

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HONG KONG DESIGN INSTITUTE

SIGNED

ISSUE THREE 2012

ROLL UP,
ROLL UP!
HKDI'S VISUAL
COMMUNICATIONS
GRADUATES
GO CIRCUS

RAINBOW
EFFECT
THE
COLOURS
OF ASIA

HIGH
DRAMA

THE HKDI'S
GRADUATION
SHOWS
LAUNCHES A NEW
GENERATION OF
STARS



《IMAGINATION
IS THE HIGHEST
FORM OF
RESEARCH.》

ALBERT EINSTEIN

INSPIRATION

EDITOR'S LETTER

ISSUE THREE

For a designer, inspiration is not a gift that falls from the sky, it's more like the last potato buried in a 10 acre field that a starving man must dig for, even as hunger overwhelms him and his spade work becomes more desperate.

Even when inspiration is found the outcome is never certain. It's like hunting a great white shark: catching one can end in glory or the jaws of death. Picasso's view was that of the stoic, the man who keeps digging for that last potato, even if he's not sure it's there. "That inspiration comes, does not depend on me," he wrote. "The only thing I can do is make sure it catches me working."

We have chosen inspiration as the theme for this third edition of SIGNED magazine because we have been privileged to fill these pages with so much extraordinary work by students and staff from within the HKDI community. That inspiration visits the shores of Tiu Keng Leng and washes through the spaces of Thomas Coldefy's iconic building on a regular basis is apparent from the recent graduation shows that we feature here, which witnessed such an astonishing outpouring of creativity.

And much of this work is the result of a profound partnership, between the youthful energy and raw creativity of the student body and the wise craftsmanship and Socratic guidance of the HKDI's faculty.

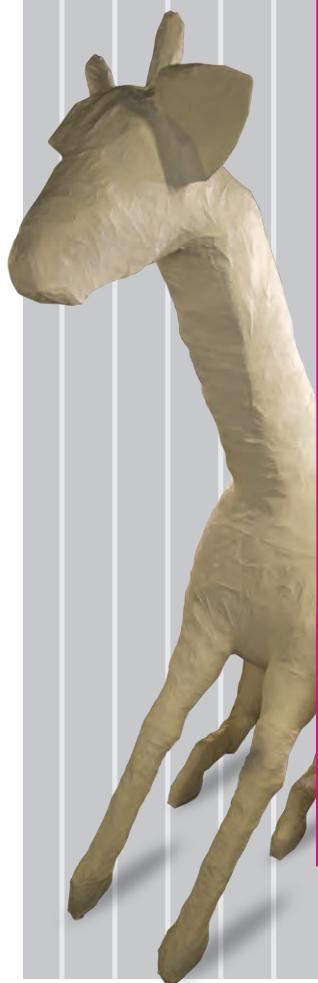
The American polymath Wendell Berry once wrote that "There are two muses: the Muse of Inspiration, who gives us inarticulate visions and desires, and the Muse of Realization, who returns again and again to say 'It is yet more difficult than you thought.' This is the muse of form. It may be then that form serves us best when it works as an obstruction, to baffle us and deflect our intended course. It may be that when we no longer know what to do, we have come to our real work and when we no longer know which way to go, we have begun our real journey. The mind that is not baffled is not employed. The impeded stream is the one that sings."

How right that is. For every designer and artist there are always obstacles and without those rocks in the river bed, water would not produce the harmony of splash and gurgle that makes a river bank such a charming place to be. And in the best places of learning, the students are the source of the river, the secret of its power and the faculty are the banks that guide the water on its course. To stand in that river, as this edition of SIGNED has sought to do, is to see inspiration at work and be thrilled by its power and glory. For wherever human beings are inspired there is hope, and wherever there is hope, life blooms abundantly.

DANIEL JEFFREYS

Editor-In-Chief

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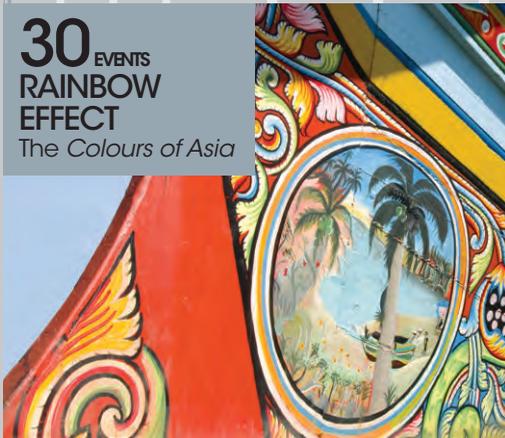
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SPACESHIPS DESIGNED FOR THE CIRCUS EXHIBITION PRESENTED BY GRADUATES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION DESIGN AND DIGITAL MEDIA

ROLL UP, ROLL UP!

The graduation show presented by the HKDI's Visual Communication students was inspired by the circus world and proved that when it comes to innovation the school's creative resources run deep. **DAISY ZHONG** reports.



THERE WAS A LION, an elephant, a giraffe, horses, and a bear; over 100 spaceships were suspended in the air ready for a fantasy journey and a surrealistic cinema displayed graduation work projected in a big top created for a high-wire circus act.

Under the theme of “Design Circus”, graduates of the HKDI’s Higher Diploma programme in Visual Communication created an exhibition interspersed with a wide range of projects, completing three years of study with a colourful and graceful celebration.

“Circus is a place where we experience the most joyful moments,” says Pauline Hall, a lecturer in the HKDI’s Department of Communication Design and Digital Media. “The students wanted visitors to enjoy a journey that provided a playful and exciting design experience, instead of just showing their work in a traditional exhibition.”

Divided into five areas, the exhibition used a minimalist colour scheme to enhance the exciting circus atmosphere, creating an inspiring mix and match.

Visitors could start viewing the exhibits by imaging themselves on a spaceship journey, or they could



ABOVE AND ABOVE RIGHT GRADUATION PROJECTS FROM THE CIRCUS EXHIBITION

enter a gallery showing work by students of photography, or a theatre with an oversized magic hand illuminated from within, surrounded by stepladder seats that displayed the graphic work of students who entered the programme from form 7.

At the heart of the exhibition was a showcase of performing animals made with a wooden frames covered in paper and finished with PVA glue and emulsion paint. Each of the five animals took 4 to 5 days to make and was created by a team of ten students. The animals were displayed in the midst of student design projects. The tour ended with an impressive video projection in the high-wire theatre.

The wide-ranging graduation exhibition showcased illustration



and book design, branding and promotional design, photography as well as the newest user interface designs for smart phone apps and websites. It also featured different kinds of creative promotional videos, music videos, film trailers and short films. “This year, many students showed a strong social concern for the community,” says Hall, “To name just a few, the topics of student projects included cyber bullying, mindful eating, the heritage of Cantonese opera, single women in Hong Kong, Gothic culture in Hong Kong, and many more.”

Other teams created projects inspired by LOHAS (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability), bamboo usage, the promotion of organic cotton, and the “Pantone” colour spectrum of Hong Kong.

Hall says she was impressed by many of the projects. As a lecturer she witnessed how the course enabled students to extend their creativity from reality to an imaginary world, and from narrative storytelling to visual effects and visualisation.

“In the final year project, they have to define their

own project theme, research, experiment and work out a possible design solution in a self-designated media within a very uptight schedule. They needed to handle every detail from creative ideas to production. It is all about integrating design, graphics, typography, photography and art direction into their project and they have shown their competence to a professional standard through a wide range of skills”. 

ABOVE AND BELOW PAPER PRODUCTS DESIGNED BY GRADUATING STUDENTS







WINDS OF CHANGE

When the HKDI's annual Fashion Show and Image Show took place on two sultry nights in June, graduates from the Department of Fashion and Image Design (FID) blew a typhoon of fresh ideas across a packed audience, as they presented a series of spectacular collections on Design Boulevard. But as **DAISY ZHONG** and **LISA LI** report the extravagant shapes on display have a practical role to play in securing a future for some of Hong Kong's most talented designers.



MAIN PICTURE (PREVIOUS PAGE) A LOOK FROM *THE REVOLUTION IS NOT A CRIME* COLLECTION; ABOVE RIGHT RETIRING PRINCIPAL ALEX FUNG (CENTRE) ACKNOWLEDGES APPLAUSE FROM VTC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DR. CARRIE WILLIS (LEFT); ABOVE LEFT AND LEFT STUDENTS PREPARE THEIR MODELS FOR THE CATWALK; RIGHT WORK FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF GRADUATING STUDENTS, CLOCKWISE, *CONSTRAINT*, *TREE OF LIFE*, *FURNITURE DESIGNS*, *ALIEN CONNECTED* AND *BARROC. CUPID. 1600*

MINIATURE CHURCH BELLS RANG from the Baroque-style leather and organza; prints of daisy petals and dolls brought back memories of a mellow childhood spent in the countryside; and an intimidating and perplexing medieval elegance was fabricated in fur and copper. This year's HKDI Fashion Show and Image Show had all these and more, with the former showcasing twenty collections selected from over 150 Fashion Design graduation projects, each one consisting of five to six garments.

And in the Image Show the students' creativity was encouraged to break the bounds of imagination as they took care of styling a single "look" including hair, make-up and clothing. Thus while the Fashion and Image Shows share a common degree of flamboyance, they each have a different focus.

Elizabeth McLafferty, the Head of FID, says that the Fashion Show concentrates on garment design. "It's a chance for them to manipulate the skills they have learnt. The product might be very abstract or dramatic, but can also be very simplistic in style."

On the other hand, the Image Show is more about creating a whole image that is a moving work of art. "It's more theatrical, like a performance. The designs are like something that grew organically on the body, or a character from a stage play."

Despite the air of theatre, the shows are about far more than entertainment. "They are designed to let students get the sense of what it's like to be a true designer", says McLafferty. "It's an open project, without restraint, and students are free to express their vision of fashion... Besides celebrating the end of their studies and the start of their career, the shows are a platform for them to express their creativity in a professional format".

Indeed, professionalism was woven into every aspect of the shows. Professional models were hired, clothing industry



concerns sponsored some of the materials used by the entrants and the judges for the awards presented after the shows were drawn from the fashion industry, including designers, fashion editors and stylists.

“Inviting professionals to be judges provides our students with a chance to learn more about perspectives from inside their chosen field,” says Shaun Cheung, the programme Coordinator of Fashion Image Design. “And the exposure allows our students to become better known to the industry.”

The audience at this year’s shows was amazed by their variety and sophistication. In the manner of true professionals, students had roamed the boundaries of philosophy, art history and culture in search of inspiration for their collections with themes derived from the anxiety and strangeness that many feel in contemporary society, interactions between religion and evolution, and the search for a harmonious balance between humanity and nature.



At the core of the FID’s mission is to bend such abstract concepts to the imperatives of aesthetics and practicability, so that even the most flamboyant pieces on show have the potential to be worn on the street.

« *The shows are a platform for them to express their creativity in a professional format.* »



«The most important lesson I learnt from the Fashion Show competition is how to turn a sketch into a garment.»



ABOVE FASHION SHOW OVERALL PRIZE WINNER LEE TAK SHING (THIRD FROM RIGHT) WITH HIS DESIGNS AND DAI FUJIWARA (SECOND FROM RIGHT), ONE OF THE JUDGES; RIGHT AN OUTFIT FROM THE IMAGE DESIGN COLLECTION *ALIEN CONNECTED*

“Many of the pieces are very dramatic or extravagant, but even with those that don’t seem wearable, it doesn’t really matter,” says McLafferty. “Usually, when you take a few components away or scale them down, they become perfectly wearable. That is the genius of fashion design.”

Behind the spectacle of showtime was six-months of blood, sweat, tears as students prepared for their big night.

In her *Metamorphosis* collection, Fashion Design student Tso Yuan Sze was inspired by Franz Kafka’s surreal 1915 novella in which a man awakes to find he has transformed into a bug. “I use latex to represent the bug,” she says. “It was very difficult to handle the material well. Because of its texture, the latex tends to shrink together and I had to work out a way to ensure that it remained stretched.”

The challenges students faced also came from the complexities of fabricating new cloth and hand-made accessories.

“I did all the weaving myself, in order to create pure symmetry. I started weaving six months ago, and the product was not finished until the night before the show,” says Fashion Design student Lui Pi Chu, who drew upon the architecture of Notre Dame de Paris.

All Lui’s efforts paid off at the show and she believes that the process of overcoming so many obstacles has made her a more mature and nimble designer. “At first, I was very dependent on the suggestions and reminders of the teachers. Now I feel more independent.”

For Lai Ching Yin, his catwalk debut left him with an indelible impression. “From the design of the concept, to the realisation of the idea, to the show itself, you take care of every detail on your own and there is a lot of study involved. The most exciting moment is just now when I saw my work showcased on the models”.

Portia To, the programme coordinator of Fashion Design, believes the shows push the creative ability of students to its limits as they struggle to turn an abstract concept into wearable garments and develop problem-solving skills they can’t read about in books.

“For example, one student got the size of his clothes wrong,” she says. “It turned out that he had made a small mistake in the sizing on his sketch. We had been telling them the importance of detail in class, but obviously, they learn better from practice.” Besides being a platform for free-expression and scholarship,





ABOVE MODELS TAKE THEIR BOW AT THE END OF THE IMAGE SHOW; BELOW STUDENTS BACKSTAGE MAKING FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE IMAGE SHOW

the shows are also a stage for HKDI students to gain recognition from the industry. Portia To says that many students got job interviews after the show, where the audience included a large number of professionals from the industry.

Meanwhile, fresh graduates are on their way to become future leaders of the fashion industry. Apart from those who work for broadcast companies like TVB, some have become designers for well-known artists, while others have set up

their own business, according to Cheung. Among the 11 Hong Kong designers selected to participate in the World of Wearable Art Award Show in September 2012, 10 are 2011 graduates from the HKDI's Fashion Image Design programme.

And the 2012 Graduation Fashion Show Overall winner, Lee Tak Shing, was on his way to Australia after his victory, a trip sponsored by Australian Wool Innovation Limited after he won the Best use of Australian Merino Award. "It is my first collection," says Lee. "The result is very exciting. I am now discovering the fabrication process of the merinos."



The judges believed that Lee's collection, *The Sentimentalist*, demonstrated a high degree of practicality, completeness in the choice of fabrics and portrayed a natural gradation of colour by applying a technique that knits looped fabric and woven fabric together in a flowing progression.

"The most important lesson I learnt from the Fashion Show competition is how to turn a sketch into a garment," says Lee. "When you do the sketch, you usually do not pay enough attention to the details, which become tremendously important in practice. On paper, you can change the length and width

BELOW WORK FROM THE COLLECTION ALIEN ACTION; BELOW BOTTOM FROM LEFT TO RIGHT LOOKS FROM THE RADIATION, SURREALISM AND THE WARRIOR'S CONFESSIONS COLLECTIONS



easily but in practice, it costs you a lot of energy to change these details.”

For McLafferty the presentation of the students’ work is like watching the entire creative thought process unfold. “The shows revealed the concept, the thought process of developing one’s own style, and whoever comes to the show can see the strength of the idea and be touched by it.”

Away from the dazzling spotlight of the Fashion and Image Shows, another creative blockbuster

from the FID was shimmering in a more discreet manner. As part of the Graduation Show, 25 HKDI graduates from the London College of Fashion (LCF) Top-Up Degree Programme showcased their photographic work in a creative multi-media presentation.

The programme, a collaboration between HKDI and LCF, provides FID Higher Diploma graduates a chance to further develop their expertise.

“Whereas the Higher Diploma students in Fashion Design or Image Design have a more generalised study field, the Top-Up Programme students specialise in just one field, such as hair, make-up and photography. LCF Top-Up students are also trained in terms of the analytical skills used in visual dialogue,” says McLafferty.

«Many of the pieces are very dramatic or extravagant, (but)... when you take a few components away or scale them down, they become perfectly wearable.»



IMAGES FROM THE LCF TOP-UP PROGRAMME
 BELOW THE REMAINS: WAR DEFORMED; RIGHT
 FASHION WORLD'S FAIRY TALE; RIGHT BELOW
 STYLE OF HONG KONG GIRLS AND THEIR
 IDENTITY; FAR RIGHT HOMOSEXUAL TOWARDS
 FASHION WORLD: PREJUDICE OF LOVE

She says that students from two streams – Hair and Make-up, and Styling and Photography – worked together in presenting their graduation projects, an approach that models a practice that is common in the industry. The students' creativity is challenged throughout the programme as they are constantly requested to analyse ideas, produce test shots and make choices regarding makeup or styling.

Tutors of the programme are mainly from LCF. "Students are inspired by the way overseas tutors teach and communicate and by their international perspective," says Athena Choi, the programme Coordinator.

"The graduates' work has to reach a professional level for them to meet the vigorous competition of today's fashion industry. It's obvious that the works reflect a high level of technical skills, an understanding of industrial requirements and the convergence of individual creative sense. Students possess great potentials and have a great chance of achieving their dreams."

This view is shared by Portia To and Shuan Cheung who witnessed FID students grow from novices who did not even know how to use needles to designers capable of independent thought and critical perspective. But the last word should be left to the students themselves, for it is their work that will help frame the industry's future. Among this year's graduates the strongest concern has been about making clothes that are environmentally sustainable, while appealing to the beauty that lies within every person, no matter their shape.



"I want to design clothes that are sustainable and make people feel more confident," says Fashion Design student Tso Yuen Sze. "No matter what kind of figure someone has, I hope my clothes would look beautiful on them. Fashion is about bringing out the personal beauty of each individual. It seems to me that the current fashion industry sets a very standardised view of beauty." But maybe that's all about to change. Paris and Milan had better watch their weft and warp. Hong Kong is coming. 

«*I did all the weaving myself... I started weaving from the first day of the programme, and the product was not finished until the night before the show.*»

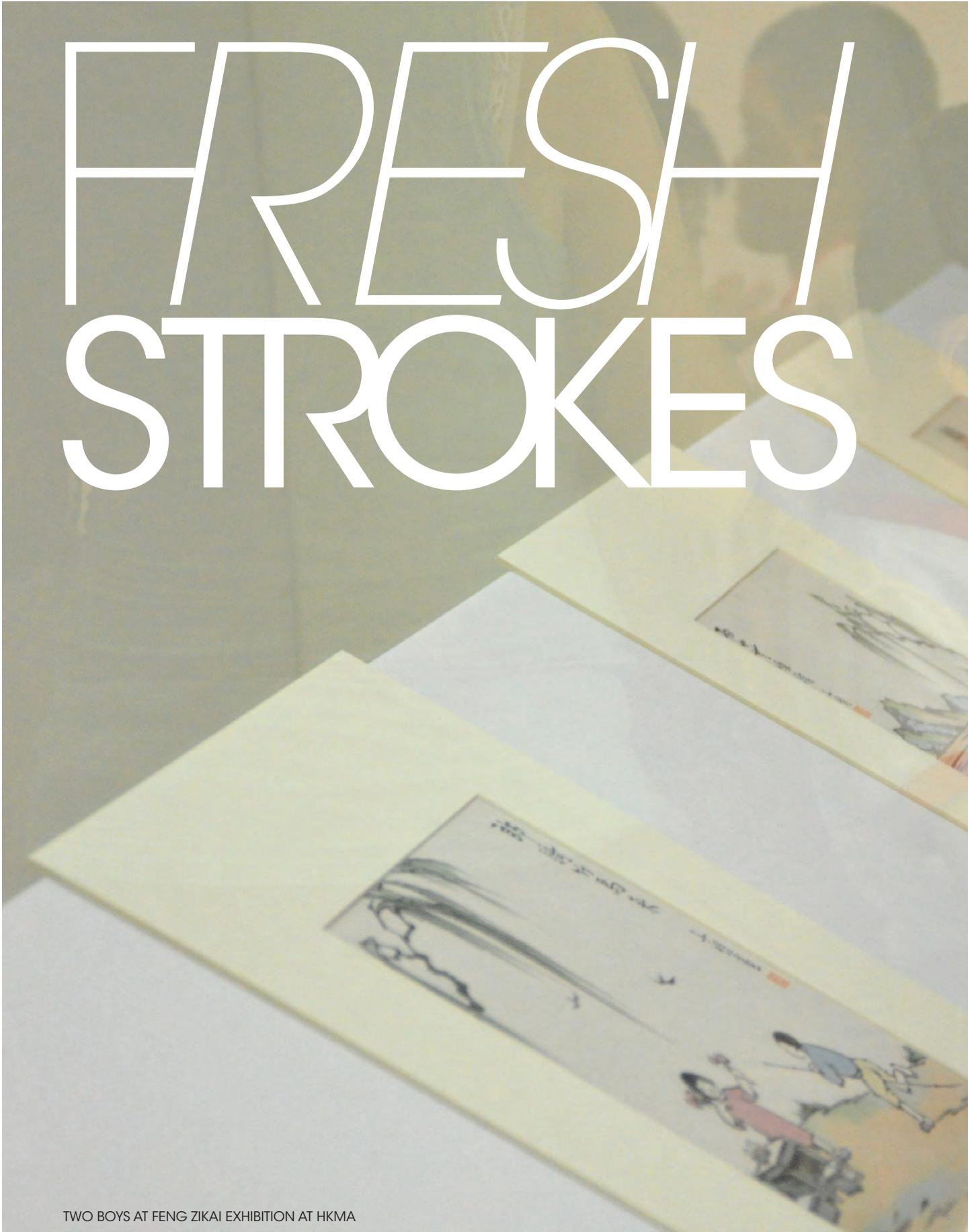






FEATURE

FRESH STROKES

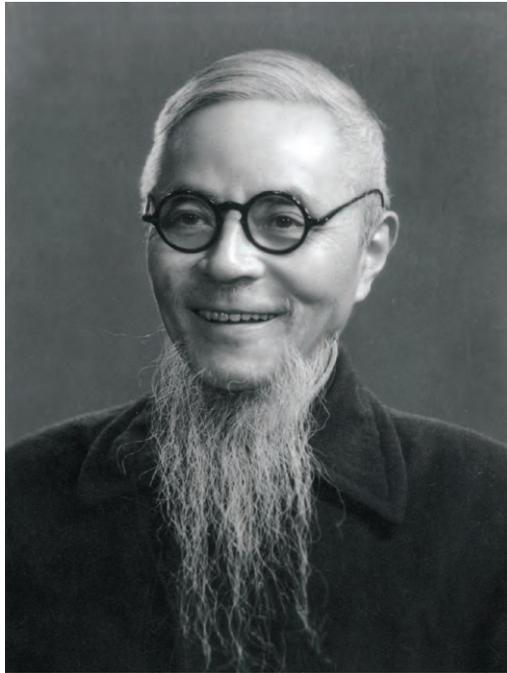


TWO BOYS AT FENG ZIKAI EXHIBITION AT HKMA



A HKDI project to breathe new life into the work of two famous Chinese artists has sparked fresh interest in traditional cartoons and painting techniques, while providing an international showcase for the ground breaking work of local design students. **SUMMER CAO** reports.

HKMA



LEFT FENG ZIKAI; RIGHT IMAGES CAPTURED FROM *CHILDLIKE HEART* AND *FAMILY*, VIDEO CLIPS CREATED BY HKDI STUDENTS BASED ON FENG ZIKAI'S WORK

FENG ZIKAI (豐子愷)(1898-1975), was one of the most innovative artists in Chinese history, and he was the first to use scholastic calligraphy brushes to paint everyday life, taking techniques that had been inseparably married with academic approaches to art, and turning them into tools that made mundane topics vivid and interesting. In the process Feng fused Chinese brushwork with western composition and, using the lives of ordinary people as his subject, he coined the Chinese word “manhua” (漫畫) or “cartoons” in the magazine *Our July*.

When Feng, who came from Zhejiang province, first unveiled his work in the 1920s, China had just emerged from two thousand years of imperial history, was groping her way toward independence and few realised the significance of his work. More than once his drawings were denounced as strange or useless.

Despite criticism of his trailblazing techniques, Feng's simple black strokes captured the public's imagination, largely because his vivid cartoon albums were cheap and accessible to everybody. They could be seen in public baths and noodle stalls. Street peddlers, shop vendors, porters, the illiterate, elderly and young all loved his drawings. Given Feng's popularity among ordinary people it's unsurprising that he devoted so much of his life to expressing his love and concern for humankind, earning him a reputation as one of China's foremost humanists.

In order to preserve the flavour of Feng's work and pass on his humanistic teachings to a new generation, the Hong Kong Museum of Art presented two thematic exhibitions this summer, titled *Creating a World of Compassion* and *Cultivating Life and Soul*, curated with assistance from Zhejiang Provincial Museum.

“Feng's work has long been sidelined because the fine art world thinks his subject matter is too trivial, while the cartoon world believes his calligraphy is too eccentric,” says Szeto Yuenkit, curator of the Hong Kong Museum of Art. “However, I believe that as long as work touches the emotions, it is art. And Feng's cartoons are definitely capable of arousing strong feelings. Through this exhibition, I hope we can promote new thinking about Feng and a more flexible approach to setting the boundaries of art.”

One of the highlights in the Feng exhibition is an e-book of Feng Zikai's cartoons combined with two animated clips called *Childlike Heart* and *Family*, which were created by the Communication Design and Digital Media Department of HKDI.

The themes for the short animations were chosen from creative ideas suggested by students. *Family* depicts the family life of the past as affectionately painted by Feng, while *Childlike Heart* is a reflection on the lives of contemporary children and tells the story of how a boy obsessed with online games learned to enjoy the companionship of his family through playing the traditional games found in Feng's work.

Feng's thoughts on the role of art and the artist suggest he would have been happy with then HKDI's recreation of his work. Scholars of Feng's writings say the artist spent his entire life trying to become a better human being, a course that he might have been inspired to take by his mentor Hong Yi (his life-long teacher and friend) of whom he once said “I admire him greatly because he is very close to being a true human.”

Born as the 19th century came to a close, Feng hailed from Zhejiang's Shimen Town. His birthplace has the typical scenery of Southern China, with gurgling streams and picturesque crop fields. It is the water and rice from this tranquil and idyllic place that first nurtured Feng's heart, and lent his work a simple and graceful character, like the flowers, trees, low-roofed houses and honest villagers in his hometown.

At 16, Feng was admitted to the Zhejiang No.1 Normal School

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and met Li Shutong who taught him art, and humanistic values such as kindness and humility. Li was one of the most accomplished scholars of his time, and he later became an influential Buddhist with the name Hong Yi.

Feng himself admitted in his book *Telling Hong Yi's Stories to the Youth* (為青年說弘一法師) that "I would not have taken the path of painting without him." And Hong Yi is also credited with inspiring Feng's compassionate approach to art. Feng's six-album cartoon series, *Paintings to Protect Life*, which was created over five decades, was the result of a promise Feng made to Hong Yi.

The project began when Feng celebrated Hong Yi's 50th birthday by painting 50 pieces dedicating to the idea that life is sacred and should be respected.

This became the first album of the *Paintings to Protect Life* series. At Hong Yi's 60th birthday, Feng painted 60 pieces. Hong Yi then proposed that Feng should create an album every ten years – at his 70th birthday, Feng should paint 70 pieces; at the 80th birthday, 80; at the 90th birthday, 90; in the end, at the 100th birthday, a final 100 pieces.

Every piece in *Paintings to Protect Life* is intended to arouse a respect for the sanctity of all living things. Feng believed that by protecting each



single life, one was protecting or cultivating the dignity of humanity as a whole. Even after Hong Yi's death, and in the hard years of the Cultural Revolution when the intelligentsia was suppressed, Feng persisted with his humanistic project. A short time before Feng's death in 1975, the 450 pieces required for the six albums was finally accomplished.

Feng also adored children, regarding childhood as a halcyon period in the life of a human being, one that he would like to return to, although he regretted that by the time a person realise the precious nature of their childhood it is too late.

In his short essay *To My Children* (給我的孩子們), Feng wrote of his sadness that childhood could not be preserved forever: "I long to stay in your world. But when you are able to understand what I have written... you will no longer be in the world where I long to be."

Feng believed that children were masterpieces and by recording their behaviour, the best part of human nature could be shown.

The two HKDI animations at the HKMA were inspired by Feng's views of childhood and his humanistic belief that "With life comes compassion; and with compassion, art". As such the animations explored the social problems that families have in the high-tech era, and emphasised the importance of quality family time, all while capturing Feng's philosophy of respect for human life and his simple drawing style.

"The students had to employ the imaginative capacity of an artist to create colours that matched the calligraphy painting strokes of Feng's work as well as adding appropriate elements to avoid anachronisms," says Ken Wong, the supervisor who led the HKDI animation team and coordinated their collaboration with the digital music and printing & publishing teams. "I am very happy with the outcome. In order to make every movement more vivid, they used one month to look for children to cast for the animation, and then spent three to four months to hand draw each frame."

Wong continues, "When the project started, a lot

BELOW TANG HOICHIU, CHIEF CURATOR OF HKMA, IS SHOWN THE E-BOOK OF FENG ZIKAI'S CARTOONS CREATED BY HKDI STUDENTS AT THE EXHIBITION; RIGHT WORK FOR FUN BY FENG ZIKAI



of students found the calligraphy painting style quite boring. But during the months of research and production, students have learned to appreciate the loving and caring spirit hidden in every detail. They came to realise that cartoons are not just for entertainment, but are able to reflect social issues."

To adequately convey the messages within the animations, music and sounds were combined with the new images. Racky Chan, the supervisor of the digital music team says, "Students had to learn the music of that era and how it relates to the vitality of Feng's cartoons. From birdsong, to the sound of dressing, and pouring tea, all the details should combine to assist viewers to understanding the emotions that are at the heart of the animations."

Although this was the first time that different departments from HKDI had collaborated so closely for a big art project the outcome has been hailed as a success by the HKMA.

"I have been very impressed by HKDI students," says Szeto. "For example, the students did extensive research on teapots and found designs that were used in Shanghai in the 20s. Based on several options, they chose the most likely one. Nowadays when commercials and movies make so many anachronistic mistakes, this kind of quality is invaluable."

Jessica Ho, supervisor of the printing & publishing team says, "It was a big confidence boost for an established museum to be willing to exhibit the students' work."

Ho says the project also has a life beyond the exhibition "The e-book of Feng's cartoons is now available at the Apple apps store. The public can download and read it for free. And we have now been commissioned by the Hong Kong Museum of Art to create an e-book and animation clips based on the Xubaizhai (虛白齋) collection."



《 I LONG TO STAY IN YOUR WORLD, BUT WHEN YOU ARE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT I HAVE WRITTEN... YOU WILL NO LONGER BE IN THE WORLD WHERE I LONG TO BE. 》



Accolades for HKDI's Communication Design and Digital Media Department have also come from The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (HKFYG), which has asked HKDI students to animate Xu Beihong's (徐悲鴻) horses for its 2012 China Week exhibition *The Heritage of Chinese Ink*. The work is two metres high, eight metres long and includes nine horses as well as magpies, pines and mountains. The project has given HKDI students a further opportunity to revive interest in an important Chinese artist.

"We want to draw the attention of the younger generation," says Choi Yusing from the HKFYG. "By exhibiting the digital version of the horses with Xu's original works, visitors can make comparisons that will allow them to see the original work more clearly."

Xu Beihong's pictures are characterised by bold and confident brush strokes and the artist, who died in 1953, became a household name by combining Western perspectives and methods of composition into Chinese ink-and-wash painting, after he studied at the *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts* in Paris. Emphasising the importance of natural authentic, he included cats, cranes, dogs, eagles, people, lions, magpies, pine trees, roosters and horses into his paintings, all portrayed in natural settings and without excessive adornment.

For example, unlike his predecessors who were

keen to depict horses with jewelled saddles and excessive refinement of form, Xu's horses are drawn from nature and are bold, uninhibited and beautiful. The nostrils are bigger, revealing excellent breathing capacity; the legs are longer, showing them to be capable of great speed; the mane and tail suggest strong will and vitality. Filled with a patriotic romanticism, the horses represent the intrepid spirit of the Chinese people. As the mid-century war against the Japanese escalated, the horses galloping from his brush became ever more muscular and lean, as if eager to go to the battlefield.

In order to capture the horses' spirit as well as the master's painting style for the collage, HKDI students were divided into three groups – one was assigned to observe real horses and study their movements; one to research the context and background of Xu's paintings; one to research Chinese paintings.

"The project began in March, and finished in late June," says Eric Lee, the project supervisor. "In 4 months, the number of participants shrank from 60 to 30, and the students who endured were those with a real interest. I am very happy to see the final product, especially given those 30 students were all beginners, and capturing the dynamics of Xu's paintings, as well as recreating the hidden elements which cannot be seen in the original works has been a real challenge. Through this project, they also had to meet the client and experience a project in the real world, which is an invaluable experience."

The Feng and Xu collaborations have done much to bring a new generation to the work of these great Chinese painters, as well as creating an appetite at HKDI for additional projects of the same type.



LEFT PANORAMIC VIEW CAPTURED FROM THE ANIMATION OF XU BEIHONG'S HORSES; BELOW STUDENTS IN THE HKDI DIGITAL DESIGN STUDIO ANIMATING XU BEIHONG'S WORK

“Both of these animation projects strove to use new media to bring out a fresh message and feeling regarding Feng Zikai and Xu Beihong,” says Ben Mau, Head of the Communication Design and Digital Media Department. “I am very happy to see these two pioneers from Chinese culture find a new audience among young designers. We need to build on this experience, especially on cross-programme cooperation, and hopefully work with more museums and NGOs in the coming year.”

《THE FENG AND XU COLLABORATIONS HAVE DONE MUCH TO BRING A NEW GENERATION TO THE WORK OF THESE GREAT CHINESE PAINTERS》



FAREWELL NOTES

VTC Auditorium at HKDI came alive on July 8th as graduates from the Digital Music and Media programme performed *Music in Motion: Playful Gig*, a selection of original compositions by students. As **DAISY ZHONG** reports, eight teams competed for prizes including a Grand Award for best overall performance.

PERFORMANCES AT THE *MUSIC IN MOTION: PLAYFUL GIG*, AND (FAR RIGHT, BELOW) GRADUATING STUDENTS FROM THE DIGITAL MUSIC AND MEDIA PROGRAMME

AN ENGAGING EXPERIENCE FOR OVER 600 SPECTATORS, *Music in Motion: A Playful Gig* was a fascinating journey, with performances and lighting design integrated into a compelling mix. The show also had a selection of multimedia work, including animation, music composition and musical drama created by students in Communication Design and Digital Media, who had also been nominated for graduation prizes.

“The performances were of high quality and encompassed acoustic, jazz, pop, rock and many others,” said Shirley Cheung, Senior Lecturer and the HKDI’s programme leader in Digital Music and Media. “Students spoke through their original compositions, which were so earnest and expressive that people could immediately grasp their strong emotional content.”

The Digital Music and Media programme was established in 2008 and in the same year, teachers and students founded “Music in Motion” as an Art Group registered with the Hong Kong government, which enabled them to find sponsorship to put on shows. As such Music in Motion acts as a platform for students to practise and perform outside class.

“Music in Motion is an event or you can call it a group,” said Cheung, “In the name of Music in Motion, students can actively participate in various kinds of music and art activities, and the most

notable is the creation of the graduation music concert every summer.”

The annual Music in Motion show represents a showcase for graduation projects. Students from years 1 and 2, with the help of the teaching staff, take charge of executing every detail of the show – design, planning, coordination, production and post-production.

“Thus, not only the Final Year students are showcasing their talents and creativity, but also the junior students are wholeheartedly involved,” added Cheung. “It is a golden opportunity for them to apply the techniques and knowledge they learnt in class. At the same time, while behind the scenes, they can imagine their own exciting performances in one or two year’s time. It’s like carrying and passing a torch.”

For team “36B” which won the Grand Award, this spirit provided the strongest source of their creativity. During the 3-month preparation period for the concert, they wove their emotions about leaving HKDI into the lyrics of their graduation work, *No Longer such Feeling* (此情不再), a pop-rock style song which expresses their deep attachment to the class and the school. Their name “36B” is derived from the course code for the higher diploma in Digital Music and Media – 61336 – and their class number “B”.

Cheung said, “As a lecturer I am delighted to have taught these students, who have grown up a great deal during their three-year course of study. When they entered the campus they were just young people who were interested in music, but now they are professionals.”



Bold and bright hues are an integral part of the Asian landscape. In November the HKDI will host an exhibition called *Colours of Asia* which, as **LISA LI** reports, will offer new insights into the way that colour shapes every aspect of our lives.

RAINBOW EFFECT



IN THE MINDS OF MANY, CHINA and the colour red are almost synonymous, but it has not always been that way.

“Few people know that ‘China Red’ became a symbol of the Chinese nation only after the Xinhai Revolution,” says Freeman Lau, Vice Chairman of the Design Alliance Asia (tDA Asia), a collaborative network of designers in Asia.

Founded in 1999, tDA Asia serves as a platform for Asian designers to work together and exchange ideas. The study and analysis of colours has been one of their most productive projects.

“Designers make choices among colours everyday. Yet when choosing a colour, few are aware of its meaning and usage in different cultures”, says Lau. “That’s why the topic of colour aroused great interest among tDA Asia members. The meetings of tDA Asia associates have created fruitful results on this subject over the years, which we wanted to showcase so that the wider public could benefit from our work.”

The result was the *Colours of Asia* exhibition that will open on November 3rd at the HKDI, which was chosen because “we share a mutual interest in understanding the people, culture and lifestyles of Asia,” says William Harald-Wong, the Chairman of tDA Asia and the curator of the exhibition, which will run until December 31st.

The exhibition will be structured with five zones representing red, yellow, green, blue, white and black (white & black in one zone). Harald-Wong says, “in the colour zones, we will showcase hundreds of artifacts that tell stories about each of the five colours and their significance as well as images that are the most important to different cultures.”



LEFT COLOURFUL MOTIFS ON TRADITIONAL FISHING BOATS REFLECT MALAY COSMOLOGY; RIGHT A BOY PAINTED BLUE TO REPRESENT LORD SHIVA (INDIA)

The images to be exhibited were selected from a research repertoire correlating cultures and colours, based on work by designers and academics from 13 different regions in Asia over the course of 2012.

Besides an extensive study of Asian literature, scholars spent a lot of time doing field research. For example, in order to uncover the subtle meanings of colours rooted in tradition and age-old beliefs, designers went to local communities and visited the elders, who are less influenced by global colour trends.

“Each researcher must have experienced fascinating insights in the process,” Harald-Wong believes. “In Thailand, there is a colour for each day of the week. Children recite these colours in a sing-song manner in schools and older people in some traditional villages and towns still dress according to the colour of the day. For example, they wear yellow on Monday. Perhaps not coincidentally, the King was born on Monday and yellow is the royal colour.”

Besides the mysterious links between colour and royalty, breathtaking discoveries about



colour were made in Malay kitchens, where an outsider might not be able to understand the dialogue between a mother and daughter as they cooked, since the descriptions of food are done in unique Malay colour terms, many of which were derived from observations of the flora and fauna in the environment around each village.

Colour terms used in the Malay language include Kuning Bunga Ketola (Angled Gourd Yellow), Kuning Lemak Ketam (Crab Fat Yellow), Kuning Pinang Masak (Ripe Areca Yellow), Hitam Lotong (Leaf Monkey Black), and Hitam Kelawar (Bat Black).

The variety of colours in the different segments of the exhibition ensured that its creation was an exciting project for those involved, although there were also many tough challenges.

“Communicating thoughts and ideas was not always easy given that our teams are located in different parts of Asia,” says Harald-Wong, “There was a great deal of diversity



ABOVE THE BALANCE OF EMPTY SPACE AND RICHLY DECORATED AREAS IN THE KITE IS CHARACTERISTIC OF MALAY AESTHETICS; BELOW WHITE KHADI WORN TO CELEBRATE GANDHI'S BIRTHDAY IN INDIA

and an unfamiliarity with the intricacies of each culture, even though we are all collectively known as Asians”.

Lau says the scope of international exchange involved with the exhibition was only possible with the full support of HKDI, which “became the platform that connects the overseas artistic community and the local

community in Hong Kong.”

The *Colours of Asia* is intended to be just the first step in a long-term programme of research. HKDI will follow up the exhibition by taking on the role of cultural ambassador for the study and by building up an Asia colour archive together with tDA Asia.

“As a database of colour studies in Asia, the archive will in the long

RIGHT A MASTER DYER SUPERVISING AN APPRENTICE IN LAOS ; BELOW LEFT GARAEDDOEK (WHITE RICE CAKE) IS TYPICALLY SERVED DURING THE NEW YEAR IN SOUTH KOREA; BELOW RIGHT A NAGA GUARDING THE ENTRANCE TO THE WAT ONG TIEU BUDDHIST TEMPLE IN VIENTIANE, LAOS; BOTTOM BUKUL SIA IN SINGAPORE (AUSPICIOUS BASKETS). THE GOLD MOTIFS SIGNIFY PROSPERITY AND WEALTH



run benefit scholars, students and the design community as a whole,” says Lau.

The archive project would also allow the existing research results to be developed more thoroughly. For example, as part of the archive project, Lau is working on a book to be published after the exhibition, which will include more detailed explanations of the five colours showcased as well as academic reports from scholars in various regions.

“Some countries do not have representatives within tDA Asia, for example we do not have Japanese members, but we will have one paper in the book that was contributed by Japanese scholars, adding more perspective to the colours of Asia,” says Lau.

Celebrating the commonalities and differences among Asians is what inspired the *Colours of Asia* exhibition as well as the archive project. Most of all, this delicious banquet of colour will also “open eyes and minds to the power of colour in our daily lives”, says Harald-Wong. 





END GAME

2012 has long been the subject of myths and speculation because it appeared to be the year in which the world was supposed to be destroyed, according to some scholars of the Mayan calendar. So far this year has not seen a global cataclysm but, as **SUMMER CAO** reports, it has inspired a hit movie and a popular HKDI show.

IN THE HOLLYWOOD DISASTER MOVIE 2012, Christian values, Mayan mythology and scientific theories about global warming were woven together to form a high concept drama that revealed a planet in the grip of an apocalyptic disaster. The film became a box office hit as it aroused excitement, fear and controversy around the globe.

Inspired by the movie, and trying to surpass its wild make-believe plot, graduates from the HKDI's Higher Diploma programme in Creative Media and Entertainment Technology (CMET) collaborated with the finest creative minds in the Department of Multimedia and Internet Technology (MIT) of the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Lee Wai Lee) to create a multimedia entertainment extravaganza.

The joint CMET/MIT show employed cutting edge technologies including laser animation, projection systems, computer controlled lighting and moving sound technology that creates the sensation of movement, to explore the infinite possibilities of 2012 and the prospects we may face in the future. It provided audiences with a unique experience in a fantasy environment.

"The myths surrounding 2012 actually represent quite an open topic, and the apocalyptic vision is only one of the most popular interpretations," says Steve Leung, a lecturer from the Department of Multimedia and Internet Technology. "The ambiguity of 2012 provides a very diversified source of creativity, which proves the theme is a good inspiration for students. The graduation works bring us so many surprises: diverse

interpretations of 2012, technical achievements, and creative use of entertainment technology.”

To create the show’s programme students were divided into groups of six to eight people to develop different themes and aspects of 2012, with each group specialising in theatre lighting, sound systems, acoustics, stage visuals and special effects.

One group presented a show segment called *Truth*, which stayed close to the Mayan prediction that December 21st, 2012 will be the end of the world. *Truth* employed video projection, lighting and audio effects to interpret Mayan prophecy and lead audiences to consider whether selfish and irresponsible human activity is, potentially, the true cause of civilisation’s doom.

A segment called *Lolly Land* explored a more optimistic and romantic prospect from the perspective of children, seeing 2012 as the beginning of a new world, a colourful place full of lollipops, a concept designed to make audiences happy as they recapture the feelings of a childlike heart.

Agape used lights and sounds to give shape to the mysterious concept of divine love, the love that the Bible says “passes all understanding.” *Agape* told the story of a girl recalling somebody who had given her unconditional, self-sacrificing and thoughtful love, emphasising the importance of receiving and giving love in life.

While most of the segments used the inspiration of 2012 to cast an eye on the future, *Two, Only One True* took audiences back to 300 BC and the Era of the Warring States. The segment was inspired by the Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi who posed a question about the relationship between reality and illusion when he asked, “Was the butterfly in my



LEFT *TWO, ONLY ONE TRUE* DEPICTING ZHUANGZI’S PHILOSOPHICAL DILEMMA; ABOVE A GIRL REMINISCING ABOUT THE PAST IN *AGAPE*; BELOW OVER 60 GUESTS ENJOYED THE SHOW; BELOW RIGHT TOP *TRUTH* INTERPRETING THE MAYAN DOOMSDAY PROPHECY; BELOW RIGHT BOTTOM HKDI STUDENTS PREPARING TECHNOLOGY FOR THE SHOW



dream when I was sleeping? Or was I in the butterfly’s dream?”

In *Two, Only One True* gorgeous lighting, sound, laser effects and multi-screen projections, show a butterfly flying through space. The creature was supposed to lead the audience to experience Zhuangzi’s confusion, by asking whether they were flying with the butterfly or had become the butterfly. The butterfly also alluded to the youngsters’ struggles with the gap between reality and dreams.

“The Chinese painting style and project mapping technique brought Zhuangzi’s imaginative perspective on reality to life,” said Leung. “We hope our graduates can bring new ideas and innovative applications to entertainment technology, which is the key to the further economic development of the entertainment industry.”



THOUGHT PROCESS

The HKDI's Department of Product & Interior Design operates on the belief that great designs only become fabulous products if they have good working principles behind them. As programme leader Bill Chan reveals to **SUMMER CAO** this approach helps create sustainable careers and a healthier design environment.



“WE DON’T WANT OUR STUDENTS to redesign existing models or products, like commercial entities do in order to maximise profits,” says Bill Chan, explaining the philosophy behind the HKDI’s product design course. “Through our students’ graduation project as well as all the other projects they undertake during their time at HKDI, we aim to increase their capacity for holistic planning and creative thought.”

For the 2012 graduation project students were required to identify a segment of the lifestyle market, and investigate its existing problems, consumer needs and behavior, brand preferences, technological development and cultural

differences. Based on this research, students developed their designs, branding strategies, packaging and promotion materials.

“The most important part of the project is the research,” says Chan. “Students were required to investigate a particular human activity such as listening to or making music and discover ways that it could be performed more effectively – they were told not to concentrate on an existing product. Based on the chosen activity, students had to decide how to position their products.”

Chan cites a vacuum tube amplifier, designed by Kenneth Fung as a good example of how the department’s approach works.

The amplifier has a chic black appearance with elegant icons in the shape of musical instruments on the four pairs of vacuum tubes, to represent the different sounds they each produce.

Vacuum tubes control electric current in a hermetically sealed container, and give music an especially rich sound. They are indispensable for music lovers and musicians, who choose them because they reproduce sound with great accuracy and depth. However, tubes creating different sounds might look very similar and there isn’t a standard for tubes that have a particular effect. Different electronic companies also produce their own tubes and this adds to the difficulty for beginners. Fung’s design makes it easier for musical novices to choose the right vacuum tube.

For the jewellery design graduation project, students were expected to combine the storytelling techniques and craftsmanship learnt in the 2-year’s courses.

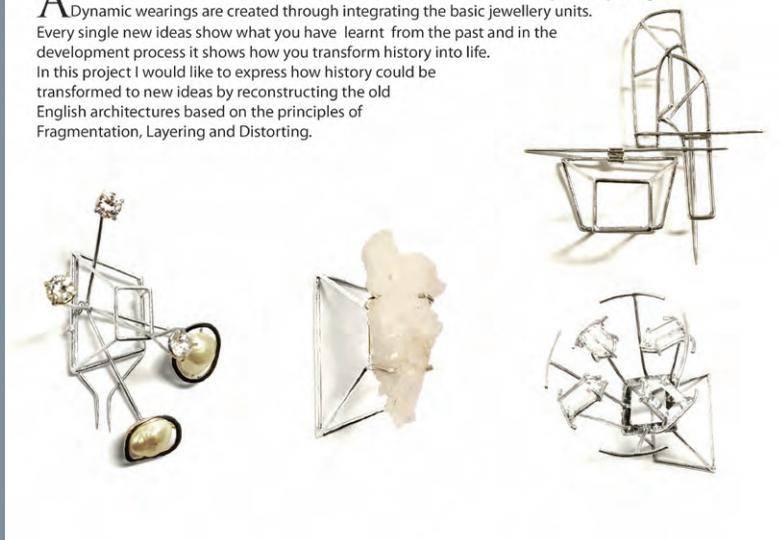
“In Hong Kong where the market is dominated by big brands, jewellery is usually designed for mass production, whereas in Europe, people pay more attention to craftsmanship and the stories behind a piece of jewellery,” says Chan. “In order to enable the students to employ their talents to the fullest, and prepare them for future developments in the industry, students must be trained according to the standards that apply in both of these contexts.”

The key to achieving this, according to Chan, is craftsmanship. “The more craft techniques students have in their repertoire, the more flexible and

LEFT KENNETH FUNG'S VACUUM TUBE AMPLIFIER
BELOW A POSTER DISPLAYING CYNTHIA LUI'S
JEWELLERY DESIGNS



Architectural esthetic elements are extracted & reconstructed in term of jewellery design. Dynamic wearings are created through integrating the basic jewellery units. Every single new ideas show what you have learnt from the past and in the development process it shows how you transform history into life. In this project I would like to express how history could be transformed to new ideas by reconstructing the old English architectures based on the principles of Fragmentation, Layering and Distorting.



imaginative they can be when turning their concept into a design. Then there is the passion that I think is the most important element to drive a designer to create better work. Students should be fascinated by the jewellery world and become self-driven. Only in this way can they improve and be successful."

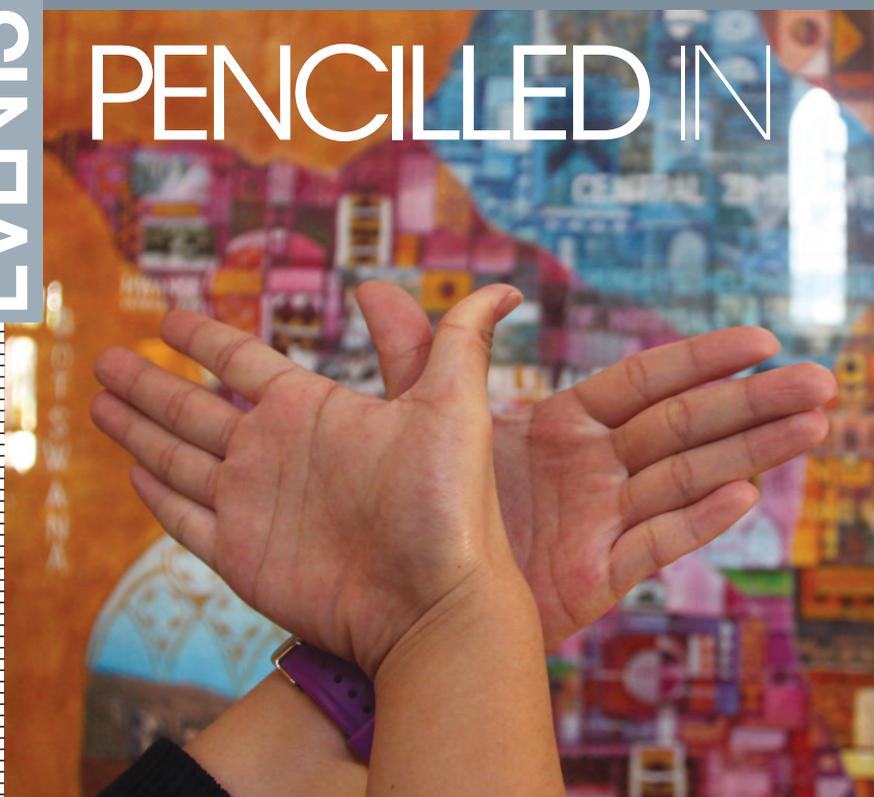
Chan recommends a jewellery set designed by Cynthia Lui as a good example of his approach. It consists of five pieces inspired by the different window shapes found in ancient architecture that were transformed into jewellery. The design also included stars and clouds and other features that could be seen through windows.

The final grade for each student for both programmes was based on the way students tackled the design process, as well as by the finished product. "In the design world and in society as a whole, most people only think about results. As educators, we want to stress the importance of the design and execution process to students. Only in this way can they form healthy habits in their careers that will enable them to treat obstacles positively and tackle them independently.

"Both of the students I mentioned showed progress throughout the project. I saw Fung deal with a tough time, break through constraints and steer his design onto the right track. And Lui had a strong focus and knew what she wanted from the beginning, she put her design concept into a video which became a successful way to present her work."

The HKDI's Department of Product & Interior Design has had great success in placing its students with design companies in Hong Kong and elsewhere, a sure sign that its holistic approach is paying big dividends. ∞

PENCILLED IN



ABOVE COLOUR-FILLED CONTAINERS ABOVE COLOUR-FILLED CONTAINERS BELOW COLOUR-FILLED CONTAINERS ARE A COMMON SITE

The D&AD Awards for 2012 arrived in Hong Kong on September 4th as an exhibition of 100 prizewinners from this year was unveiled at HKDI. Among the work on display was *Peace One Day – Spread Your Wings* by a team of students from the institute that won this year's Student Award as Best of Year.



THE OSCARS HAVE ARRIVED in Hong Kong, or at least the design industry's version of Hollywood's glittering prizes. Since 1962, when D&AD was founded (originally as British Design & Art Direction) their annual prize giving for creative excellence has been regarded as the "Academy Awards" of the design industry.

Each year D&AD awards its Yellow and Black Pencils to work that is groundbreaking in its field, whether that be TV advertising or graphic design. D&AD Pencils are presented to both students and professional creatives and the HKDI's exhibition features one hundred selected pieces from both the student and professional awards.

Part of the prestige of the awards results from the rarity of the Pencils and the famous rigour of the judging process, which ensures that pencils are only awarded to work that is strong enough. No fixed number of Awards is allocated for any particular year and entries are judged by the very top creative minds from around the world, so those who enter the D&AD awards process knows that if their work is successful, they are performing at the top of their game.

D&AD produces an Annual every year that features the best work from the Awards and as 2012 is the organisation's 50th Anniversary, the work that appears in the 50th Annual and in the HKDI's special exhibition offers a window onto a historic moment in design and advertising.

For this year's awards, HKDI students Chang Oi Ting, Law Ying Ting and Ng Pui Yin entered a design called *Spread Your Wings*, which was created as a fan page for the Peace One Day Campaign. Fans of the page are requested to upload their own "Spread Your Wings" photographs and one dollar is donated for each click of the

Facebook “Like” or “Share” option.

Spread Your Wings is inspired by the idea that violence can be turned into a harmonious and peaceful reconciliation, that the act of slapping somebody’s face can be redirected to a slap of palms, symbolising the resolution of a dispute by a heartfelt embrace between the hands of two people. The conjoined hands in the students’ work resemble the wings of a dove in flight, a universal icon of peace and love.

“Since the competition was a global one, students needed to deliver their design in a visual language that was international,” says Sylvia Tan, the HKDI lecturer who guided the three students through the entry process for the competition. “The dove is a globalised image, and people from different places know that it symbolises peace, thus the message is powerful.”

The first D&AD student awards were launched in 1979 in collaboration with the British Post Office and they were designed to bridge the gap between study and work, presenting students with commercially plausible briefs that could stretch their skills and reveal the potential of their talent. The award won by Chang, Law and Ng is important for them and for the HKDI as a whole.

“This is the first time that HKDI, a relatively new institute, has received this award, and this means that we are very internationalised,” says Tan. “We have often organised exhibitions in the past [like the Red Dot prize winners] to increase student exposure to high-end designs, and it proves that this kind of exposure can have very positive results.”

The D&AD Awards 2012 Winners exhibition at HKDI was organised by the institute and D&AD with sponsorship

BELOW COLOUR-FILLED CONTAINERS RIGHT COLOUR-FILLED CONTAINERS BOTTOM RIGHT COLOUR-FILLED CONTAINERS ARE A COMMON SITE

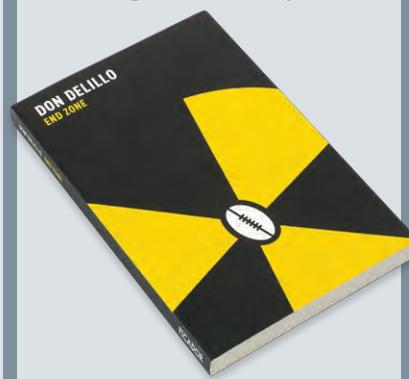


from the British Council, Hong Kong Design Association and the Hong Kong Design Centre. It runs through September 24th. Apart from the student awards visitors will also be able to view groundbreaking designs for books, Whisky bottles and CD covers. The awards as a whole are for Art Direction, Book Design, Branding, Digital Advertising, Digital Design, Direction, Film Advertising Crafts, Graphic Design Illustration, Integrated & Earned Media, Magazine & Newspaper Design, Mobile Marketing, Music Videos, Outdoor Advertising, Packaging Design, Photography, Press Advertising, Product Design, Radio Advertising, Spatial Design, TV & Cinema Advertising, TV & Cinema Communications, Typography, Writing for Advertising and Writing for Design. For Chang, Law and Ng, and any other students with ambition, the exhibition can serve as inspiration to win a D&AD Black Pencil. Yellow Pencils are awarded for “work that is

outstanding, rather than merely excellent” whereas a Black Pencil is “the ultimate award, for work that is truly groundbreaking” and designers who win them become a benchmark for the whole industry.

“The Black Pencil is the ultimate accolade,” says Rosy Arnold, the President of D&AD. “There are so few given out that if you have your own black pencil you are in a club on your own.”

And that’s why the D&AD awards are so closely watched, because they recognize the kind of design that has such a high level of emotional engagement it rises to the level of art. Just as it does in the HKDI’s *Spread Your Wings*. 



A toy competition to celebrate the Vocational Training Council's 30th Anniversary broke records and showed how fine art and popular culture can be combined to spectacular effect. As **SUMMER CAO** reports, the contest also revealed how the region's most established design school works to promote the reputation of Hong Kong's design industry.



QEE BEAR
OUTLOOK
DESIGNED
BY CHAN
LAITING,
THE WINNER
FROM THE
KWUN TONG
DISTRICT

BEAR MARKET



JUDGE PANEL (AT THE BACK) OF THE QEE BEAR IMAGE DIY DESIGN COMPETITION WITH CONTESTANTS FROM YUEN LONG DISTRICT AND THEIR DESIGN. THE PANEL INCLUDES RAYMOND CHOY, CREATOR OF QEE BEAR (THIRD FROM LEFT), BERNIE TING, CHAIRMAN OF HONG KONG Q-MARK COUNCIL, FEDERATION OF HONG KONG INDUSTRIES (ON THE RIGHT), C.K. YEUNG, VICE CHAIRMAN OF BLUE BOX HOLDINGS LTD (THIRD FROM RIGHT), KELLY SZE, CHAIRMAN OF HONG KONG DESIGNERS' ASSOCIATION (2010-12) (SECOND FROM RIGHT), JOHN TONG, VICE CHAIRMAN OF HONG KONG TOYS COUNCIL (FOURTH FROM RIGHT), ALEX FUNG, THE RECENTLY RETIRED PRINCIPAL OF HKDI (FOURTH FROM LEFT), EDWIN WONG, PROGRAMME LEADER OF HIGHER DIPLOMA IN VISUAL ARTS AND CULTURE OF HKDI (FIRST FROM LEFT)

"I MIGHT APPLY FOR A PLACE in the Guinness Book of World Records," says Dr. Raymond Choy, commenting on the Qee Bear do-it-yourself design competition organised by HKDI for all secondary students in Hong Kong. "This is the biggest toy DIY design competition in Hong Kong, maybe the world."

Choy was one of the competition's judges and is the founder and president of Toy2R, a Hong Kong based toy company that gave birth to the urban vinyl toy Qee in 2001. Choy is no stranger to awards, having been showered with them over the last decade. After Qee's initial success he created blank black or white figures, giving Qee fans the chance to design and paint their own toys.

A DIY Qee competition was

the next logical step and more than 1,000 designs from 18 districts in Hong Kong were received. In phase one each participant had to submit their entry on paper with a short description of the design concept, which was required to include iconic cultural elements from their district. On July 14th the winners from each of the 18 districts gathered at HKDI's Design Boulevard, to render their designs for the judges and spectators on 1.80 metre-tall Qee Bears.

The final awards will be given on December 9th after a round of online voting during August. The combined size and number of the Qee Bears set a record in the toy DIY field, and brought Hong Kong's urban vinyl movement into the spotlight.

In the mid 1950s the Pop Art

Movement, which originated in Britain and the United States, started to bring fine art and pop culture together, as a counterpoint to an elitist culture in art that had kept the two strictly separate. Pop Art's style depicts images and icons from daily life in an ironic way with works such as Andy Warhol's Campbell soup can and Roy Lichtenstein's cartoon canvasses being prime examples.

Inspired by Pop Art and by the region's highly developed animation and comic market, artists in the east began movements of their own, such as Neo Pop in Japan, which combined animation and comics in art works. After Japanese artist Akashi Murakami coined the word "superflat" in 1999, to describe the practice of connecting fine art with manga and



MAIN PICTURE 60-INCH TALL QEE BEARS DESIGNED AND PAINTED BY THE WINNERS FROM EACH OF THE EIGHTEEN DISTRICTS OF HONG KONG AT HKDI'S DESIGN BOULEVARD; BELOW LEFT CONTESTANTS FROM THE SHAM SHUI PO DISTRICT AT THE FINAL COMPETITION ON JULY 14TH; BELOW RIGHT A CONTESTANT FROM THE KOWLOON CITY DISTRICT DECORATING HER TEAM'S QEE BEAR



animation it was then only a short additional step for toys to become creative platforms for Pop Art practitioners.

The influence of Neo Pop quickly expanded to other cities in Asia including Hong Kong, and found popularity among young artists working in the toy industry. Urban vinyl is an extension of Neo Pop, and it features a toy that has been used as a canvas for art work. The urban vinyl trend was initiated by Hong Kong-based artist Michael Lau, who first created urban vinyl figures in

Hong Kong in the late 1990s, an innovation that inspired Takashi Murakami whose urban vinyl work has been exhibited in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

An offshoot of hip-hop and other forms of popular youth culture, urban vinyl often represents real-life figures. Two examples are Lau's depiction of the LMF rappers from Hong Kong.

As the fame of urban vinyl began to spread Qee Bear and the Qee series became one of the most



successful toy concepts to emerge from Hong Kong's commercial art scene, inspiring internationally renowned artists to design new looks for Qee figures.

In 2007, a 60-inch Qee Bear designed by Choy and a 36-inch version by James Fong aka Ultraman were featured in Sotheby's Chinese Contemporary Art catalogue. More recently, the original hand-painted 8-inch Brain Pattern Qee raised 1,050 euros for the Foundation Against Aids during a Sotheby's auction at Swab Barcelona 2012 in May.

HKDI's encouragement of urban vinyl through the DIY toy competition is part of the institution's mission to improve and enhance the Hong Kong design environment, its global status and the health of its industries. The competition has offered an opportunity to elevate awareness of local culture, explore the potential of young design talent and promote Hong Kong's design industry.

Choy says, "By including the cultural background of each of Hong Kong's 18 districts in the designs, the competition has





thoroughly explored the deep and sophisticated cultural roots of this area. They were brought together, and united under the name of Hong Kong, like a well-advertised brand.”

The cultural elements in the Qee bear competition designs included landmark buildings, the city’s skyline, political emblems, folklore symbols, religion, customs and key events. Arranged in a variety of creative combinations they brought out the unique aspects of the culture found in the city’s districts and of Hong Kong as a whole.

Some of the most striking designs sought to show the changes between the present and the past. For example Pui-yu Chien, the finalist from Wan Chai vibrant east-meet-west culture, juxtaposing the wet market and a signpost for the Lan Kwai Fong entertainment district.

The father of the Qee Bear says his favourite design came from the Kwun Tong District. “The designer [Lai-ting Chan] used a bold black and white colour scheme to bring out the development of Kwun Tong, with the gear wheels used for the ears and legs and other parts of the Qee bear’s body telling the story of Kwun Tong’s industrial

history. A blooming flower at the front torso seems to invite people to see the character of the new neighbourhood now that its industrial era has faded away.”

The most challenging phase of the competition came when entrants had to convert their designs on paper into a 60-inch Qee. In order to ease the process students participated in a seminar where they learned how to put their designs on an 8-inch Qee. Choy continues, “After the seminar, all the students had grasped the method regarding linking connecting colours, adjusting designs from 2-D to 3-D and finding an appropriate prop.”

After seeing his goal of training young talent and promoting Hong Kong culture accomplished, Choy now hopes that the competition will help cultivate the local appetite for Hong Kong toy design.

“The Hong Kong market has a preference to foreign toys, mostly ones from Japan, Europe and the US,” he says. “Hong Kong has a lot of excellent designers and toys, but they lack promotion and support.”

An exhibition of the 18 60-inch Qee Bears is scheduled to tour around Hong Kong later this year, after the winner has been announced. Maybe Choy will then see the city’s toy industry move a few steps closer to his dreams. ☺





THIS PAGE A CONTESTANT FROM THE KWUN TONG DISTRICT POLISHING THE BACK OF THE QEE BEAR; OPPOSITE PAGE TOP CONTESTANTS FROM THE NORTH DISTRICT; OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM CONTESTANT FROM THE TUEN MUN DISTRICT



PAINTING
WITH
SCISSORS

During the summer months a seven foot tall calligraphy brush drew the eyes of visitors to the HKDI campus and led them to work by Wu Guanzhong (吳冠中, 1919-2010), a Chinese painter who is suddenly back in vogue as a new generation of artists appraise his contribution to contemporary art. **DAISY ZHONG** reports.

IN 1935 A YOUNG ENGINEERING STUDENT met the love of his life, an event he later recorded in his autobiography: “At the age of 17, I threw myself into the power of her, into the magical universe of beauty... I was obsessed, enchanted, and bewitched. From then on she controlled my life, all the way until today, when I am already silver-haired.”

The enchanting “she” in this memoir was no misty eyed maiden, but the world of art, and the engineering student was Wu Guanzhong, who would go on to become a foremost practitioner of contemporary art and one of the most influential Chinese artists of the twentieth century.

Wu was recently the subject of a major retrospective in New York City, where the Asia Society hosted an

exhibition titled *Revolutionary Ink: The Paintings of Wu Guanzhong*, featuring work by the artist from the 1970s until 2004. And Hong Kong’s Museum of Art celebrated the artist in April with an exhibition titled *Painting·Dance·Music*, which examined the relationship between movement, rhythm and emptiness that characterise Wu Guanzhong’s paintings. Three paintings from this exhibition were on display at the HKDI from June 22 to September 14.

The degree of attention Wu’s work receives has intensified since his death in 2010, as the art world began to appraise how great a talent had been lost, an artist who brought Impressionism to traditional Chinese landscape painting and survived the Cultural Revolution intact, despite having to burn decades worth of his work



ABOVE AWAKENING (2010) INK AND COLOUR ON PAPER (《夢醒》, 水墨設色紙本) BELOW WU GUANZHONG SPEAKING IN SUZHOU CITY, 18 JUNE 2008

and being forced to labour in a rural camp where he was forbidden to paint.

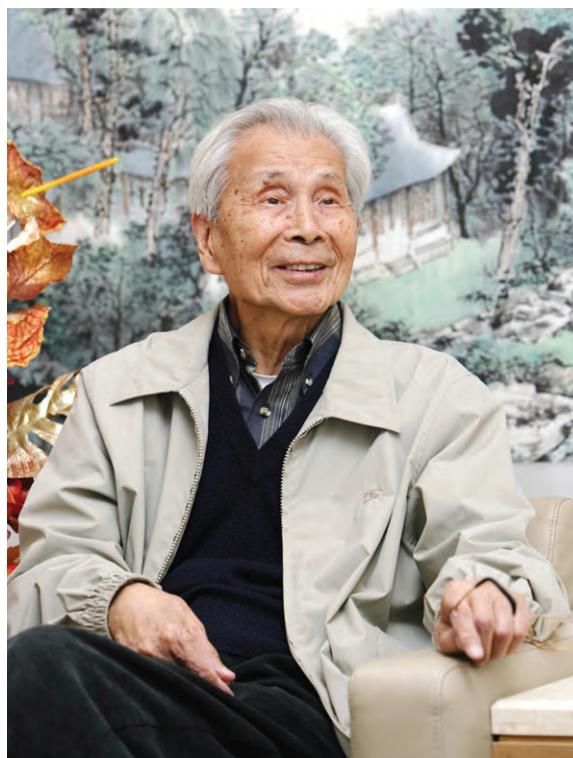
When Wu described his 1930s life-changing moment in an autobiography titled *I Owe Painting* (我負丹青), published 50 years later, it was obvious that the power of his first love was still strong: “I saw images and sculptures that I had never seen in my life. I got a first glance at beauty. It was so attractive, and easily captured a young heart, the owner of which became most willing to be enslaved by her.”

In the grip of his infatuation Wu gave up his engineering studies at Zhejiang University, and went to study at National Hangzhou Academy of Art instead, an act his family and friends condemned. At Hangzhou, Wu studied Chinese and Western painting with Lin Fengmian (林風眠, 1900-1991) and Pan Tianshou (潘天寿, 1897-1971) before traveling to Paris in 1947 to study at the *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts*.

After graduation in 1950, he decided to return to China and devote himself to his homeland through art. For the next 60 years, he rose to become a pioneering artist whose hybrid style charts the changing face of Chinese art in the 20th Century.

The defining characteristic of Wu’s work is the mix of East and the West, executed through the blend of Western oil painting techniques with the pen and ink aesthetics of Chinese calligraphy. Wu once wrote “Oil paint and ink are two blades of the same pair of

scissors.” He later expanded on this thought in *Direction Unknown* (走向遠方), published in 2002. “Oil paintings are the foundation of my ink paintings, while ink paintings are the sinew of my oil paintings. The two are my lifelong companions, the obverse and reverse...”



《Oil paintings are the foundation of my ink paintings, while ink paintings are the sinew of my oil paintings.》—
Wu Guanzhong, *Direction Unknown*



of my art. At the same time, colour and black-and-white are locked in a perpetual wrestle and a perpetual embrace in my works. They are like a see-saw.”

“Wu established revolutionary aesthetics in Chinese painting, which demonstrate a crossbreed of Chinese spirituality and Western form,” says Szeto Yuen Kit, the curator of the HKMA, to which Wu donated more than 50 of his pieces. “Wu’s works are the bridge between Chinese and Western art, as well as the bridge betwixt ancient and modern art.”

Wu Guanzhong compared his groundbreaking approach to ink painting to the way a kite is navigated: flying high but with a tether always connected to the ground. The firm foundation in the tradition of Chinese ink painting is revealed in his use of ink and wash, the compositions and varying types of brushstrokes utilised to present variation in texture. For instance, majestic mountains in Wu’s paintings can remind people of the monumental landscape masterpiece *Early Spring* (早春圖) by Guo Xi (郭熙, ca. 1000–1090), which is believed to have been painted in 1072.

On the other hand, a kite symbolises liberation in an unlimited sky and as such Wu’s paintings are fundamentally different from traditional work. While

traditional Chinese ink paintings underscore the grandeur of the natural landscape over man-made buildings, Wu preferred painting rural architecture. These paintings extract their geometric aesthetics from rural structures, and thus provide a more intimate experience as if the viewer is fully immersed in the landscape.

Another distinctive departure from traditional ink painting is Wu’s underlying formalism, which produced paintings that are marked by bright colours, liberal use of wash, and drastic compositions.

“It’s an ‘art for art’s sake’ approach to painting,” says Szeto. “His artworks are pure aesthetics, without any reference to political, social or ethical functions.”

Wu’s kite metaphor echoes the statement “Strokes equal nothingness” that he wrote in a highly controversial essay published in his early years, in which he explained that techniques or skills should always be subjugated to feelings and thoughts.

“What he meant was that he would not encourage pure formalism, the concept that a work’s artistic value is entirely determined by its form,” says Szeto. “But rather artists should strive to produce paintings with feelings that can touch ordinary people.”

That is the reason Wu had such high regard for Shi Tao (石濤, ca. 1641–1718), who advocated that being bounded by established techniques is not good for art. As Wu wrote in a commentary, “Shi Tao put emphasis on his feelings, and asserted that for each painting, skills were shaped by the feelings experienced by the artist at the time”.

Like Shi Tao, Wu’s works are about feelings and the two artists share a remarkable accomplishment: they won acclaim from both art experts and ordinary citizens. The link is through emotions. To Wu, whatever artists are painting, it is of utmost importance that they paint with feeling.

“The dots, lines and planes are painted in a way so that they express rhythm, which causes feelings such as ecstasy, fervour and liveliness,” says Szeto. “It doesn’t have to be depicting anything, but just the feeling and rhythms of feeling.”

Szeto believes that rhythm is the key word in



LEFT A 7-FOOT TALL CHINESE BRUSH AT THE WU GUANZHONG EXHIBITION AT HKDI HELD FROM JUNE 22 TO SEPTEMBER 14
 ABOVE WU GUANZHONG AT HIS HOME IN FANGZHUANG, BEIJING, DECEMBER 1996

understanding Wu’s art. For example, in *Faces Unchanged* (朱顏未改), colourful dots were the only element in the composition. “Liberated from figural representation, the character and characteristics of the primary elements are augmented, such that they are no longer the parts serving the figural whole but important elements interacting with one another to become the whole,” Szeto wrote in the short introduction to the HKMA’s exhibition.

The rhythms of Wu’s paintings have also inspired the Hong Kong Dance Company to create a dance called *Two Swallows: Ode to Wu Guanzhong* based on 8 of the artist’s pieces. The epic dance poem depicts the freedom and solitude of the artist as he roamed the idyllic countryside along the Yangtze River.

“That’s why great art is great: its beauty is universal. The same rhythm, or beauty, can be presented in various ways – painting, dance and music,” says Szeto.

In Wu’s later years rhythms are particularly

enshrined, as his works became more abstract and focused on illusions of visual reality, states of being, emotions, and concepts.

In this late work Wu’s Western studies and oil-painting background show through most strongly. His exuberant mural *The Hua Mountains at Sunset* (夕照華山) (1997), which opened the New York Asia Society exhibition, “bristles with Abstract Expressionist brio,” according to the *New York Times* reviewer, who continued “Its snaking black lines and clustered dots look like Pollock-esque drips, even though they are actually the trails and resting points of a brush making full contact with paper.”

However, Wu’s work is never purely abstract. “In his early years a figural wall is clearly identified in his painting, and in his later years a wall becomes a white blob of colour,” says Szeto. “But even there, you can still see the feeling, and the real life reference for where the blob comes from. The root is there. And Wu’s greatest

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WU TIM, THE GRANDSON OF WU GUANZHONG VIEWS AN EXHIBIT OF HIS GRANDFATHER'S WORK AT THE ASIA SOCIETY IN NEW YORK, APRIL 2012

skill was to distill pure beauty from ordinary life.”

The abstract works of Wu's late years were the focus of the HKMA exhibition, and the HKDI's Department of Design Foundation Studies (DFS) brought a trio of these paintings – *At Rest* (休閒), *Faces Unchanged* (朱顏未改) and *Illusion* (幻影) – to the HKDI campus for exhibition after the HKMA show had closed. The 7-foot tall Chinese brush that hung above an enlarged version of *At Rest* emphasised the Master's concept of creativity by bringing out the unrestrained freedom expressed by the painting's dynamic lines.

The installation at HKDI was designed “in order to enhance HKDI students' interpretation of Chinese culture and widen their perspectives on Chinese tradition and aesthetic values,” says Edwin Wong, a DFS lecturer and the curator of the exhibition.

In addition, a seminar and a workshop were held on June 18th, conducted by Dr Ma Kwai-shun, Senior Lecturer of the Department of Creative Arts of the Hong Kong Institute of Education. A group of 40 students attended and learnt some of the Chinese techniques for painting plants.

“Chinese cultural heritage is a great treasure for design students to explore and apply within modern

design,” says Dr Raymond Tang Man-Leung, Assistant Curator of Hong Kong Museum of Art. “In my conversations with HKDI students, I found that although it's easy for them to accept new, chic designs from abroad, it's not quite so easy when it comes to an older and more sophisticated culture.”

During Wu's studies in Paris, he took a great liking to post-impressionists such as Van Gogh, Gauguin and Cezanne. He said, “A young artist must fit him/herself into a master's shoes, walk for a distance, and take off the shoes. In the process of putting on and taking off, the artist finds his true self.”

For contemporary students to put on the shoes of Wu requires them to understand the deeper aspects of his work or that of other Masters, by gaining a wider comprehension of the Chinese tradition of scholar-painting, Western abstract art and formalism. It's a tough road, but one that Wu proved can pay enormous dividends in terms of enhanced creativity and artistic technique.

“Only when you have done some thorough research on these techniques can you start to fully appreciate Master Wu Guanzhong's unusual achievements,” says Tang. ㊦



«MY CHILDREN, WHO *RESEMBLE SWALLOWS*,
SHARE THE **DEEPEST DESTINY** WITH ME, AND
IN MY HEART POSSESS EQUAL STANDING
WITH DEITIES, **STARS** AND **ART.**»

WU GUANZHONG



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Member of VTC Group
VTC 機構成員

《IDEAS
COME
FROM
EVERYTHING.》

ALFRED HITCHCOCK

