fashion and Image Design, where **Liz McLafferty** encourages students to explore the boundaries between the imperatives of art and the needs of society.



LIZ McLAFFERTY

IN THE 19TH CENTURY Theophile Gautier coined the phrase *ars gratia artis*, or art for art's sake. This bohemian doctrine insists that art be judged for itself and not by reference to commercial, religious or political criteria. At HKDI, *ars gratia artis* has its place and young talent is encouraged to produce work of a purely aesthetic nature, but the institute's fundamental belief is that the creative industries can and should be tools for social education and change, highlighting global concerns among students and the general public.

With this philosophy in mind, HKDI has sought to raise the profile of Hong Kong as a design hub and a centre for sustainability within the mediums of fashion, photography, and art. The creative trades both define and transcend culture – and so it makes sense that a school seeking to foster future generations of artists should also be global and thus the Department of Fashion and Image Design now has UK-born Liz McLafferty at its helm. She was appointed from the London College of Fashion on a two-year contract at the end of last year to increase the international element in the department's curriculum.

Respected for her experience in hair, make-up, fashion styling and visual imagery, McLafferty smiles as she contemplates her role as an educator. Having left school at 16 with only a few minor qualifications she worked as a hairdresser and never considered a career in academia. Working on photo shoots sparked an interest in make-up, sowing a creative seed for what was to come. Wanting to expand her skillset, McLafferty enrolled in night school classes to complete her A-levels, demonstrating the tenacity that would later bring her to Hong Kong. By the time McLafferty was 26 she had moved to London to gain her higher diploma in Theatre Studies at the London College of Fashion, after which she earned a BA in Education. Her MA studies took her to South East Asia and Japan, and her dissertation was inspired by Kabuki and Takarazuka, a dramatic art form in which woman play all the roles with the aid of elaborate make-up.

McLafferty's hands-on experience has seen her directing Wigs and Make-up backstage at musicals like *Les Miserables* and *Phantom of the Opera*, and also lending her expertise to television shows on the BBC and UK's Channel 4. Invited by her old Alma Mater to return in a professional capacity in the early 90's, McLafferty developed the first higher diploma in Fashion Styling for LCF, and was eventually appointed principal lecturer. McLafferty spent 12 years promoting the school around the world, and a collaboration between the LCF and the Vocational Training Council began in 2007, with BA courses in Fashion Styling & Photography and Fashion, Hair and Make-up, leading to her joining HKDI in 2011.

The school is “all-inclusive and all-encompassing of the greater community” according to McLafferty, something which strikes a personal chord due to her own challenging journey through the UK's education system. She speaks passionately about bringing the arts to all ages and backgrounds; not just school leavers, but also adult learners, and she is an advocate for evening and short courses that build up vocational skillsets, which are directly transferable into the work place. She says, “Even if young people don't have the Hong Kong secondary school qualification, there are other mechanisms by which HKDI allows them to acquire credits and then eventually go onto study at HKDI for a higher diploma.”

McLafferty likens HKDI to “a rosebud gently opening, about to spread its petals”, an entity in its infancy, taking its first steps towards the international stage. She says, “Check back in 5 years or less, we'll be up there with the best.” Whilst HKDI is yet to launch the career of a true fashion star, its students are gaining international acclaim and winning competitions around the world. At the recent ReMix competition in Milan two students from HKDI reached the final, proving that the institution's students can compete on the world stage.

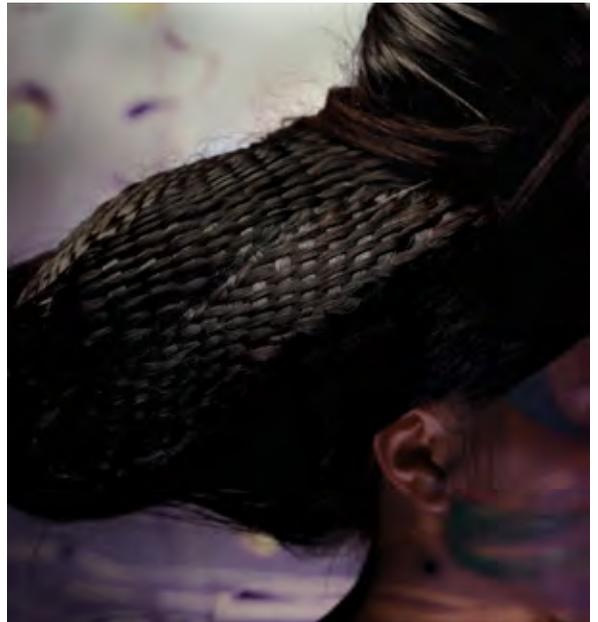
《HKDI IS A
ROSEBUD
GENTLY
OPENING,
ABOUT TO
SPREAD ITS
PETALS》



*RESPLENDENT
WARRIOR,
DESIGNED BY
CARMAN,
HO-YEE WONG*



CHINA DOLL,
DESIGNED BY
LIZ, LAI-YUNG
CHENG; BELOW
LEFT *STRAW*,
DESIGNED
BY WAI-TUNG
LEUNG; BELOW
RIGHT *FREE TO
FLY*, DESIGNED
BY AH-CHING
YEUNG



McLafferty credits her principals at HKDI, Alex Fung, who was UK-based for many years, and Leslie Lu from New York, both native Hong Kongers, with bringing an international perspective to Hong Kong's educational setting. Both have helped her to advance interdisciplinary thinking, develop creative growth and challenge existing paradigms. In pursuit of these goals HKDI regularly invites visiting fellows to engage students in new dialogues.

McLafferty especially commends HKDI guest photographer Michiel Meewis for teaching an alternative to "the big idea". Pondering life in Hong Kong, she attributes the hectic, fast-paced buzz in the city to the goal-orientated methodology in the students' work. Her objective is to ask the students to pause sometimes and understand that the journey is sometimes just as important as the final destination.

Meewis agreed and he felt the HKDI students were encapsulating too many concepts into one space or medium. Meewis brought them back to basics by considering simplicity as a "big idea" in itself by playing with simple colour palettes, and encouraging them to use the Hong Kong cityscape as a backdrop for their work.

Moving away from the classroom, in a field where practical teaching is already the norm, an increasing engagement between different areas of study is another vital aspect of the fashion department's ethos. To this end, McLafferty is looking forward to the arrival of Richard Strange, the famed actor/poet/musician, who will be a visiting creator in residence. He will be running a cross-disciplinary creative collaboration between the Digital Media students and the Fashion Image & Design students where they will style, shoot and edit short films with original soundtracks.

In addition to the cross-pollination of disciplines and cultures, McLafferty feels that the responsibility of higher learning lies in promoting a sustainable, ethical practice in design. This is especially true in cities like Hong Kong, which often fall short of acceptable environmental practices in industry. In 2010, a staggering 234 tonnes of textiles per day were discarded, on average, into Hong Kong landfills, according to the Environmental Protection Department.

"You'd be astonished at the amounts of waste involved in this industry, not just scraps of lace here and there, but huge rolls of material that are slightly off colour or somehow imperfect," says McLafferty, "It's our duty to raise awareness of the damage this industry can cause to the environment, and education is as much about teaching the fundamental skills, as it is about the bigger picture involved."

McLafferty points out that the European Commission estimates that 80% of the environmental impact of a garment is determined by the designer's decisions, giving fashion designers a major responsibility to do better. HKDI is therefore resetting the guidelines of design, from production into retail. The cycle begins with teaching pattern cutting that reduces fabric wastage, and recycling materials as well as minimizing pollutants, energy and water consumption.

McLafferty likens it to a dripping tap: you have to persevere, eventually the sink will fill up and the message will hit home. "Everyone is a fashion consumer," she exclaims, "Let's make some noise so the average buyer is thinking about these issues whenever they get dressed or walk into a shop."

The HKDI's vision for sustainability connects students, professional designers, manufacturers and the local community. The Event/Community aspect of the Fashion Design & Branding course seeks to raise awareness of industrial garment waste, as well as to highlight the plight of disadvantaged residents in Hong Kong. Garment waste will be used to produce accessories and bags, and members of the Salvation Army and The Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation will be invited to participate in the production alongside the students. The profit from sold products will be go to the Salvation Army – a heartening example of a course poised to make a measurable difference.

A horticultural venture is next in the pipeline. HKDI is looking to establish a garden on their campus grounds to cultivate plants from which to extract natural colourings for fabric processing. Currently in the planning stages, the programme will include research projects on the application of natural dye plants in various fields including fashion, textiles, hair and paper. Workshops and seminars will be given by leading dye experts, research undertaken and a collection of fashion and textile designs produced.

When asked about her objectives for her two years at HKDI, McLafferty says that whilst it is a limited timespan, she'd like to be known as supportive and inclusive of all the staff. She is adamant that everyone should have a voice, as the lecturers and tutors are the backbone of the institute, and in ensuring their "sustainability", she hopes to ensure the sustainability of the students and school itself. A fine ambition and one tailored to succeed. 

DAILY SKETCH

*Derek Marks is an artist who draws his inspiration from the people around him. After spending three months at the HKDI as a visiting fellow he tells **DANIEL JEFFREYS** that Hong Kong is the perfect place to find subjects for his work.*

IT'S 5PM ON a Wednesday in a cocktail lounge on London's Regent street and I am sipping cold white wine with Derek Marks. While we are chilled the same could not be said of a couple nearby who are engaged in a lip-locked, limb-entwined wrestling match of the sort that is best played out in private.

"I think they're married, but not to each other," he says, punctuating the sentence with a sly grin. "Otherwise they'd save that for when they got home."

Spend some time with Marks and it's impossible not to notice that he has exceptional people radar and is always scanning internal space for people he might find interesting. And it's always people, never things.

"I like to draw the useless moments of life," he says. "The moments when somebody doesn't seem to be doing anything relevant. These are the moments they won't remember."

Marks chooses these moments of everyday life because he feels they give him an insight into the true character of his subject.

"I draw people when they are off guard," he says. "They are not aware that I am drawing them so they are natural. I have become quite expert at drawing people so they are not aware of me.

I should have been a detective."

If a detective is the one who discovers what is hidden then Marks qualifies for the title. His work, which has been exhibited at major galleries in Europe and Asia, has a profoundly cool observational quality that suggests he sees well beyond the surface of the people he draws.

"Derek's work invites us to look in, to catch sight of, a subjective experience and to share a visual questioning about the nature of identity and identification," says the artist and psychotherapist Rebecca Bergese. "He has a deep commitment to the tradition of painting, and so his images use the figure as a medium through which to explore the notion of a subjective self in relation to an objective identity."



DEREK MARKS AT WORK

One of the best examples of this process in Marks' recent work is the painting *Carmen* which was exhibited in his *Girls at Play* series that had its premiere at the Bicha Gallery in London last year. The piece was derived from a sketch and the process from freehand drawing to full painting shows much about the way Marks works.

"I was at a bus stop on my way back from buying art supplies and I saw this girl talking to two guys," he says. "The guys were interested in her but she wasn't interested. She was looking at her iPhone, and her face was so full of life. It was a joy to behold."

Marks makes dozens of drawings every week but only a few become full scale paintings. And often it's the most perfect and fully worked drawings that do not become paintings, whereas the sketches that are done in a heart beat with only a few lines are the ones that frequently become what he regards as his best paintings. Thus it was with *Carmen*.

"I got enough information from her face to capture something," he says. "The whole thing became a big 5 foot by 6 foot painting. I called it *Carmen* because she was so spirited, like the opera and men were interested in her. As an artist I have to see the moment and not think too much."

This was a principle Marks tried to teach the students he worked with at HKDI on a project called "Face and Façade" in which he asked them to make "head adornments" inspired by shapes in their immediate environment.

"I wanted the students to understand that clothing design doesn't have to come from make-up or fashion but it can be derived from anything you want to invest interest in," he says. "I wanted the students to pay particularly close attention to the architecture around them and see if they could find inspiration there. The result was some wonderful head adornments."

« *I like to draw the useless moments of life... The moments when somebody doesn't seem to be doing anything relevant.* »

OPPOSITE MAIN *CARMEN* FROM THE *GIRLS AT PLAY* SERIES; OPPOSITE BELOW LEFT TO RIGHT *FIRST LOVE* (2011) AND A SKETCH FOR THE HKDI ARCHIVE, BOTH BY DEREK MARKS

« *Artists have to adapt whatever they can to serve the purposes of their inspiration.* »

Marks hopes to return for another stint at HKDI later this year. He found the bustle of Hong Kong to be a perfect place for people watching.

"My art is very heavily based on my life," he says. "Proust used to say that he spent as much time giving art to his life as he gave life to his art. I can't be stuck 24 hours a day in my studio. I am inspired by what's around me, by communicating with what's around me. That made Hong Kong the perfect place for me."

In common with all the fellows invited to HKDI to participate in creative programmes Marks was asked to contribute a creative work to a new archive.

"Derek has produced some sketches for us," says Liz McLafferty, head of the Fashion and Image Design Department. "Previously the fashion photographer Michiel Meewis, took some images whilst he was in Hong Kong in response to his stay here. So we are building a collection of 'material', which may form part of an exhibition of staff and visitors work in the future."

Marks was happy to contribute to the archive although he was concerned that Hong Kong's humidity would not be kind to the heavy stock paper he likes to use for his drawings. He overcame the problem by using paper that is not of such high quality and hence does not absorb moisture so readily.

"Artists have to adapt whatever they can to serve the purposes of their inspiration," he says. "I can't separate my life from my art that's why everything I experience has a place in my work." ☺

Derek Marks is represented by Bicha Gallery, London (www.bicha.co.uk)



MASTER STROKES

A new exhibition at HKDI will reveal how one of China's most famous contemporary artists created a unique synthesis between East and West.

WU GUANZHONG (吳冠中) IS widely recognised as the father of modern Chinese painting. A contemporary Chinese artist, his work features Chinese architecture, plants, animals, landscapes and waterscapes in a style reminiscent of the impressionist painters of the early 1900s. Some of Wu's most important works will be exhibited at HKDI in May 2012, in order to enhance HKDI students' understanding of Chinese culture and their ability to use the Chinese painting medium as a means to visualise ideas for their design projects.

Master Wu was born in Yixing, Jiangsu, in 1919. In 1942 he graduated from the National Arts Academy, Hangzhou and in 1947 travelled to Paris to study at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts on a government scholarship. Although he initially taught traditional watercolour painting, Wu began to combine western watercolours and Chinese ink painting techniques. The experiment was successful and his watercolour paintings integrated eastern artistic concepts with western disciplines. This combination made him famous as a watercolour



ABOVE WU GUANZHONG, *TWO SWALLOWS*; TOP WU GUANZHONG, *祈禱 (PRAY)*

landscape painter in China.

In August 1966, at the outset of Cultural Revolution, Wu was prohibited from painting and writing about art, and many of his early works were destroyed. It was not until after Mao Zedong's death in 1976 that Wu, like many of his peers, was able to return to his work. Wu had his first solo exhibition in 1979, and his career took off

in the 1980s. In 1991 Wu was made an Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture.

With the support of Hong Kong Museum of Art (HKMA), the HKDI Wu project will consist of an exhibition, a series of seminars and Chinese ink painting workshops conducted by curators and HKDI teaching staff. ☺



COLOUR CODE

In November and December this year, HKDI will collaborate with The Design Alliance Asia (tDA Asia) – one of Asia’s most extensive creative networks – to host an exhibition entitled “Colours of Asia”.

COLOURS MEAN DIFFERENT things in different cultures, and the symbolism attached to colours is a powerful way to express cultural uniqueness and meaning amongst different countries in Asia.

Over the course of 2012, tDA Asia’s associates from across Mainland China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Laos, the Middle East, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam will conduct research and identify the different symbolic significance in various Asian cultures that influence beliefs, lifestyle and design.

The exhibition aims at fostering an exchange of creative ideas and

comparative studies of culture through designs focusing on the use of colours. It will also help generate a creative cultural environment within the local design community to develop an appreciation of the vibrant use of colour in the artwork of Asian cultures.

In addition to the exhibition, a series of workshops, seminars and forums will be held to support the programme and facilitate an exchange of ideas between members and participants including students, professionals, educators and the general public.

The events will be opened to the public and all participants with no charge. 



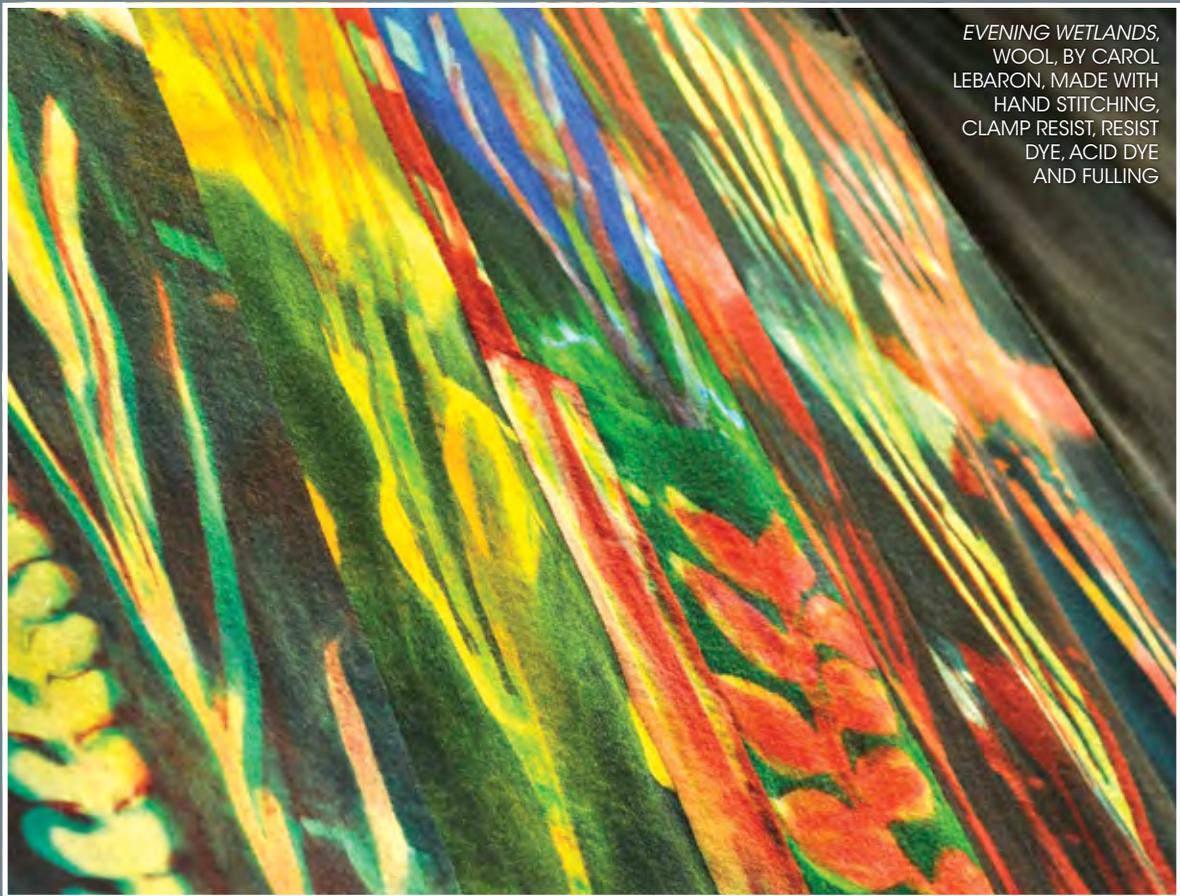
ABOVE COLOUR-FILLED CONTAINERS ARE A COMMON SITE IN HOMES, WORKPLACES AND STREET SHOPS DURING THE COLOUR FESTIVAL ‘HOLI’ IN INDIA; TOP COSTUMES USED BY DANCERS IN THE PHILIPPINES



FIT TO BE TIED

In conjunction with the 8th International Shibori Symposium, HKDI presented *The Animal Fiber: Art Informs Shibori* from 13 December 2011 to 14 January 2012, revealing how an ancient technique has grown into an art form revered by couturiers and a medium of experimentation loved by children of all ages. DAISY ZHONG reports.

PANEL 7, SILK AND WOOL, BY JEUNG-HWA PARK, USING MACHINE KNITTING, TYING, FELT AND DYE



EVENING WETLANDS,
WOOL, BY CAROL
LEBARON, MADE WITH
HAND STITCHING,
CLAMP RESIST, RESIST
DYE, ACID DYE
AND FULLING

THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION of textile artwork showcased Shibori's inherent transformative power on material and the way it moves fabric from 2- to 3-D.

With its shape changing and volume shifting abilities, the Shibori process, which is often known as "tie-dyeing" in the west, creates a unique interplay with animal-based fibers. The exhibition also served as a commentary on contemporary global innovations in materials that have been with humanity since primeval times.

The point of departure for this exhibition was artwork made from animal fiber, animal hide, or a combination of both, utilizing the principles of shaped or resisted Shibori dyeing techniques. The works were inspired by the transformative

properties of materials and their potential to change surface and structure, exhibiting visual and dimensional transformation.

"The design process can begin with it, as in pattern dyeing, or end with it, as in over-dyeing and shaping", says Jorie Johnson, a renowned textile artist and co-curator of the exhibition. "I enjoy utilizing even the most simplistic of the resist motifs to emphasize the movement of the line I have preserved in the wool, so I can apply the technique myself without the aid of a professional dyer. There can be vibrancy, as well as, a subtlety to the application of Shibori techniques."

There were a total of 52 pieces of artworks showcased in the exhibition from 39 international textile artists, including a masterpiece from Junichi Arai,

who was an important choice for the exhibition because his innovative approaches have made him a designer's designer. For more than 40 years Arai has been rethinking fabric's identity: making three-dimensional scarves out of steel, reinterpreting ancient traditions like Shibori, and developing flame-retardant fibers for theatrical and commercial drapery. His collaborations with Issey Miyake and Comme des Garçons in the 1970s and '80s – when he became known for combining the new technologies of the West with the ancient Japanese art of obi fabric weaving – have had a huge influence on interior, fashion, and textile designers.

Accompanying the main exhibition was another show titled, *Animal Fibers in Chinese Tradition*, curated by Edith Cheung, which

showcased 16 items chosen from different regions of China, with interesting uses of animal fibres on display, especially from minority groups who raise sheep, goats, horses, yaks, camels and birds. Various techniques were displayed, including those used for headdresses, costumes, carpets and stage costumes, including weaving, interlacing and embroidery. The exhibits are all on loan from the Textile Collection of the Jin Ze Arts Center.

Johnson says that animal fibres have a good memory for retaining shape after being exposed to extreme changes in conditions such as heat, pH and time. “The variations and techniques which fall under the Shibori Tie-dye umbrella when applied to animal fibers can produce simply extraordinary effects on the cloth or the object itself.”

As part of the project there is a third, extended exhibition, *Wearable Art: Draped, Shaped, Flow and Shadow*. And it focuses on the notion of clothing as an extension of the skin, which stretches and contracts as the body moves. The concept of clothing “as a second skin” implies that clothing should be a good fit with a wearer’s day-to-day movements, feelings, and activities. This approach leaves room for the active participation of the wearer in the design process because it is they who actually complete the designer’s artistic vision.

Using Shibori to add not patterning, but texture alone to a piece contributes to the creation of a new type of garment in which shape and function are dictated by material. The artists and designers in the exhibition share their unique investigations in this conceptual and playful approach to wearable design.

BELOW CREATIVE FELTING DESIGN WORKSHOP HELD AT HKDI DURING THE EXHIBITION PERIOD; OPPOSITE ITEMS IN THE EXHIBITION



“The simplicity of wrapping a fabric with rope and therefore preserving that area from being touched by colour is such a primitive pattern making action, yet it can be highly sophisticated as well,” says Johnson. “This shows the flexibility of the medium when directed by individual artists and, as seen in our recent show the range of work produced is broad.”

During the exhibition period, renowned artists and exhibitors were invited to deliver workshops and seminars to HKDI staff and students, including Makiko Minagawa, the Director of Textile Design at Issey Miyake Design Studio; Yoshiko I. Wada, President of World Shibori Network; Michel Garcia, Botanist and founder of Couleur Garance and of the Botanical

Garden of Dye Plants in France; Rta Kapur Chishti, author of the book *Saris – Traditional and Beyond* and founder of the Saree School, India and renowned textile artists Ana Lisa Hedstrom and Jorie Johnson.

“The primitive aspects as well as the exceptionally sophisticated and detailed work of true lifelong practitioners of Shibori makes this dyeing and shaping technique approachable by children, as well as, professional textile artists,” says Johnson. “Excellent results can be achieved with little equipment and a personalised item is produced and that thrill is uplifting.” It is not surprising that Shibori has been so enduring in occasional periods of mass-market popularity to attain an honoured position in the fashion and fabric designer’s toolbox. 

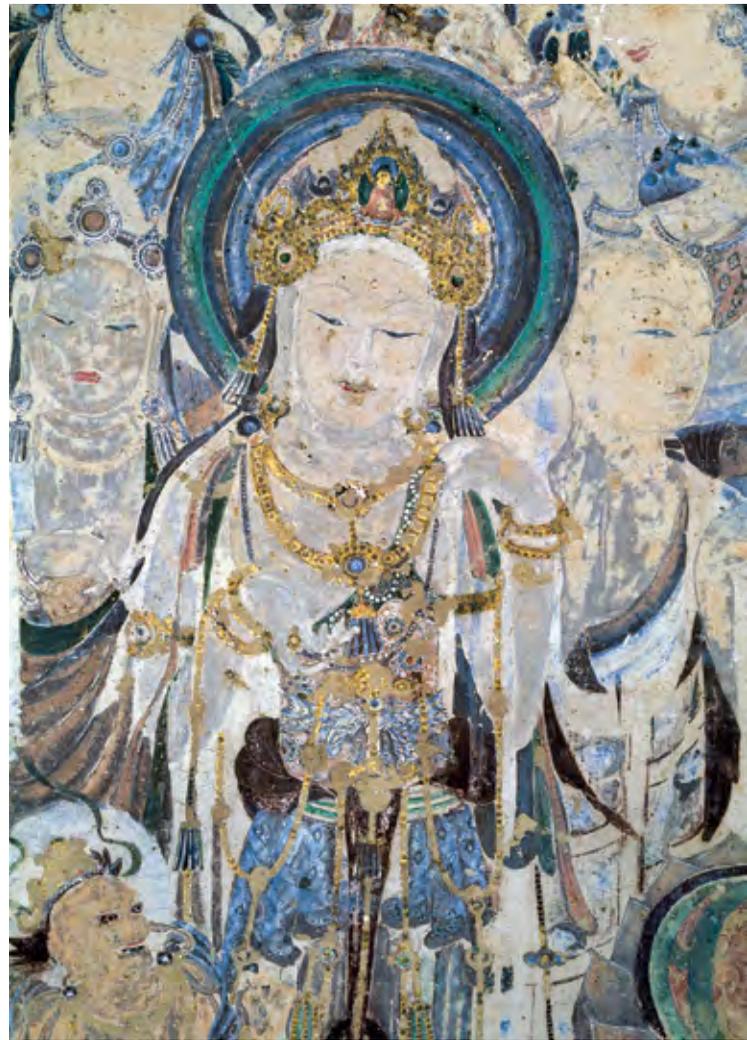
MATRIX OF DELIGHTS

Using skills from the 21st century scholars are putting digital techniques to work in an effort to preserve the endangered artefacts of China's Dunhuang region, where the Mogao caverns represent one of the world's most important repositories of ancient art. As **DAISY ZHONG** reports, part of their solution has been to digitally recreate the caves in Hong Kong.

“**C**HIC LEGGINGS WERE highly fashionable in the Tang Dynasty 1000 years ago, and were worn inside translucent gowns or plus fours,” said Lee Mei-Yin, a researcher with the Dunhuang Academy and a renowned scholar of Dunhuang culture, “Tang people were so bold and open in their make-up and dress.”

Lee saw the leggings depicted in a mural during her first visit to the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, and her astonishment at the stylish collections of clothing displayed on the ancient murals has only grown during her 22 subsequent visits.

Located in a desolate part of northwest China, the Dunhuang UNESCO World Heritage site is a treasury of Buddhist art displayed in grotto temples that abound with murals, statues and architectural monuments created from 366AD to 1368AD across 10 dynasties. These Buddhist arts, originally designed to assist devotional contemplation, eventually acquired



AVALOKITESVA (GUAN-YIN) PAINTING, SOUTH WALL, MOGAO CAVE 57, EARLY TANG 618-705AD

a narrative purpose as well, telling a story through time about the peoples who created them.

Echoing the resolve of ancient Chinese artists and craftsmen who created the unique artworks, a group of Dunhuang devotees initiated an unprecedented digitisation of the murals and sculptures in 2010. In the process they have shed light upon important issues of cultural sustainability in relation to the oldest forms of heritage from the ancient world.

The Dunhuang Academy, the custodian of the site, began the process by undertaking extensive digital imaging of the Mogao Grottoes. The photography, unparalleled in scale when compared to other world heritage sites, involved a race to “capture” and preserve the caves before any more degradation can occur.

After photography, scientists at the City University of Hong Kong (CityU) combined the high-resolution images, with laser scanning data, animation and 3D modelling to tell stories about the extraordinary wealth of paintings found in the caves at Dunhuang.



A FIGURE UNDER A VIRTUAL MAGNIFYING GLASS IN A BUDDHIST WALL PAINTING AS PART OF THE *PURE LAND* EXHIBITION

Over a six-month period, the project's team of artists and animators also redrew, restored and re-coloured key iconographic elements in the wall paintings, and created 3D animated objects and dance sequences.

These animations were supplemented by sound design based on research into traditional Chinese music and the recording of similar instruments that are still in use today, including FangXiang (metallophone), PaiXiao (pan flutes), Dizi (flute), Sheng, Yaogu (waist drum), Ruan (lute), Guzheng and Konghou (harp).

As a showcase for the initial fruits of this ongoing project, an exhibition titled *Pure Land: Inside the Mogao Grottoes at Dunhuang*, was held at CityU from March 17 to April 7, 2012.

Visitors were asked to step into a large 360-degree panoramic projection theatre, where they were immersed in the seemingly true-life experience of being inside a cave temple, seeing its magnificent Buddhist wall paintings at 1:1 scale. A "virtual magnifying glass" allows the viewer to zoom

into the painted surface of the mural and see its details in ultra-high resolution. Figures and objects in these paintings are dramatised by means of spectacular interactive 3D animations and digital effects that reveal their painterly beauty and underlying narrative meanings.

The whole project, recasting the entire Dunhuang experience in a way that will both intensify and distance it, is part of an attempt to solve the tension between the desire to show this rich and important treasury to the world and the on going protection and preservation of the caves.

Although the site used to be an oasis in the Gobi desert at a crossroad on the Silk Road, Dunhuang's environment has deteriorated over the last few hundred years, while tourists have swamped the site in the past few decades. The caves now suffer from high levels of carbon dioxide and humidity that are severely undermining conservation efforts.

Continued page 45

VISITORS ARE IMMERSED IN A LARGE 360-DEGREE PANORAMIC PROJECTION OF A MOGAO CAVE TEMPLE



« These important historical arts are not simply frozen like fossils in ancient space and time. »





BODHISATTVAS STATUE,
NICHE, MOGAO CAVE 45,
HIGH TANG 705-781AD

In an effort to limit deterioration, Dunhuang Academy has agreed to only open a few dozens of the caves among the 492 Mogao caverns that still contain rich murals and sculptures. In those caves that are open, visitors may use pale torchlight to examine the cave walls while glass windows often stand between the viewer and the wall to ensure the murals are protected.

On the contrary, the *Pure Land* projection theatre, although virtual, can yield a better visitor experience. Wu Jian, Director of the Digitisation Centre of Dunhuang Academy said, "Our digitisation is not simply cameras plus video recorder; it is the high-tech plus arts instead."

The work of *Pure Land* has also helped with the research of the ancient mural designs. "If not for the digitisation of the murals, I could not have seen so many details to interpret and analyse," says Lee Mei-Yin, who came to HKDI to lecture about Chinese textile, as she points to the leaf veins on plantain trees between two Buddha, a transparent glass bow held by Medicine Buddha, the enchanting eyes of a Bodhisattva, and the blusher on a goddess' face, all of which are within a few centimetres' width in the digital recreation.

From 200BC until 1400AD, Dunhuang was once a nexus of cultural interchange via the Silk Road between China, India, Persian, Greco-Roman and Central Asia. From the amplified images, Lee identified the fashionable designs of carpets, women's wear and children's wear in the Tang dynasty.

"Chinese culture is so old and so rich, that it would be highly beneficial for design students to study its roots and lay an excellent foundations for their design career," says Jimmy Lo Chi-Ming, the Vice-Chairperson of Friends of Dunhuang, an NGO made up of volunteer entrepreneurs who care about Dunhuang's heritage. They supported the whole digitisation project.

"HKDI has a lot of design talents, from dress designing to multimedia," says Lo. "I saw the Miao project done by HKDI students in 2008, and I thought that's what they should do in cultural sustainability design, so Friends of Dunhuang made the necessary connections for students to visit some of the caves normally not open to the public and get a sense of their veiled beauty."

During the trip, HKDI teachers and students went to the Mogao Grottoes for a two-day tour last October and had a brief exploration. Students will go to the site again for a seven-day series of detailed observations in the later half of 2012. They will study and re-create the processes found in ancient arts and use the images of the past as a form of inspiration. Design projects with different focuses such as dresses, architectures and sculptures will be explored.

The Dunhuang trip is also in tune with the objectives of an on-going "Cultural Trips" project that started from 2008 in HKDI. By visiting places of cultural significance in China and exploring ethnic culture and lifestyles, students apply living culture in the real-life design projects.

"I can't agree more with the concept of 'cultural sustainability'," says Lou Jie, Director of Fine Art Department Exhibition Centre of Dunhuang Academy. "This is also an important part of the purpose of our digitisation project. Those important historical arts are not simply frozen like fossils in that ancient space and time, but have lives – they are constantly providing nutrients for ideas and inspirations. I believe it has the vibrancy to continue its liveliness."

Lou stressed the importance of students acquiring sound knowledge of the cultural and historical backgrounds of Dunhuang art before they set sail for a successful cultural trip.

"A central issue of art and design is to answer the question of where we come from and where we are heading to. I believe Dunhuang arts shed lights upon this. The revival of tradition and the continuation of a culture depends on a later generation's self-willed act of re-creation."

Lou masterminded the animated re-creation of some of the elements on the murals. These include 2D cut-outs of the seven Medicine Buddha appearing to emerge from the original mural repainted in their original colourful state, 3D animation whereby the orchestral instruments and the Medicine Buddha's canopies become three-dimensional solid objects floating and rotating in front of the actual painting, and a live video of 3D digital recording made of dancers from the Beijing Dance Academy who re-enact the dances shown in the mural painting.

She regards these innovations as a beginning and a tribute to the ancient painters who were earlier practitioners of "cultural sustainability". "One thousand years of artworks are trying to convey the same Buddhist values through similar expressions such as Feitian, but each period has its unique, creative patterns."

"Just like the artists who painted the murals, one needs to know how to cope with the loneliness of being a Dunhuang scholar," says Wu Jian. "For nearly half a century, with very poor material conditions, generations of these scholars regarded the Grottoes as their homes, immersed in solitude. Such tranquil minds and meticulous attitude are especially rare and precious in today's anxious, hectic world."

With such guiding spirits, HKDI students will release their design results at the end of this year, sharing with all innovative re-creations of the gentle touch and timeless glamour of Dunhuang art. (C)

CHANGE AGENTS

Two recent visitors to HKDI helped students understand how design and a sustainable lifestyle can be good partners but as **SUMMER CAO** reports designers have to inspire consumers to adopt better habits before long term improvements in the environment will be possible.

“THE FUTURE OF human beings will be changed by either disaster or design,” says Professor Helmut Langer, a preeminent graphic designer and environmental protection activist, as he displayed “products of human civilisation” – over-packaged tea bags, over-printed labels and unrecyclable plastic-paper-aluminum drink containers at a recent seminar held within the HKDI.

Is Langer overstating the case? The HKDI has chosen not to bet against him, instead it has shouldered some of the social responsibility entailed in Langer’s critique by taking sustainable design into its curriculum, inviting prominent talents in the field such as Langer, a renowned international cultural communication designer, and Professor Fumi Masuda, from Tokyo Yokai University, to teach and inspire students.

“We have stolen too many resources from the earth and produced energy and materials that our bio system cannot sustain,” says Masuda. “Highly civilised cities like Tokyo or Hong Kong are not sustainable at all.”

Masuda is a world leader in sustainable design and the host of *Destination*, an international conference focused on “design for sustainability”. His work *Pile Chair*, which he created in collaboration with his student, Takayuki Umehara, has been given accolades around the globe for its embodiment of sustainable design values.

“Everything that has gone wrong on our planet has something to do with water or oil, with the unsustainable usage of raw materials,” says Langer. “For example, all the wars that have afflicted the Arab World have little to do with giving people freedom,

rather they are stimulated by the western world’s need to get control of oil and resources.”

The wars waged over oil are strong evidence for the view that humanity will be the author of its own destruction, but there is a glimmer of hope in the fervent search in some countries for new ways to achieve sustainability.

“Nowadays in Europe, all the big companies have a sustainability department,” says Langer. “They seek to improve the sustainability in their management techniques and products and aim to limit the use of resources. At the same time, people are also more aware of where products are coming from, and how they are manufactured. So it is a competitive decision for a company to follow this new trend, although it does encourage greenwashing (a form of spin in which green PR or green marketing is deceptively used) like the way McDonald’s has



PILE CHAIR BY FUMI MASUDA AND TAKAYUKI UMEHARA



《 Highly civilised cities like Tokyo or Hong Kong are not sustainable at all. 》

PROFESSOR FUMI MASUDA

FUMI MASUDA

changed its brand colour from red and yellow to green and yellow in Germany. But you don't have this kind of thinking yet in Hong Kong or Mainland China."

Masuda and Langer believe that Hong Kong is in the infancy of its green awareness, with little more to offer than some inconspicuous "save water, save power" posters in public toilets. Although the government is keen to promote a green image it has yet to do enough to deserve the reputation of being a green city.

"Hong Kong is one of the most consumption-focused cities in the world," says Masuda. "It's a place where one finds serious discussions about adopting sustainable practices difficult."

However, Masuda has found that HKDI is a place where the debate can be taken forward. "The HKDI is a very advanced school that has absorbed sustainable design into its curriculum, right from the beginning, which is a unique strong point. And HKDI students are eager to incorporate

rules for sustainability into their design practice."

In some of Langer and Masuda's workshops, students were inspired to use less color, less material, and less packaging than would be commonplace in design companies in the commercial world. However, this kind of utilitarianism is not what the workshops are aiming for. Instead, their aim is to keep students informed of practical changes they can make in the workplace that will contribute to sustainability.

"Through the workshops, students receive real-world information about how packaging companies produce packaging material," says Langer. "And what techniques a printing company uses. So they have concrete ideas about what is practical when it comes to sustainable design."

"Some of students' ideas for sustainability are too wild and unreal, but that's not bad because those ideas are an expression which shows that they understand the problem and can opt to use less

or different types of material. We also make students look responsibly at what they do, and thereby consider sustainability as another aspect of quality."

However, engendering the belief among designers that design should not be synonymous with appearance, but should also include a concern for the environment and social justice is only the first step. The values put upon the products by consumers should shift accordingly.

"A brand is a reflection of the market," says Masuda. "So we can't ask the brand to change in isolation. You have to change the marketplace first, and then the brands follow. It is the economy; it is a matter of money. So the market itself has to change."

But how?

"Through better design," says Langer. "Designers can think about other materials, and cultivate a sustainable life style among their clients. The public's attitudes toward sustainability can be changed by new and better design." 

POSTERS BY LANGER, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (2005-2014), UNESCO WORLD TOLERANCE CAMPAIGN





« The future of human beings will be changed by either disaster or design. »

PROFESSOR HELMUT LANGER



ABOVE GRAPHIC LOGOS
DESIGNED BY HELMUT LANGER,
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT CLOCKWISE:
UN CLIMATE CHANGE
CONFERENCE, DONELLA
MEADOWS SUSTAINABILITY
INSTITUTE, UN SUSTAINABLE
CONSUMPTION PROGRAMME,
UN INTERNATIONAL PANEL
FOR SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT, THERMO
CONTAINER GROUP TAIPEI,
UNESCO EDUCATION FOR ALL
BY 2015, UNESCO FREEDOM
OF PRESS EXPRESSION, UN LIFE
CYCLE INITIATIVE

30

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29...

TURNING THIRTY

THE HONG KONG Design Institute played host to the kick-off ceremony for the Vocational Training Council's 30th Anniversary on February 29th 2012. John Tsang, the HKSAR's Financial Secretary, was the Guest of Honour and other officiating guests included Michael Suen, the Secretary for Education and Paul Tang, Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare. Some 300 guests from industry, educational institutions and the local community joined the ceremony.

At the same event, the Toy Image DIY Design Competition, one of the signature events for VTC's 30th Anniversary, was officially launched via the unveiling of the icon for the competition – "Qee", a toy model designed by Dr Raymond Choy, an internationally renowned toy designer. Organised by HKDI, the competition aims to promote Hong Kong's creative industries and nurture a new generation of design talent.

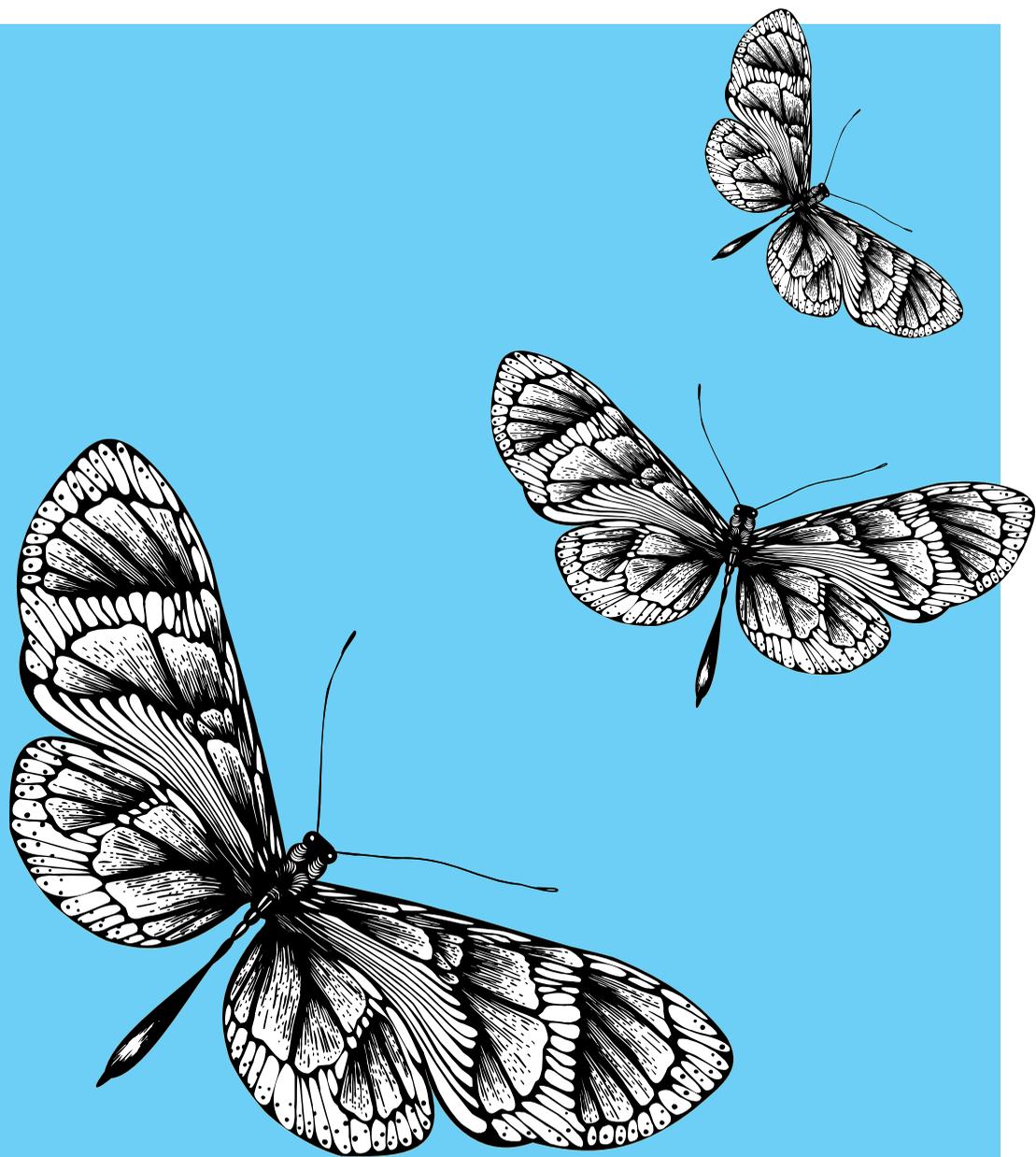
Dr Roy Chung, Deputy Chairman of VTC and Chairman of the Organising Committee for the VTC's 30th Anniversary Programme, announced a series of celebratory events that will take place throughout the year. "I hope everybody will share my joy and pride at the VTC's 30th anniversary," said Chung. "The work of the VTC is vital to the future of Hong Kong and improving the quality of design education is one of the surest paths to success."

The history of the VTC began in 1982 when the government led a determined effort to establish a statutory body to nurture a quality workforce for Hong Kong's industries. The roots of the VTC, however, date back to 1936 when the first Technical College, the predecessor of IVE (Morrison Hill), opened its doors in Hong Kong.

"Although much has changed in the past few decades, we remain true to our mission of nurturing high-calibre professionals for Hong Kong and the region while staying attuned to the changing times," says Clement Chen Cheng-jen, the VTC's Chairman. "In all of the VTC's institutes and training facilities we seek to add value to our students and stakeholders through the provision of high quality and relevant vocational education and training." 



« THE WORK OF THE VTC IS VITAL TO THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG. » ROY CHUNG



«BALANCE,
PROPORTION AND
HARMONY ARE
TASKS OF OUR
DAILY LIFE, AS ARE
ALSO ACTIVITY,
INTENSITY AND
UNITY. AND LEARN
THAT BEHAVIOUR
RESULTS IN FORM
AND FORM
INFLUENCES
BEHAVIOUR.
ART PROBLEMS
ARE PROBLEMS
OF HUMAN
RELATIONSHIP.»

JOSEF ALBERS



HONG KONG
DESIGN
INSTITUTE
香港知專
設計學院

Member of VTC Group
VTC 機構成員

《 SOME
PAINTERS
TRANSFORM
THE SUN INTO
A YELLOW
SPOT; OTHERS
TRANSFORM
A YELLOW
SPOT INTO
THE SUN. 》

PABLO PICASSO

