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THE MAGAZINE OF THE HONG KONG DESIGN INSTITUTE

# SIGNED

ISSUE FOUR 2012 HKDI



DOUBLE  
FIGURES  
BODW  
TURNS  
TEN

THE  
POWER  
OF ONE  
THE TAO  
OF KAN  
TAI KEUNG

# LESS IS BETTER

GERMAN DESIGN FROM  
BAUHAUS TO YOUR HOUSE

# HKDI

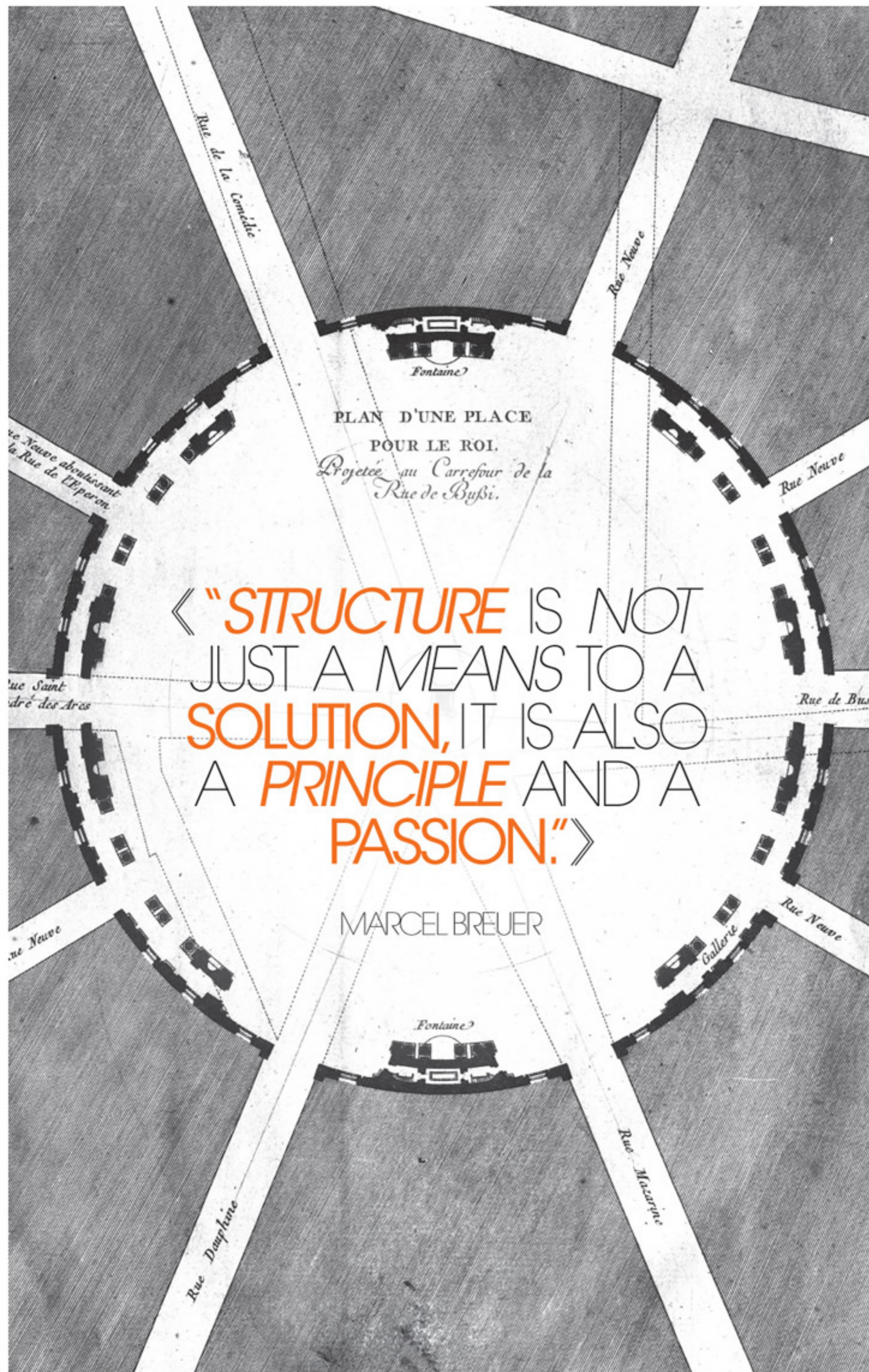
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VTC 機構成員



«GOD  
IS IN THE  
DETAILS.»

MIES VAN DER ROHE



« **STRUCTURE** IS NOT JUST A MEANS TO A **SOLUTION**, IT IS ALSO A **PRINCIPLE** AND A **PASSION.** »

MARCEL BREUER



What does it take to be a great designer? A world-class imagination? An exceptional degree of technical skill? A unique grasp of colour and form? Men and women through the ages have had all these qualities and still failed to find greatness, or even do work that is still remembered today. Those creative talents who had much, but achieved little probably lacked one key quality. It was the great Greek mathematician and philosopher Aristotle who said in the fourth century B.C. that, "Courage is the first of human qualities, because it is the quality that guarantees all others." His view was echoed twenty-three centuries later by C.S. Lewis, the author of *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* who wrote "Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point." Both men were expressing the idea that no talent or virtue will produce much, unless it belongs to somebody with courage. A skilled marksman may always find his target, but he will never win a battle unless he has the courage to shoot under fire. And a painter may have extraordinary ability but never go beyond creating uninspiring work unless he has the backbone to throw his paint in the face of convention. This edition of SIGNED has taken Courage as its theme and the idea is found throughout the stories that run here. In *Paper Tiger*, graphic designer Neville Brody reveals the importance of focusing on ideas rather than popularity. In *We Speak Design* we see how the masters of German creativity throughout the

twentieth century fought convention and political oppression to advance the agenda of minimalism and functionalism. And in *People Power* we find the inspiring story of how three men who made a major motion picture against all the odds. The message is clear – wherever there is creativity there is courage, for to be creative demands the will to change and do something that has never been done before.

**DANIEL JEFFREYS**  
Editor-In-Chief

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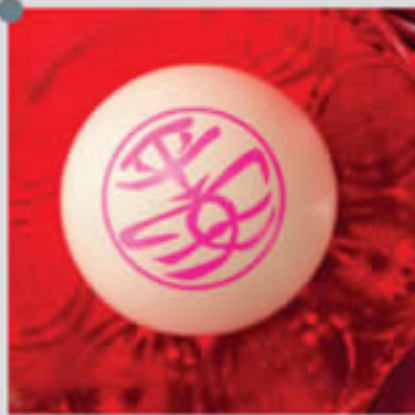
**06** FEATURE  
**COMING OF AGE**  
BODW turns 10



**10** FEATURE  
**WE SPEAK DESIGN**  
How Germany changed the way life looks



**26** EVENTS  
**PEOPLE POWER**  
From kitchen table to big screen



**20** EVENTS  
**BRIGHT APPROACH**  
Cultural identity in the Colours of Asia

**16** FEATURE  
**TALK OF THE TOWN**  
New forum for Hong Kong Masters

# CONTENTS



**30** EVENTS  
**PRIVATE MATTER**  
Christopher Le Brun on the secret strength of artists



**32** EVENTS  
**VISUAL FEATS**  
Press Photography at its best



**42** PEOPLE  
**PAPER TIGER**  
Neville Brody on courage and digital ennui



**46** CULTURE  
**MOVING UP**  
HKDI in the forefront of sustainable fashion



**36** PEOPLE  
**THE POWER OF ONE**  
The Tao of Kan Tai Leung



**50** CULTURE  
**GAME JAM**  
Making games en masse



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

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This year Hong Kong's Business of Design Week celebrated its tenth anniversary with its eleventh and biggest show yet creating an exciting roster of international design masters, including many from Denmark, the partner country for 2012. As **DANIEL JEFFREYS** reports, the event has grown in authority and scope over the last decade and now represents one of the most important dates on the creative industry's global calendar.



COMING OF

# AGE

OPPOSITE PAGE THE  
CROWD GATHERS  
FOR BODW 2011

DIETER RAMS, FRANK GEHRY, Marcel Wanders, Rem Koolhaas, Raman Hui, Zaha Hadid, Tom Dixon, Jimmy Choo, Sir John Sorrell, Karim Rashid, Marc Newson, Vivienne Tam, Winy Maas, and Thomas Heatherwick. These names sound like a celestial roll call, for they are all stars of the design world. And they have all been speakers at Hong Kong's Business of Design Week (BoDW).

It is a mark of the event's maturity and influence that BoDW has become an essential destination for the top talent from the world's creative industries. And from the beginning the structure of the event, created by the Hong Kong Design Centre (HKDC) has been deceptively simple.

"The goal has always been to promote awareness of the value of design and to link the business and design worlds together," says William To, the HKDC project director who is in charge of the BoDW programme. "We want business to understand how important design is as a business tool and we want designers to have a better understanding of how they can build their brands."

To says the over-arching goal is that "business and design should speak the same language" and to that end BoDW is structured as a series of forums

"for great creative and business minds" with an exhibition by the partner country and opportunities for exchange programmes between the partners involving the two main participating educational institutions, the HKDI and Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Since the HK Ambassadors of Design took over the Detour programme 4 years ago, they turned it into an important element of BoDW, engaging the general public and young designers in design appreciation and interaction. And although the partner country feature of the BoDW programme is now one of the event's trademarks, it was not initiated until 2004.

"The first year we had a country partnership HKDC worked with Sweden and in the second year it was Sweden, Finland and Denmark," says To. "The UK came next and after that the event really started to grow."

In the last four years the country partners have been the Netherlands, France, Japan and Germany. Each year the HKDC receives several proposals from countries that wish to be the BoDW partner and HKDC staff also selects countries they would like to see as partners.

"The vetting process is very thorough," says To. "There are clear guidelines that the partner countries must follow but we always initiate creative tracks that emphasise each country's strengths. With Germany it was cars, with the Netherlands architecture and objects."

Denmark, this year's partner, came with a much-anticipated focus on sustainability and social design, two topics that are at the heart of the HKDI's mission.

"Denmark has a very rich culture in design," says To. "The influence of their design masters can be seen all over the world. And they are the leading country in social design."

HKDC



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: DIETER RAMS (2011), ANTONIO CITTERIO (2011) NAOTO FUKASAWA (2010), ZAHA HADID (2007); OPPOSITE PAGE: THE BODW GALA DINNER 2011

world, when you get to pension age, what you do is that you develop a secondary occupation, and this happens because if you are not 'in engagement' you simply die," says Hvid. "We are proposing changes to the welfare services that will promote and facilitate the development of the engagement potential of this sector of the population and in its daily working life. We will live longer and work longer, because it will be what we want to do."

To and others at BodW were inspired by the kind of work that INDEX has been doing, and also gratified that the ideas brought to this year's event by Denmark are so different to the focus of previous years.

"Every country approaches BodW in a different way," he says, picking on an element of the event that he believes is a vital asset. "This makes sure that each year is unique, but there is a common goal for every BodW, to make sure everybody who attends is inspired and amazed." And as the programme grows, it became obvious that the event has also turned into an international platform for connection and collaboration.

In 2010 Japan was the BodW country partner and outside the conference centre there were some mutterings of discontent because of ongoing friction between the governments in Beijing and Tokyo. To and others at BodW say these external issues did not find their way inside the event in any meaningful way, highlighting again the importance of cultural exchanges like BodW in improving international relations at the micro-level.

"Design is never involved in politics and the collaboration with Japan was very successful," says To. "We had the biggest public attendance so far in 2010. Creativity opens up minds and neutralises conflicts because the purpose of design is to improve life and society. In the design world there are no geographic boundaries."

Although BodW has brought many international designers and their work to the city, it has not been a one-way street. Designers and business people who visit Hong Kong for the first time are often impacted in profound ways and those who are returning for a second visit are often stunned by the speed of the city's progress and development.


"Hong Kong's status as an international city has made the BodW a core draw, combined with the fact we are a gateway to Mainland

China," says To. "Every foreign designer who comes here for the first time with open eyes gets inspired and invigorated."

With many visitors struck by the city's efficiency and the successful way it has combined modernity with traditional Chinese culture. To believes that many BodW visitors over the last decade have returned home determined to make changes in their own countries. But To says the BodW's most important achievement in the last decade may be the way it has changed perceptions about the value of a career in design, making it easier for talented and creative young people to enter the creative industries.

"I think BodW has helped parents to understand that design is an important career and to not freak out if one of their children decides he or she wants to be a designer rather than a doctor or a lawyer," he says. "This has actually been the result of a combined effort between educational establishments, BodW events and the incredible support from the Hong Kong government, without which there would not be a BodW."

To emphasise the importance of government support, To points to the new government-funded renovation of the old Police married quarters on Hollywood Road, where 100-130 units are being created for young designers to work and showcase their creativity. It's a prime central city space in a very expensive neighbourhood that could so easily have been sold to a property developer to demolish and build flats. And yet it will soon emerge as a hub of creative entrepreneurs.

"I think visitors to the 2012 BodW will be amazed when they hear about the Hollywood Road project," says To. "Like BodW itself, the project will strengthen the city's reputation as an Asia design hub. I think many of the designers who come here and see these developments will go back and ask their governments why they are not doing the same thing." 

*«I think BodW has helped parents to understand that design is an important career and to not freak out if one of their children decides he or she wants to be a designer rather than a doctor or a lawyer.»*

**WILLIAM TO'S BODW TOP TEN**

- 1 **FRANK GEHRY** signing on to be one of our earliest keynote speakers when BodW was at its infant stage.
- 2 The first year of full-scale collaboration with a partner (UK).
- 3 In 2007, Italy sent two major exhibitions - History of Italian Seating and 50 Italian Masters which were both very successful.
- 4 In 2008 when The Netherlands was our partner, the Dutch broke all records by bringing in the biggest design delegation (over 300+) and the entire city buzzed with creative energy and everywhere in Central you could see people kissing each other on the cheek 3 times (a Dutch tradition).
- 5 Inviting **REM KOOLHAUS** to be our keynote speaker and him agreeing to curate our first Culture & the City track by hand picking creative participants from all over the world.
- 6 Successfully convincing **DIETER RAMS** to come, with the help of our good friends, **FRITZ FRENKLER** and **RALPH WIEGMANN**.
- 7 Signing on **PHILIPPE STARCK** as our keynote one year and getting a sold out full house.
- 8 Being informed by **PHILIPPE STARCK** he couldn't come so we had to arrange live-telecast to satisfy our audience.
- 9 Despite the political tension between China and Japan in 2010, Japan staged the most successful exhibition that drew the highest number of visitors.
- 10 Receiving **ZAHA HADID**.



WE  
SPEAK  
DESIGN  
SOUND

A SWIVEL CHAIR BY JEKSLAUB GBR, TEAMGEST MATCHBALL BY ADIDAS AG, COURTESY OF THE RED DOT DESIGN MUSEUM

A HAND SHOWER FROM GROHE AG, COURTESY OF THE RED DOT DESIGN MUSEUM



Germany has been at the heart of architectural, aesthetic and artistic innovation for most of the last two centuries and as a new exhibition that celebrates its design industry's achievements over the last 125 years opens at HKDI, **DANIEL JEFFREYS** examines the way one country's creative masters shaped the environment in which we live today.



IMAGINE A LAKE THAT HAS FROZEN. Through the ice many things are visible and some of them seem quite interesting, but nothing is moving, there is no development. This was the German design industry in the middle of the 19th century. And then came Peter Behrens. He hit the ice like a meteorite, blasting the surface open and sending a spider's web network of influence running through the history of German design that persists to this day.

That is why one of Behrens' designs from early 1906 is in the exhibition *German Design Standards - From Bauhaus to Globalisation* that opened at the HKDI gallery on December 6th (it runs until March 4 2013), despite the fact Bauhaus, Germany's most influential design movement was not officially launched until 1919, in Weimar.

Two decades before Behrens' work started to command a wide audience German industry began using the "Made in Germany" designation for products that were authentically produced by manufactures working within the country. This year the mark is 125 years old and to celebrate the HKDI invited Die Neue Sammlung - The International Design Museum Munich and the red dot design museum in Essen to curate an exhibition of German design classics.

The result was the *German Design Standards* exhibition, which uses its two sources to impressive effect, with Die Neue Sammlung, the biggest and oldest design museum in the world providing iconic items from its extensive collection and the red dot museum offering examples of modern product design, including recent winners of the famous red dot design awards.

The offerings of these two design museums were curated by HKDI staff working with Professor Dr. Peter Zec from red dot, author of *German Design Standards* (soon to appear in a third edition) and Professor Dr. Florian Hufnagl of Die Neue Sammlung.

Die Neue Sammlung provided two pieces that bear Behrens' stamp, a quartet of electric boilers and a trio of fans. Both may well have been conceived in the workshops where, between 1907 and 1912, the future father of Bauhaus, Walter Gropius worked. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, and Adolf Meyer were also to become Behrens' assistants, shortly after he became the "artistic consultant" for AEG (Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft), designing the company's entire corporate identity and thereby becoming the first industrial designer in history.

As Europe emerged from the nineteenth century the first seeds of Modernism were being sown. The essential core of this new movement was the rejection of traditional (i.e. pre-twentieth century) modes in art, architecture and literature as inappropriate for a rapidly industrialising world in which the city was becoming the most important unit of social, cultural and political organisation.

OPPOSITE PAGE: A WASSILY CHAIR BY MARCEL BREUER; THIS PAGE: TIZIO LAMPS BY RICHARD SAPPER



DIE NEUE SAMMLUNG - THE INTERNATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM MUNICH

DIE NEUE SAMMLUNG - THE INTERNATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM MUNICH

# «THE BAUHAUS IS GERMANY'S MOST SUCCESSFUL CONTRIBUTION TO INTERNATIONAL ART AND THE CULTURE OF MODERNITY IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY.»



This shift made the period from 1900 to 1919 an extremely exciting one for designers in Germany, but the revolution had begun even earlier for some creative innovators, such as Michael Thonet, who created a revolutionary means of steaming wood in order to develop his Chair No. 14, one of the prized pieces on display in the *German Design Standards* exhibition. It's a graceful cat's cradle of curves and lines that became the first piece of furniture to be produced over one million times - it went on to record 30 million sales.

The mass produced work of Thonet was a precursor to a much more organised approach to the dissemination of new design within the burgeoning urban centres and it had its apotheosis in the *Deutscher Werkbund*, founded in 1907 by Herman Muthesius and ten other designers, including Behrens. Its goal was to elevate the quality of mass production and to form partnerships between designers and industrialists that would improve German competitiveness on the international stage. The purpose of *Deutscher Werkbund* - its motto was *Vom Sofakissen zum Städtebau* (from sofa-cushions to city building) was not dissimilar to the mission of HKDI in the twenty-first century, namely to bring designers and industrialists together to ensure that creativity finds a ready market.

The *Deutscher Werkbund* found new markets for German design throughout Europe and the United States, paving the way for The Bauhaus. Without the impact of Behrens and *Deutscher Werkbund* it's doubtful that Bauhaus designers would have

found such ready acceptance for their ideas outside of the arts and crafts movement in Germany.

In 2009 an exhibition held in Berlin to celebrate the 90th anniversary of Bauhaus (curated by the three German Bauhaus institutions - Bauhaus Archive/Museum für Gestaltung Berlin, Stiftung Bauhaus Dessau and Klassik Stiftung Weimar - and the Museum of Modern Art in New York) had this to say about the movement in its programme notes: "[Although] it existed for only 14 years... it became the most important school of modernity."

The curators were also at pains to assess the influence Bauhaus has had since its untimely demise. "The Bauhaus is Germany's most successful contribution to international art and the culture of modernity in the early 20th century," they wrote. "More than 75 years after it was closed in Berlin, the reputation of this inter-disciplinary school for architecture, design, visual and performing arts that moved to Dessau in 1925 continues to be as internationally significant as ever."

The three German Bauhaus institutions were also clear about the impact that Bauhaus has had on German Design Standards.

"The vibrancy and impact of the Bauhaus during its existence and after its dissolution in 1933 demonstrate that although the Bauhaus, as a laboratory and workshop of modernity, was destroyed by a deliberate political act, it was exactly that circumstance that enabled it to unfurl its global influence - history's irony."

The 2009 retrospective in Berlin reminded the design world that the most enduring characteristics of Bauhaus - its interdisciplinary approach, experimental teaching, practice-oriented workshops, pursuit of answers to social questions, propagation of timeless aesthetics and experimentation with new techniques and





LEFT NOMOS GLASSHUTTE ZURICH DATUM WATCH;  
BELOW POWERCAT 1.10FG FOOTBALL BOOTS, PUMA



materials – is the reason why its influence persists in architecture and design.

The HKDI exhibition has on display a superb selection of original Bauhaus material that includes a table lamp designed by Wilhelm Wagenfeld in 1924 and still in production. There is also Marcel Breuer's B3 Klubsessel, a tubular steel and leather chair that resembles a diagram in space and is always known as the "Wassily", because it was so greatly admired by abstract painter Wassily Kandinsky. Look further in the exhibition and the minimalism that defined Bauhaus (and through the Bauhausian diaspora became a key part of movements in Japan and the US) can be seen in a wicker table from 1952 by Egon Eierman, stools by Max Bill, Hans Gugelot and Max Hildinger, a toy rocking horse designed in 1957 by Walter Pabst and in brightly coloured Bofinger chairs from the studio of architect Helmut Bätzner that are now considered to be one of the most important classics of modern furniture design history.

Beyond the artefacts from Die Neue Sammlung, the exhibits from the red dot museum have significant hints of the Bauhaus aesthetic, most profoundly in the Julia Ehrensberger Cooker Hood for Siemens that has the precise straight-lined symmetry of a Mies van der Rohe skyscraper, in Max Eicher's and Christopher Becke's beautifully functionalist refrigerator (also for Siemens) and in the Nomos Glashutte Zurich Datum watch where even the curves of the timepiece's face are made to seem

angular via the means of a straight lined minimalist display of the hours and date.

This is not to say that the development and elevation of German Design Standards came to an end with Bauhaus. Although Gropius and others in Weimar and Dessau held that, "The building is the ultimate goal of all fine art" other German designers chose to put their emphasis elsewhere, especially at the Ulm Academy of Design *Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm* or HfG, which is regarded by many as the successor to Bauhaus. While it initially followed in the footsteps of the Bauhaus, it soon pursued concepts of its own and set internationally acknowledged standards for design during the 15 years of its existence.


One of HfG's three founders, Max Bill was a former student of Bauhaus and initially led the school on a Bauhaus model, with an emphasis on humanism and minimalism and with less focus on the "form follows function" philosophy that Gropius and others in Weimar had borrowed from Adolf Loos, who said that "ornamentation is a crime". Once Bill had departed, to be replaced by Tomas Maldonado, HfG took an even less dogmatic position, finding a place for aesthetics within a framework in which the professional would be responsible for harmonising aesthetics with the diverse requirements of materials, manufacturing, context of product use, usability, identity and marketing.

Midway through the 1950s HfG began a collaboration with the electronics gadgets giant Braun which led the academy to start interacting with Dieter Rams, who has become one of the most prominent German designers of the late twentieth century, creating a seemingly endless range of functionalist inspired items that are derived from his saying *Weniger, aber besser* (Less is better). Rams developed ten principles that are now at the heart of modern German Design Standards. Taking a lead from his grandfather, who was a successful carpenter, Rams says that design should be innovative, make a product useful, be aesthetic, make a product understandable and unobtrusive, be honest, long-lasting, thorough down to the last detail, environmentally friendly and involve as little design as possible. Walter Gropius could not have put it better, and he would probably have agreed with every principle on the Braun designer's list.

Rams has pushed for environmental issues to be at the heart of German Design Standards, realising as early as 1976 that the over use of natural resources would be a key issue for the design community. "I imagine our current situation will cause future generations to shudder at the thoughtlessness in the way in which we today fill our homes, our cities and our landscape with a chaos of assorted junk," he said 36 years ago, before calling for designers to enter a period that will bring "an end to the era of wastefulness."

It remains to be seen how many designers will take up Rams' challenge. What is certain is that the ideas that Bauhaus and HfG created and developed live on, especially in other countries, where the design community frequently looks to Germany for ideas.

"The fundamental concept of German design is very rational, functional and minimalistic, it leaves little room for the subjective or the personal," is how Max Borka, co-founder of DAMn, an international magazine on art, architecture, and design and art director of designbrussels put it in a recent interview, before sounding an optimistic note about future trends. "One surprise for me was the paradox that so many Berlin designers still orient themselves on the standards and norms of industrial production, in spite of the fact that there is hardly any industry left in Berlin. I like the Berlin collective, REDESIGNDEUTSCHLAND that seeks to maximise minimalism and purism and calls for a restandardisation of language, time and the redesigning of Germany as a whole. These designers are aiming at a radical deconstruction of standardisation by taking it to extremes."

In other words, the German Design industry is still a cauldron of experimentation, just as it has been for the last 125 years, and in the fire of this alembic the new standards for German excellence in design will be forged. 

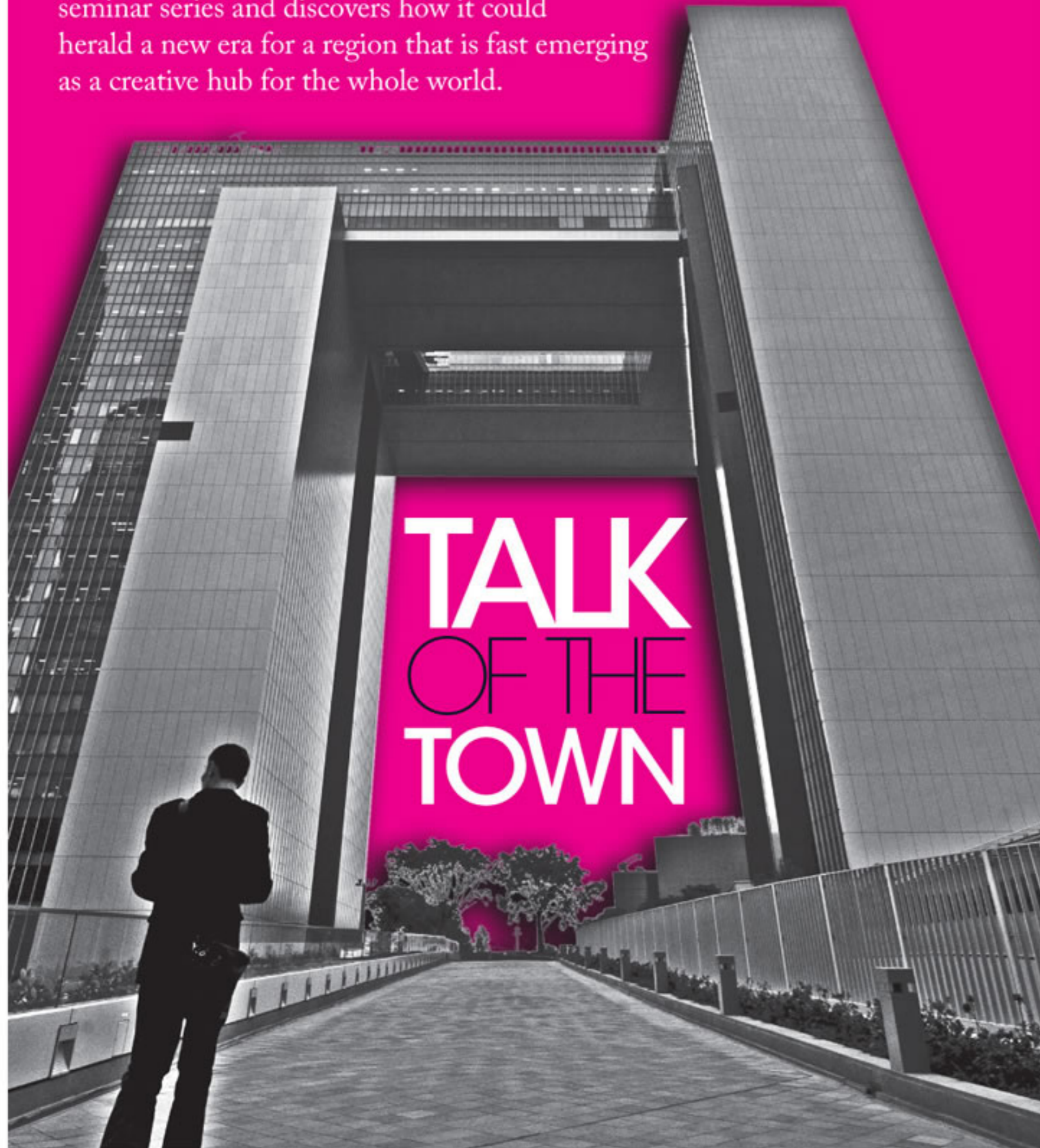


ABOVE WALTER GROPIUS; RIGHT THE BAUHAUS BUILDING IN THE GROPIUS-ALLEE, DESSAU



RED DOT DESIGN MUSEUM

The Hong Kong design community is rich with talent and projects like the striking new government headquarters at Tamar, conceived by Rocco Design Architects, is a symbol of the city's extraordinary creativity. To showcase local talent like Rocco Yim, Tina Liu, Koyo William and Alan Chan while providing a forum in which the whole community can discover their own design masters, HKDI will launch a new six month programme next year called *Design Dialogue: Hong Kong Culture 2013*. DANIEL JEFFREYS previews the seminar series and discovers how it could herald a new era for a region that is fast emerging as a creative hub for the whole world.



## DIALOGUE MASTERS

THROUGHOUT 2012 HONG KONG has played host to a strong field of international conferences focused on design, including the Business of Design Week's tenth anniversary event (BoDW), the AGI Open (for graphic designers) and ATypl (for typographers). These events have brought a spectacular range of designers to the city, including furniture designer Ron Arad, architect Thomas Heatherwick, visual designer Ilse Crawford and film director Hanna Sköld.

But like several other areas of Hong Kong cultural life, for example the arts, where ArtHK has focused heavily on foreign artists, these design shows have had a relatively small number of Hong Kong-based designers on their roster. The result has been a shortage of forums for the many internationally renowned designers in the city, and a lack of emphasis upon a design aesthetic that has its roots in the unique elements of Hong Kong culture.

That will change next year with the launch of *Design Dialogue: Hong Kong Culture 2013*. The series of 11 seminars over six months will provide a unique window on Hong Kong designers, their concerns and inspirations, while giving the local community a chance to interact with the city's home grown masters.

"I have worked in advertising and design for the past 42 years and I have applied my expertise to an array of creative projects ranging from corporate and brand identity, packaging, product and interior design, architecture and art," says Alan Chan, the first Hong Kong designer to have a one-man show at the Shanghai Museum of Art, who will speak on February 22. "I am looking forward to sharing my design and life journey with younger design students, hopefully giving them insights and illuminating the path of their own design journey."

### HENRY STEINER

(January 24) founded Steiner & Co., one of the world's leading branding design consultancies. He is best known for designing the HSBC hexagon mark and banknotes for Standard Chartered. Named World Master by Japan's Idea magazine, and one of *Iconogra*'s Masters of the 20th Century, *Next* magazine cited him as among the 100 most influential people in Hong Kong's history. In 2010 he faced the challenge of designing a new series of banknotes for Standard Chartered that retained the integrity of the first series he created in the 1970s while conforming to strict new guidelines that had been imposed on all three Hong Kong banks. Steiner's seminar is titled *How to Make Money in China*.



iconic buildings in Asia, including the new HKSAR government headquarters at Tamar. He won The Chicago Athenaeum Architectural Awards in 2006 and 2011 and his works have been displayed at the Venice Biennale in 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2012. Yim believes that architecture must transcend art and not just look good, but do good as well. His topic, inspired by his humanistic perspective on sustainability and authenticity, will be *Is Architecture an Art?*

### ALAN CHAN

(February 22) and his company have won more than 600 local and

international awards during his 42 years in advertising and design. Besides being selected twice for the Shanghai Biennale and Hong Kong Contemporary Art Biennial, he is also the first Hong Kong designer to be invited to hold a solo exhibition at the Shanghai Art Museum (in 2007). Since 2010, Chan has been developing his iPhone photography series *iEye-ai*, first exhibited in Hong Kong and Shanghai. In September 2012, *iEye-ai* was exhibited at New Age Gallery in Beijing 798 Art Zone. Chan will talk about the ways in which he has built bridges between Eastern and Western aesthetic traditions in his address *Revisiting "Oriental Passion, Western Harmony"*.

### KOYO WILLIAM

(March 22) is the Founder and Creative Director of KOYO,



which specialises in customising bespoke clothes for celebrities and providing stage and concert-related fashion styling services. His designs and creativity are held in high esteem by actors and musicians, making KOYO a sought after brand in both the fashion and entertainment industries. The company's



**TINA LIU**  
(January 24)  
With years of experience from the film, television, radio, music, stage,

publishing, fashion retail and service industries, Liu's forte in image design, production and training has earned her compliments throughout the region's media. Liu has been named as one of the Ten Best Dressed Personalities in Hong Kong by the Hong Kong Fashion Designers Association, and Marie Claire magazine recently gave her the Inspiring Women 2012 Award. Her seminar will be called *Journey of an Image Director* and she will aim to answer a range of questions including whether image design is as glamorous and exciting as people suppose.

### Architect ROCCO YIM

(February 2) has been responsible for several



## 《Creativity should not be reserved for the creative few.》

The series will kick off on January 24th with a Henry Steiner seminar. Steiner is often referred to as the father of Hong Kong design and his logo for HSBC, banknotes for Standard Chartered and gold coins for the Singapore mint have made his approach to graphic design famous throughout the world.

"Henry was born in Vienna and raised in New York but he regards himself as Hong Kong home grown and he sees that as an honour," says Grace Kao, who is the head of the Professional Education & Engagement Centre at HKDI and is directing the *Design Dialogue* project.

"We do have a lot of design seminars and events held annually in Hong Kong, most of which focus on internationally renowned designers and have relatively high admission fees," say Kao. "The attendees are usually limited to industry players who can afford to participate. We want to promote design to a much wider audience, not just for designers, but for everyone."

Kao's motto is that "creativity should not be reserved for the creative few", and this idea has generated a passion at HKDI for promoting the best designers in Hong Kong and creating a deeper awareness of the cultural roots that feed the city's design aesthetic.

The result has been an ambitious programme that will feature renowned graphic designers, fashion designers, filmmakers, architects, interior designers, brand consultants, artists, industrial designers, creative entrepreneurs, and costume designers. The series begins on January 24 with Steiner's seminar, followed by Tina Liu's talk titled *Journey of an Image Director*. Liu is the executive director of Tina Liu Image Consultancy Limited and vice chairman of the Hong Kong Film Art Association. VTC full-time students will be admitted free to all events and the general public will pay HK\$150 per session, or HK\$120 if they book early.

"The work of these 11 designers is all derived from the culture and traditions of Hong Kong," says Kao. "The seminars will deal with the cultural aspects of working here. The Hong Kong

environment is defined by limited space and moves very fast. A key question that the *Design Dialogue* seminars will address is how can creativity thrive in such an environment."

Kao says that "Our own students may not even know these masters," and acknowledges that a key reason for creating event is to correct a lack of understanding about Hong Kong design and its importance on the world stage.

"Our ambition is that this should become an annual event," says Kao, implying that this inaugural series will just scratch the surface of available design talent in Hong Kong. "We want students and the public to know that some of the best designers in the world work in this city."

Unlike the other design conventions held in Hong Kong, *Design Dialogue* will not have English as its official language. The seminars will be conducted in whichever language the guest is most comfortable with. Many of the designers will present their ideas in Cantonese.

Kao believes that by allowing the designers who participate to speak their native language will give them an opportunity to convey the depth and power of their ideas more effectively, but above all she and her colleagues hope the *Design Dialogue* will deliver a constructive message to Hong Kong and the design world.

"Hong Kong's unique work ethic, energy and can-do-frame of mind, means that we have the ability to adapt very quickly and that is a key attribute for success in the design industry," she says. "Hong Kong has many designers of international class and creativity who have flourished here despite the challenging environment. The way they have surmounted obstacles has lessons for the Hong Kong community and the wider world of design."

With the final *Design Dialogue* seminar scheduled to be delivered on June 21, by the iconoclastic fashion designer William Tang, it's likely the city's own awareness of its design heritage will be much stronger in 2013, and with the price of the seminars making them much more accessible to young people and the wider public it's possible the series may sow the seeds for a new generation of home-grown designers.

"I hope this series will help a new generation to understand that design and creativity are not merely a tool," says Alan Chan. "Design is also a spirit that builds bridges between people and helps to create harmony between them, cultivating love for others and for life." ©

retail spaces were designed by Koyo and are inspired by European Gothic Church architecture. The arches, buttresses and ribbed vaults that were characteristic of that genre have found a place in the store interiors, the display of products and in some of Koyo's clothing designs. The title of his talk is *The Art of Backward Thinking* and it will reveal the designer's philosophy of *Destroy and Reborn*.

### MICHAEL MILLER YU

(April 5)

graduated from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University



in industrial design in 1973. Since then, he has worked as an interior designer, graphic designer and advertising creative director at agencies worldwide and he established his own design company CreationHouse. Yu has won over two hundred local and overseas design awards and in 2006 he received the Ten Outstanding Designers Awards from the renowned Hong Kong Art & Design Festival. From 2007 to 2010, three of his major projects have won the Outstanding Greater China Design Awards and he has been the Chairman of the Hong Kong Outstanding Designers Association since 2012. Yu believes that designers should not be too romantic about Hong Kong's unique mix of Chinese heritage and international character but should focus instead on uplifting the city's design aesthetic. His seminar is titled *The Love Affair between Culture, Art and Design*.



### DOUGLAS YOUNG

(April 12),

born in Hong Kong in 1965, is a Hong Kong design

institution thanks to G.O.D., the company he co-founded with Benjamin Lau in 1996. The company designs and retails contemporary furniture, fashion, homeware, and lifestyle accessories with

a Chinese twist. A multi-disciplinary design team led by Young designs most of the G.O.D. merchandise in-house, and the company now have 8 stores located throughout Hong Kong. Young's topic is *Hong Kong Pride* and he will talk about the way his company has grown and what it needs to do in order to continue thriving.



### LEE CHI WING

(May 3)

Born in Hong Kong, Lee Chi Wing was educated at

Hong Kong Polytechnic University and the Ecole nationale supérieure de création industrielle in Paris, where he received his MA. In 1998, he set up Milk Design, which provides design consultancy services for international companies making consumer and industrial products, and the creation of lifestyle products. Lee is driven by the belief that design is simple and human, and should enhance the possibilities and experience or daily life. He loves to collect "dated objects" to understand the past and the ways in which design has helped society to evolve. His talk is called *Looking Back and Moving Forward*.



### YEE CHUNG MAN

(May 10)

studied design in Hong Kong and

New York, and he has been active in art, design, costume and makeup since the 1970's. He has won multiple awards as an Art Director for films including *A Chinese Ghost Story*, *Comrades: Almost a Love Story*, *Perhaps Love*, *Wuxia* and *He's a Woman, She's a Man*. In 2001, Yee received a nomination for Best Costume Design at the Academy Awards for his work on *Curse of the Golden Flower*. The title of his seminar is *Word and Image - Art Direction of Film*.

### GARY CHANG

(May 31)

Gary Chang is one of the most influential figures within



the architectural, interior and product design world and his work has focused on spatial flexibility and the interplay between art and practicality. Mr. Chang founded EDGE Design Institute Ltd. in 1994 and has since created such notable works as the Suitcase House in Beijing, a tea-set for Alessi, and the transformation of the 32 square meter apartment where he lived in childhood into a space-maximizing icon that has been featured in media stories throughout the world. Chang believes that Change (universal possibilities), Choice (the manifestation of desire), Co-existence (diversity), Connectivity (the fluid relationship between all systems) are the four elements that capture the formidable and constantly evolving spirit of Hong Kong. His chosen topic is *In Search of a New Urban Dynamics: The Culture of Change, Choice, Connection and Co-Existence*.



### WILLIAM TANG

(June 21)

Hong Kong fashion designer William Tang is

a major international fashion figure through his labels *W by William Tang* and *William Tang*, and a widely recognised commentator on travel, culture, and style. Mr. Tang's designs and shows are noted for the way he seeks to push the edges of creativity or challenge conventions and he is often referred to as a "bad boy of fashion". He will address the subject *Heritage-Culture-Fashioned HK Fashion*.

*Seminars will take place between 6:30 and 8:30 pm at VTC Auditorium, HKDI, 3 King Ling Road, Tseung Kwan O, New Territories, Hong Kong*  
[www.hkdi-designdialogue.com](http://www.hkdi-designdialogue.com)



# BRIGHT APPROACH

Many songs and poems have perished along with the minstrels who sang them, while untold books and scripts have been buried and burned but the culture and history coded within colour has endured. A new exhibition at HKDI revealed to **SUMMER CAO** how diverse Asian societies have been sustained and revitalised by the vibrant hues that are their signature.

EVENTS

THE ARTIST MARCEL DUCHAMP took a radical position with regard to colour, proclaiming that, "...since the tubes of paint used by an artist are ready made products, we must conclude that all the paintings in the world are ready made..." In a painting called *Tu m'*, his last oil on canvas, made when his contempt for paintings produced by ready-made materials was at its peak, he ironically produced the first work in the history of art that consisted of colours from a paint catalogue.

The title *Tu m'* is a French phrase in which the verb has been left blank for others to select and it means "you...me". Suggestions for what Duchamp may have had in mind for his blank verb include "bore", as in "you bore me", suggesting the artist held the future of art in contempt.

Duchamp's nihilism becomes more understandable in the context of art history. Before the advent of mass-produced paint, artists often used rare natural ingredients to mix certain hues that were thought to create specific emotional or psychological effects in the viewer, based on long-held convictions regarding the spiritual significance of different colours. For example, in Van Eyck's *Giovanni Arnolfini and His Bride*, the pregnant female wears green because in Celtic mythology the Green Man was a foot soldier for the God of fertility.

Duchamp would no doubt be disgruntled to discover that many western artists have taken advantage of cheap and easy accessible colour to let loose a new and many-hued outpouring of creativity in modern art, as seen in the work of bankable stars like Ellsworth Kelly, Andy Warhol, Dan Flavin and Damien Hirst.

However, all this trail blazing, mixing manufacturing ingenuity with creative innovation has nearly separated colour in the West from several millennia of history and cultural references. The fact that colours are widely celebrated in Western art through their modern incarnation in works such as Kelly's *Colour's for a large*

*wall*, Warhol's *Marilyn* and Damien Hirst's *John John* has washed colour clean of its cultural associations, making the western public largely oblivious of the meanings that different colours once conveyed.

The prevalence and popularity of these artists has given western culture a substantial influence among artists in Asian countries, and has divorced some of them from their own rich cultures and traditions. Art students in Asian countries still study and make colour charts like those that are implicitly denounced in Duchamp's *Tu m'*. Seldom do they have an opportunity to discover the historical roots that different colours have in their own culture.

The exhibition *Colours of Asia* that the Design Alliance Asia (tDA Asia) presented in partnership with HKDI and the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education from 3 November to 31 December is a timely warning to all regarding the importance that the study of colour should have in cultural education and in promoting the diversity and strength of Asian cultures.

"We use colour to define who we are and our place in the world," says William Harald-Wong, the co-curator of the exhibition. "If colour is so fundamental for a culture to describe itself—it's identity—then the more these colour codes are used, the more enduring the culture becomes."

As if to echo Harald-Wong's words, it's no surprise that the British Broadcasting Corporation launched a new series called *A History of Art in Three Colours* this summer. The documentary explores how the use of gold, blue and white, along with their cultural associations, has evolved through the ages. The BBC series echoes the key point made by the *Colours of Asia* exhibition, namely that the histories and anecdotes embedded in colours are a vital component of a culture's survival and vitality.

However, although the British documentary is important, it hardly fulfills the brief implied by its title, because there is scant reference to Asian art and culture, suggesting that a "the history of art" need not trouble itself with an Eastern perspective. The series could mislead art and design

PREVIOUS PAGE A BALINESE UMBRELLA KNOWN AS THE PAJENG PRADA. THIS PAGE CHINA RED, ONE OF THREE TABLE INSTALLATIONS SHOWING NUANCES IN THE COLOUR RED FOUND IN MAINLAND CHINA (PICTURED), HONG KONG AND TAIWAN



VANESSA KO

students in Asia, and strengthen western's culture hegemony in some Asia countries.

The *Colours of Asia* exhibition is a singular antidote to the over-weening power of Western popular culture and the fragile culture identity that some Asian countries have in the post-colonial era.

"The primary objective of *Colours of Asia* is to create a wider awareness of Asia, and 'Asian-ness' which is a way of thinking and doing, its many cultures and belief-systems, its aesthetics and philosophies, and their relationship with one another," says Harald-Wong. "Although the exhibition only touches the surface, we hope its images and artifacts will help everybody, not just designers, to think more deeply about Asia."

For Harald-Wong to use the word "surface" as an adjective to describe the spectacle and richness of the exhibition that occupies two floors of HKDI's d-mart is a humble understatement. The exhibits were selected from more than 3,200 pieces of traditional crafts or colour symbols whose historical values are still apparent in 13 Asian regions, either in the form of customs and rituals or through being included in contemporary designs. The pioneering colour research has also laid a solid foundation for future studies of both design and culture.

"Colour enriches us sensually, spiritually and emotionally. It is a popular and universal subject to start our investigation into what constitutes the essence of Asia," Harald-Wong says.

"Given the complexity of colour perception among Asian communities, the project's wide geographical spread and the diversity of cultures and languages, it was indeed a challenge to complete the research in nine months, but we are confident of having established a base of information and stories from which further research in specific areas can follow."

Although the quantity and variety of information is dauntingly abundant, the exhibition was arranged in a visitor-friendly setting with colourful images, traditional crafts, artefacts from festivities, food, spices as well as packaging designs and modern

VANESSA KO

« COLOUR ENRICHES US SENSUALLY, SPIRITUALLY AND EMOTIONALLY. »

BELOW TOP MIYALHALMI MASK, SOUTH KOREA, REPRESENTING AN ELDERLY WOMAN FACING DEATH; BELOW BOTTOM A GREEN LION MASK FROM TAIWAN





BELOW A MARKETPLACE SETTING FROM THE LEBANON, MIDDLE EAST AND INDIA



ABOVE WILLIAM HARALD-WONG, THE CO-CURATOR OF COLOURS OF ASIA TAKES VIPS ON A TOUR OF THE EXHIBITION (FROM LEFT, SUSIE HO, ROY CHUNG, EDMUND LEE, AND JIMI KWOK); BELOW LEFT MAYURI NIKUMBH DEMONSTRATES AN INDIAN WEDDING WELCOMING CEREMONY; BELOW RIGHT THAILAND MARKETPLACE; BOTTOM TYPOGRAPHER, DESIGNER AND EXHIBITION CO-CURATOR AHN SANG-SOO FROM SOUTH KOREA GIVES AN INTERVIEW TO A LOCAL TV STATION

exhibits don't just provide a visual aid for recalling which colors are key to which cultures, but they also showcase the nuances that the same colours can capture in different cultural contexts.

The exhibition starts with a palette of five colours, including the three primary colours, red, yellow and blue; a secondary colour, green; and the pair of black and white. Mixed colours such as saffron, indigo, and purple are also featured in appropriate colour zones to show their importance in Asian culture.

For example, the colour indigo is given a specific platform because indigo is a plant found and used in almost all Asian countries, thus an important colour for Asians. It is also regarded as a fashion colour and various decorative designs were showcased to show how it is used in different regions in Asia.

Visitors were also told fascinating stories of Indonesian tribal wars in which women who killed one or two invading men would save their tribe from destruction and be regarded as a deity, and how traditional silk production in Laos has remained sustainable by letting the silk worms crawl out of their cocoons instead of the commercial norm that entails boiling them to death in search of the same result.

« WE NEED TO REFLECT ON THE RICHNESS OF OUR CULTURES AND TO ADVANCE ASIAN IDENTITY AS A VITAL CULTURAL FORCE. »

For those who could not visit *Colours of Asia*, all is not lost. "The research papers related to the exhibition that are currently being prepared by all thirteen participating countries will be uploaded on the Internet by HKDI in early 2013," says Harald-Wong, who has great dreams for the impact the research might have. "I see an Asia beyond (or before) the artificial national borders that came into place, where we all share commonalities in our diverse communities. We need to reflect on the richness of our cultures and to advance Asian identity as a vital cultural force and a strategic platform for design."

And Duchamp would probably agree, arguing that a colour chart is nothing but a guide to the chemical composition of manufactured paints, whereas a colour that is still deeply embedded in a culture provides a map that reveals the size and shape of a people's hopes and fears. ©



VANESSA KO

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A good movie is never the work of just one person, but as **DAISY ZHONG** discovered at a HKDI screening, the team behind the film *Iron Sky* expanded their collaborative effort to include anybody with an Internet connection.



A SWASTIKA-SHAPED FORTRESS squatting among a rough and monochromatic landscape, nuclear missiles that break open the Moon's surface and a deafening, destructive orchestral soundtrack, they are all elements that suggest a camp Hollywood sci-fi blockbuster like *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* from 1991.

But these scenes are not from a futuristic tinsel-town movie with a US\$150 million budget, rather they are found in a Finnish-German-Australian sci-fi black comedy that was built upon seed investments as well as inputs from over 3,000 online contributors.

*Iron Sky* made its debut at the 2012 Berlin International Film Festival after 6 years in production and tells the improbable story of how Nazi Germans who fled to the Moon plan to return in triumph and conquer the Earth. It has been hailed as the forerunner of a new wave of film making that engages the audience in the process of making movies as well as watching them.

In November, three of the film's producers, Timo Vuorensola, Tero Kaukomaa and Jarmo Puskala brought *Iron Sky* to the VTC auditorium, along with their revolutionary ideas about filmmaking.

"The movie's roots were planted 20 years ago", says the director Timo Vuorensola. "A group of friends started shooting spoof episodes of *Star Trek* in a small

LEFT NAZI LUNAR LEADERSHIP AT THE HQ ON THE MOON, FROM *IRON SKY*; BELOW POSTER OF *IRON SKY*, STARRING GERMAN ACTRESS JULIA DIETZE WHO PLAYS THE MOON NAZI'S EARTH SPECIALIST RENATE RICHTER



## EVENTS

RIGHT UDO KIER AS WOLFGANG KORTZFLEISCH, THE FÜHRER AND CHANCELLOR OF THE FOURTH REICH IN *IRON SKY*



kitchen." The team uploaded the episodes, titled *Star Wreck*, onto the Internet for free downloading, generating unexpected popularity and increasing requests that they should make a full-length feature film.

"In 1998 we started working on the feature but with only a little knowledge of how to actually make a full-length film." But thanks to the loyal fans of the *Star Wreck* episodes, the production team received substantial support from the online community with around 3,000 people donating money, script advice, casting, subtitles and 3D modeling.

Seven years later, the film *Star Wreck: In the Pirkinning*, was completed and released, and it proved to be an international success with several DVD versions issued. Following this positive result the team wanted to go further and get the *Iron Sky* project into production but what they had done with *Star Wreck* – communicating through email, forums, ICQ, MSN and IRC was no longer efficient for a major project like *Iron Sky*.

As a result, the *Star Wreck* team established *Wreck A Movie*, a collaborative filmmaking website to support and organise the community involvement for *Iron Sky*. The website served as a collaborative platform that allowed potential contributors to read the "tasks" assigned by the production team and chip in with their knowledge, ideas and creativity.

Jarmo Puskala, the Community Manager for *Iron Sky*, who is also the originator of the film's plot, has been responsible for keeping the community up to date. "We wanted to have the audience participate as much as possible all through the process, with the idea of that the film be the product of our community, our audience and our Internet fan base."

In the process the team has been in direct contact with over 200,000 fans online. Of these fans, 75,000 were found through YouTube, 50,000 on Facebook, and 55,000 were from the *Iron Sky* website. They took part in making *Iron Sky* by offering ideas ranging from suggesting names for characters through to 3D modelling of a starship.

"Our online community was responsible for bringing *Iron Sky* to life," says Vuorensola. The reason for that, according to him, is that the behaviour of film audiences has been heavily influenced by the

Internet, which enables the audience to have a more personal experience relationship with the films and movie genres they love. In this respect, "nothing could be more intimate than joining the creative process itself," he says.

A film project such as *Iron Sky*, which demands extensive Computer Generated Imagery, also requires funding on a completely different scale to the *Star Wreck* spoofs. In 2005 Kaukomaa, who has produced more than 20 feature films and founded the Finnish production company Blind Spot Pictures, joined the team to coordinate the fund-raising process.

Kaukomaa says finding financing for the film was the challenging. "All the way to the very end of the production, the film was on the verge of collapse. We were constantly struggling with a lack of resources, and it shouldn't have been possible to make the film at all. But luckily we launched this investment option for the online community which proved to be huge success."

Through *Wreck A Movie*, some 2,000 to 3,000 contributors who donated 1 Euro to a hundred Euros each were able to access a VIP area that allowed them to view the first five minutes of a film about how the movie was produced, or behind the scenes episodes. There were also 280 investors who contributed over 1,000 Euros each and they get dividends from the film's box office receipts.

This crowd-sourced funding added up to around 1 million Euros (HKD 10 million), or 13% of the total budget. "It was the most crucial first step," Kaukomaa says. "The community have become the 'lead investor' that is always key to the traditional film making process". An additional bonus was that traditional film investors, who were extremely cautious about investing in a project like *Iron Sky*, became more willing to put up their cash after they saw the impressive amount of money raised from fans through the Internet. With the online community at their back, the team sought co-financing for a trailer at the Cannes Film Festival in 2008, and as part of the publicity campaign, they released a digital comic prequel and a video game adaptation of the film. They finally succeeded in signing co-production agreements with two other production companies from Germany and Australia.

With the new cash flow the production process was fueled, bit-by-bit, over a 6-year process. The film starred girl-next-door Julia

Dietze and Aryan Übermensch-type Götz Otto, both from Germany, and the Slovenian industrial music group Laibach did the soundtrack, which is derived from the operatic style of Richard Wagner, a composer favoured by some Nazi leaders. Filming started in November 2010 and post-production was commenced in February 2011.

In November 2011 the team got confirmation that *Iron Sky* has been selected to premier in the Panorama Special section of the 62nd Berlin International Film Festival. "You could say that our dream came true. Is there a better place to launch this film than in Berlin?" says Kaukomaa. "We had been getting lots of comments on YouTube saying 'I bet this film is banned in Germany'. We still get that."

"It was scary having the premier in Berlin," says Vuorensola. "We didn't know what would happen – would the 1,800 audience jump up from their seats and tear us apart? Luckily they didn't – they stood up and gave us a ten-minute long ovation instead."

In the five months after its début the film has made \$8m at the global box office. Its fame has also popularised the *Iron Sky* fund-raising approach among filmmakers across the world. For instance, a team of young film producers in Taiwan released their film *Zombie 108* in April 2012 with money mainly raised from Facebook.


In Hong Kong *Iron Sky* was released on December 6, 2012. "This is a very unique choice for Hong Kong viewers," says Ray Fong, who represents the film's Hong Kong distributor VII Pillars Entertainment Ltd, "because the story of the production process is itself inspirational, encouraging new ideas for entertainment as well as different perspectives to

about the world of film making."

Fong showed the film at the VTC Auditorium on November 14, 2012 with free admission, in the hope that people could enjoy the film and a dialogue with the three film producers. The screening attracted an audience of 600, about half of which were VTC students, and it was followed by a conversation with Vuorensola, Kaukomaa and Puskala.

"During the interaction with the producers, we learned that the Internet can make anything come true, and that a great production is within our grasp if we have the right motivation, enthusiasm and confidence," says Cheung Fan, a lecturer in the HKDI's CDM department, who helped to organise the screening. "There is no doubt that I will encourage my students to learn from the example of *Iron Sky*."

Cheung also stressed that the story of *Iron Sky*'s creation has important implications for educators. "No matter how well-prepared and informative our lectures are, they can never teach students the reality of the production process," she says. "So in the future, we will try to provide more opportunities for students to exchange ideas with international professionals."

Vuorensola, who is a big fan of classic Hong Kong movies, like *Better Tomorrow* (1986), says *Iron Sky* can serve as a way to motivate students. "They should be told 'Don't wait around' because there is nobody who will be just waiting for the chance to fund your first film," says the producer. "It's so much easier to talk about great films than to make a bad one. The first thing you need to do is to go out there, gather a group of friends, get a camera in your pocket, and start shooting." 

BELOW THE PANEL DISCUSSION AFTER THE *IRON SKY* SCREENING WITH RYAN LAU, BERNADETTE WONG, CHEUK FEI (UFO SPECIALIST), TERO KAUKOMAA (CO-PRODUCER), TIMO VUORENSOLA (DIRECTOR), JARMO PUSKALA (WRITER), BEDE CHENG (HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL PROGRAM MANAGER)





# PRIVATE MATTER



The artist Christopher Le Brun came to HKDI in September to share his idea that art is quintessentially private, rooted in emotion and that artists must have the courage to keep their work alive even if the world does not yet appreciate their vision. **DAISY ZHONG** reports.

IN 1976 CHRISTOPHER LE BRUN, who is now President of the Royal Academy of Arts, was a 25-year old fresh graduate. After one year of work he presented what he considered to be his "masterpiece" to one of his teachers.

"I expected him to say 'It's magnificent!' but in fact he said 'It's terrible, what are you doing?'" says Le Brun. "I found myself with a moral dilemma: the teacher said it was bad, but I secretly thought it was good, so what was I supposed to do?"

"I was determined that he was wrong and I was right," said Le Brun at a lecture called *In Conversation with Christopher Le Brun on Creativity & Inspiration* presented at HKDI on September 17 and attended by over 150 students, artists and design educators. He was visiting with the Royal Academy to engage with the arts and business community in Hong Kong.

Le Brun's confident appraisal of his own work must have been spot-on because he left art school to embark upon a life-long journey in art, during which he has emerged as one of the most influential British contemporary artists, known for his mix of symbolism and abstraction.

Born in Portsmouth, England, Le Brun was trained at the Slade and Chelsea Schools of Art in London in the 1970s. As a student who wanted to get good grades but also to be true to himself,



Le Brun painted whatever he liked on canvas and then painted on top what he had been taught to paint. "So I had my secret paintings hidden inside perfectly academic abstract paintings."

The "masterpiece" that he brought to his teacher was a giant painting full of what he had always wanted to paint, this time without guise, full of "landscapes, figures, views of deep space... everything that was unfashionable".

Meanwhile his passion for the romantic English past of poetry, myth and legend led him to begin connecting painting and poetry, to create what he called "literary painting", an approach that was equally unfashionable in the art world. "My painting was in a strange position relative to what was happening at that time, and nobody was painting anything like it," says Le Brun.

Despite that, Le Brun had the courage to follow his heart in setting his own motifs and approach to art. One exhibition in his early career brought him wide recognition from the established art scene. In 1982 he participated in the blockbuster *Zeitgeist* exhibition at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin

This influential exhibition, showing a new direction in painting, helped Le Brun realise that he was actually amongst a group of artists including the Italian Enzo Cucchi and German Anselm Kiefer who had emerged independently in other corners of the world, and who were using rapid, violent brushwork and drawing inspirations from romantic and historical subject matter, the natural world and primitivism. These artists represented the "neo-expressionism" wave of postmodern art in the late 20th Century.

On Le Brun's often large-scale canvasses the same motifs recur with Wagnerian subjects such as wings, forests, horses, wanderers, medieval knights, towers, and castles. All demonstrating a dream-like quality, they seem to share the same root in Romanticism and Symbolism.

His interest in these motifs is natural, says Le Brun, because it is anchored in his own background, as an

English schoolboy born in 1951 who was brought up steeped in tales of knights, adventures and myths. "These symbols (in my paintings) are very deep, going down to the human psyche, and endlessly fascinating. You can't exhaust them."

This mysterious, sometimes dangerous element of childhood memories has always intrigued Le Brun and made him want to uncover the unknown. "I am interested in these symbols because I don't understand them. As long as the motif of a painting remains enigmatic or difficult, it draws me towards it."

Le Brun believes that painting as an expression records the creative process unfolding. "Everything you painted on a painting, you see it in the end. You can see the track laid out. No matter what I express, I'm interested in the layers of myself that come to the canvasses without pushing too hard."

No wonder he also regards the creation of art as an exclusive and personal matter. "If art has a soul, then there is something private in art, so you need to keep this secret ambition back. So my advice (to the students) would be to have your private world, your free space. Do your own work at home, and don't let the teachers see it." ☺

*Elected as President of the Royal Academy of Arts on 8 December 2011, Christopher Le Brun is a former trustee of Tate, the National Gallery, and the Dulwich Picture Gallery. His work is in many national and international collections including those of Tate, The British Museum, V&A and MOMA, New York.*

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP CHRISTOPHER LE BRUN'S VENICE XV FROM 2002. BELOW CHRISTOPHER LE BRUN IN FRONT OF HIS PAINTING GULF AT THE EXHIBITION RA NOW AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY 2012. THIS PAGE ABOVE CHRISTOPHER LE BRUN WITH HIS AUDIENCE AT CONVERSATION WITH CHRISTOPHER LE BRUN ON CREATIVITY & INSPIRATION AT HKDI ON SEPTEMBER 17 2012; BELOW THE SKETCH OF LE BRUN BY HKDI STUDENT BARRY NG



As Le Brun presented his memorable lecture at HKDI Barry Ng, a first year student at the school, was inspired to make a pencil sketch of the famous British artist, which was presented to Le Brun when he had finished speaking. The President of the Royal Academy said he was delighted with the gift, telling Ng that nobody before, in all his career as a painter, sculptor and art educator had ever made a sketch of him "in action."

HAMILTON GALLERY, ART AND HKDI



# VISUAL FEATS

In October 2012 a collection of the world's best news images came to HKDI, highlighting the virtues of professional skills in a world where abundant smart phones and instant Internet access have turned everybody into a press photographer. **DAISY ZHONG** reports.

## EVENTS



PREVIOUS PAGE: IN SANAA, YEMEN, A WOMAN CRADLES HER 18-YEAR-OLD SON WHO WAS GASSED WHILE PARTICIPATING IN AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROTEST. (WORLD PRESS PHOTO OF THE YEAR 2011, SAMUEL ARANDA, SPAIN, FOR *THE NEW YORK TIMES*); LEFT AN AFRICAN MODEL POSES IN FRONT OF A TAILOR'S SHOP IN DAKAR DURING THE CITY'S FASHION WEEK. (2ND PRIZE, ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT SINGLES, VINCENT BOISOT, RIVA PRESS FOR *LE FIGARO* MAGAZINE); ABOVE: MELICA MEHRABAN, AN ACTRESS BORN IN IRAN WHO GREW UP IN DENMARK AND PLAYED A LEADING ROLE IN THE IRANIAN SPY THRILLER *FOX HUNTING* (1ST PRIZE, PORTRAITS SINGLES, LAERKE POSSELT, FOR *POLITIKEN*)

OUTSIDE A MONOCHROMATIC BUILDING IN PYONGYANG, an orange-lit portrait of North Korea's founder Kim Il-sung shines faintly in the mysterious gloom. On a Cairo street a few minutes after afternoon prayers a man was caught shouting during a mass protest that would eventually topple the Mubarak regime. And in front of a tailor's store in Dakar an African model is seen wearing a luminous red evening gown as she poses during the city's Fashion Week.

These and 164 other images were part of *World Press Photo 2012*, a collection of award winning photographs rich with inspirational and thought-provoking perspectives that were on display in HKDI's d-mart from 7 to 21 October. This year the annual exhibition has made 100 stops in 45 countries and it was the first time since 2003 that Hong Kong was included in the itinerary.

Established in 1955 in Amsterdam, *World Press Photo* is regarded as the most prestigious professional press photography contest in the world, providing a platform for outstanding photographers to inspire deeper understanding of the world's major issues through quality photojournalism. Unlike the Pulitzer Prize, which is awarded only to work that appears in media based in the United States, *World Press Photo* contest welcomes submissions from all over the globe and has nine categories to the Pulitzer's two, the winners being selected by an independent international jury composed of 19 experts.

Aidan Sullivan, chairman of this year's jury says that he and his colleagues wished to select photos that symbolised "hope", or those that not only reflect truth and reality, but also "give us encouragement and comfort" after a year – 2011 – that was full of natural disasters and human conflict.

"*World Press Photo* is a very meaningful and valuable international photography exhibition," says Joe Lam, the Chairman of Hong Kong Press Photographers Association and an officiating guest of the *World Press Photo* exhibition held at HKDI. "The awarded pieces provoke the audience to think more deeply about all the important events that have happened around them in the past year".

The "*World Press Photo* of the Year 2012" was awarded to Spanish photographer Samuel Aranda, who took a photo of a woman in Sanaa, Yemen cradling her 18-year-old son who is suffering from the effects of tear gas after participating in an anti-authoritarian street demonstration, capturing the heroism, solemnity and desperation of the Arab Spring.

Damir Sagolj from Bosnia-Herzegovina, the winner of the first prize for a single image in the "Daily Life" category, came to the exhibition at HKDI and shared his experiences and views on press photography in a talk called *Photo Journal from War in the Balkans to Asia*. Vincent Yu, an Associated Press photographer for over 16 years who was awarded 3rd prize singles in the category "People in the News" in 2011, accompanied him.

Yu, who received his training in basic photography at the Kwun Tong Vocational Training School in 1984-85, believes press photography still plays an important role in the Internet age, even when every witness to a newsworthy can easily take photos by using a camera or smart phone.

"A professional photographer not only honestly records what is happening, but also can create an angle," he says. "The most important thing is to show reality with a critical, meaningful angle,



ABOVE: A PORTRAIT OF NORTH KOREA'S FOUNDER, KIM IL-SUNG, HANGS ON A BUILDING IN PYONGYANG, NORTH KOREA. (1ST PRIZE, DAILY LIFE SINGLES, DAMIR SAGOLJ, FOR REUTERS); MIDDLE: IN BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA, A HUSBAND CARE FOR HIS 84-YEAR-OLD WIFE WHO SUFFERS FROM ALZHEIMER'S. (1ST PRIZE, DAILY LIFE STORIES, ALEJANDRO KIRCHUK); BOTTOM: AN ANTI-POACHING TEAM GUARDS A NORTHERN WHITE RHINO, THE WORLD'S MOST ENDANGERED ANIMAL, AT THE OL PEJETA CONSERVANCY IN KENYA. (1ST PRIZE, NATURE STORIES, BRENT STIRTON FOR *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC* MAGAZINE)

and reveal the depth of an issue, just as reporters do with editorial."

Yu's award-winning piece shows the now deceased North Korean leader Kim Jong-il and his designated successor Kim Jong-un attending a military parade in Pyongyang on 10 October 2010. Kim Jong-un had rarely appeared in public or been photographed until then. In the photograph the elder Kim turns his head to look at his youngest son in what appears to be a complex way mixing doubt and concern, while the son is concentrating on watching the parade and putting on a show of confidence.

In 2012 the *World Press Photo* contest attracted 101,254 pieces of work submitted by 5247 photographers from 124 countries. The 167 photos exhibited at HKDI covered all nine categories, namely spot news, general news, people in the news, contemporary issues, daily life, portraits, arts and entertainment, nature and sports. Yu is so far the only *World Press Photo* award winner from Hong Kong but the exhibition may have left many of the aspiring photographers who visited HKDI with sufficient inspiration to ensure that the city gets much greater representation in future years. ☺



ALL PHOTOS ARE PROVIDED BY HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL PHOTO FESTIVAL 2012\*



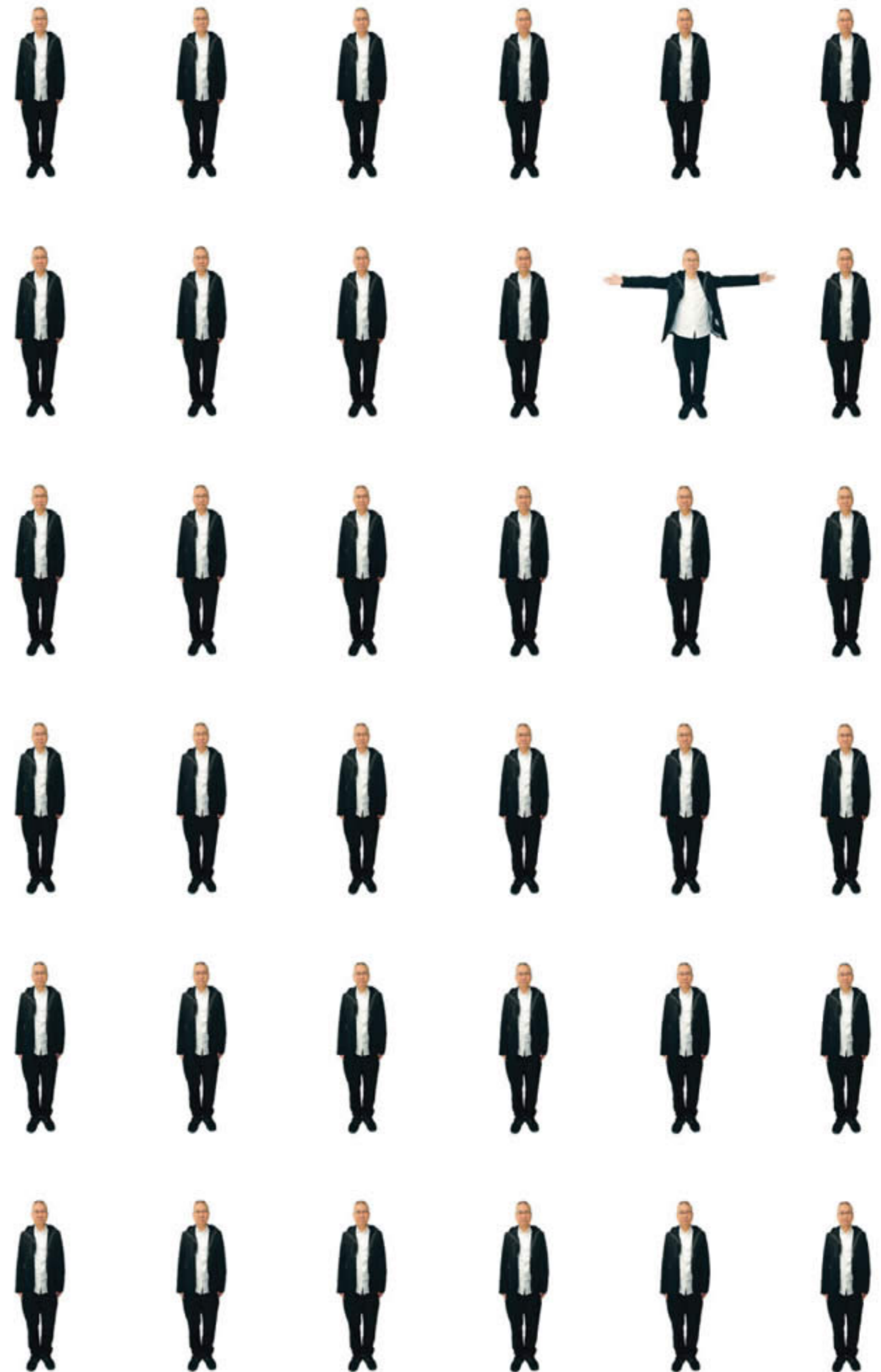
Three consecutive exhibitions to celebrate the 70th birthday of legendary graphic designer Kan Tai-Keung tell the story of how he found his own Tao of art and design. DAISY ZHONG reports.

# THE POWER OF

# One



VANESSA KO



VANESSA KO

“DESIGNING A LOGO FOR CHONGQING,” says Kan Tai-Keung when asked to name the most challenging project of his career to date. Chongqing is home to 29 million people and has a complex political history (it was once the power centre of Bo Xilai), which would have made creating its logo a challenge for anyone, even an artist who plays by the rules. But Kan’s approach has always been unconventional.

“When I started in 2004, people there told me that I should just follow what the leaders asked me to do, but that’s not my way,” he says. “My belief was that I should ask the citizens what they thought about my sketches and whether they conveyed a clear message about the city’s spirit.”

To go one’s own way with a government-assigned task was a risk and made Kan’s task an uphill battle. For two years after he was given the assignment Kan asked ordinary citizens on the street to choose among several versions of his design, give comments and make suggestions. The final version uses two characters in a posture of celebration, which have a shape that echoes the Chinese character for “celebration” with the pairing echoing the city’s name, which means “double celebration.” Completed in 2006, the logo proved to be extremely popular and has been widely used for the city’s external promotion.

During the 40 years Kan has worked in the design industry he has faced many other challenges and along the way he developed a design philosophy that emphasises what he calls the “Tao” of being humane and caring.

To celebrate his unique approach and to mark his 70th birthday, a series of three exhibitions, including one

《WHEN DOING DESIGN YOU MUST CARE ABOUT OTHERS, BUT WHEN DOING PAINTING, NO ONE CARES ABOUT YOU.》

PREVIOUS PAGE PORTRAIT OF DR KAN IN HIS STUDIO; BELOW KAN’S DESIGNS FOR A LOCAL NEWSPAPER WITH AN ADVERTISEMENT PRICE LIST FOR SINGTAO NEWSPAPER; RIGHT KAN’S DESIGNS FOR A JAPANESE PAPER COMPANY, BON FREE SERIES

at the HKDI Gallery, commenced in September 2012 and will run until January 2013. The trio of shows featured a total of more than 700 exhibits, ranging from graphic design, products, installation and multi-media work. The exhibitions also featured talks by Kan, two workshops and a lively forum that brought together designers from Hong Kong, Macao, Mainland China and Taiwan.

The exhibition at HKDI took place from October through November, and featured thin wooden boards laid out to represent a river that took visitors on a journey through more than 250 of Kan’s designs and artworks.

“The HKDI exhibition was set up so that young designers could see how to walk into the world of design,” says Kan. The items chosen for display were especially selected to focus on the design process and ranged from inspirational sketches, a rare collection of books, design



KAN & LAU



KAN & LAU

layouts and other inspirational elements. Kan also donated some of the exhibits to the Design Archive at HKDI for permanent preservation and record.

Sitting in the HKDI Gallery in front of a screen that played a documentary about his work, Kan described his life-long search for the distinctive elements of his own style.

“I came to Hong Kong from Guangdong in 1957 when I was 15 years old,” he said. “I was already interested in design and painting but we needed to make ends meet.” Kan was assigned by his father to work as a tailor’s apprentice, but he continued to draw and sketch whenever the weekend brought him free time. In order to acquire some formal training, he enrolled in a 24-lesson design course at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, taught by Wucius Wong, a brush and ink artist he much admired.

“I worked during the day as a tailor and studied at night. The course was simple and short, but enlightening. It got me to appreciate art and I rediscovered my dream of painting.”

That was 1964, when Kan was 22. His talent proved to be as strong as his interest in art. In 1967 Kan became

a designer and was delighted when his work began winning awards in competitions where he was pitched against some of his teachers and other design masters. In 1969 some of Kan’s works were displayed in City Hall as part of a student exhibition for buyers and collectors. Kan was thrilled when someone bought his some of his work.

In the 1970s Kan became one of the shining stars on Hong Kong’s design scene and in 1976 he was able to found his own company, Kan Tai-Keung Design & Associates. After winning a place at Hong Kong’s Ten Outstanding Young Persons awards in 1979, Kan went on to win numerous awards and honours in Hong Kong and has since won prestigious design awards in the United States, Poland, Switzerland and Japan, and his design work has been collected by museums in Germany, Denmark, France, Japan, and Hong Kong.

His paintings and other artworks were equally successful. He was awarded a Fine Art Award from the Hong Kong Urban Council and was also named one of the Outstanding Artists and Designers of the 20th Century in 2000.

But Kan makes a clear distinction between design and painting, although he acknowledges they share a similar background in art and creativity.

“Design is more practical – you must solve a problem according to the needs of the client,” he says. “The purpose of design is to serve others, so you have to know what their standards are. Painting, on the other hand,



« DESIGN MUST BE HUMANE AND IT MUST BE CARING. »

is purely about a desire to express your feelings. Some paintings may be obscure and do not communicate any message effectively, but design must. When doing design you must care about others, but when doing painting, no one cares about you.”

Kan emphasises that the professionalism required for successful design career must be focused on getting to know the market, and what the client wants. “A tailor is making a suit for somebody, and the purpose is to make the product suitable for that somebody, and not for the tailor.”

In both painting and design, Kan places a high value on originality. In common with other masters like Wu Guanzhong, Kan admires Shi Tao, an early-Qing Chinese landscape painter from the 17th century who argued that being bound by established techniques is not good for art or artists.

“Shi Tao not only drew in very original and imaginative ways, but also wrote a book on the philosophy of art, in which he advanced the idea of being oneself in artistic creation, to find one’s own style. He famously said ‘I use my own methods’, the spirit of which has transcended time and is extremely relevant today.”

One wall of the HKDI exhibition featured a row of Kan’s ink paintings that combined Chinese calligraphy and what seemed like a strong sense of Western abstract impressionism and formalism, but Kan says he is not sure what type of “-ism” his works belong to, he prefers to say they were created according to his own style, his “Tao”.

“The ‘Tao’ of design is not just doing design,” says Kan. “Creating designs is about an attitude. As a designer nowadays, you should give more thought to the impact that design has on people. Design must be humane and it must be caring.”

The Chongqing city logo is one of the many examples where Kan balanced the professional demands of design with his own style. The logo of the Bank of China, a widely acclaimed work, is another one. The design resembles an ancient red Chinese coin, with the tiny square hole in the centre representing heaven and

earth. It symbolises good fortune and luck in Chinese tradition, while delivering a simple, elegant and modern feel.

Kan takes care to guide his famous design company, known since 1996 as Kan & Lau Design Consultants, by the same lights, focusing its work on projects that suit the “Tao of Kan”. “My company always cares about the community,” he says. “We make sure that our work doesn’t serve the wrong principles. For instance, we will not do design work for cigarette companies.”

Besides running his own design company Dr Kan is also involved in educating artists and designers, and in promoting art and design as a profession. As the previous dean at the Cheung Kong Art and Design School at Shantou University in Shantou, Kan teaches a new course named “Design Ethics”, which emphasises sustainability, and the need for design to nurture vulnerable groups within the community.

Kan also presides over the Kan Tai-Keung Design Award, which will enter its 14th year in 2013 and celebrates local creativity while seeking to promote emerging graphic designers. For over a decade the award has also promoted exchanges among designers in Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau.

“During the first few years, Hong Kong students thought the award was reserved for mainlanders,” he says, “but submissions have increased from a few hundred in the beginning to five thousand in 2012, with an impressive increase from Hong Kong and Taiwan.” In 2011 a Gold Kan Tai-Keung Design Award was given to Wong Wai Kei, a student at HKDI studying for the Higher Diploma in Visual Communication, for her work *The Tram of Hong Kong*.

Kan believes that the future of the design industry in Asia will be focused on Mainland China, posing new challenges for designers in Hong Kong. “Mainland China’s design industry has seen impressive development in the past two decades. It is the most promising because the domestic market will keep expanding and demand will keep growing. Hong Kong’s future designers will have to work hard in order to compete.”

LEFT (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) A VISITOR TO KAN’S HKDI EXHIBITION; DR KAN IN HIS STUDIO IN KOWLOON TONG; DR KAN LEADS A TOUR OF HIS EXHIBITION; BELOW DR KAN WITH STUDENTS AND STAFF FROM HKDI



LEFT THE NEW "BRODY CALVERT" FONT CREATED BY BRODY AND DESIGN LEGEND MARGARET CALVERT THAT WILL FORM PART OF A NEW VISUAL LANGUAGE FOR THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART. BELOW NEVILLE BRODY IN HIS OFFICE AT RESEARCH STUDIOS

IT WAS MIDDAY ON A SATURDAY MORNING and Neville Brody had just felt the earth move.

"I can feel the table shaking," he says, gripping his cup of Pacific Coffee flat white more closely. "Is that an earthquake?"

As we were seated on Design Boulevard, in the shadow of the HKDI's main building, it was more likely that Brody was feeling a subway train passing through Tiu Keng Leng MTR station, but the tremors could have had their source in his ideas, for they were earth shattering enough. Here's a selection – paper is more interesting for designers than the digital space, teenagers are getting bored of the Internet, award winners should be obliged to do community service to pass on their excellence to others and his work means more to him when people hate it.

It's no surprise that Brody has a radical take on most issues. His career has always been about breaking through boundaries, ever since he first started to draw, which he claims happened before he could walk, about 15 years before he first heard about punk rock and the Sex Pistols.

"I was disgusted by the idea of the Sex Pistols at first," he says. "But then Punk music caught my attention because it was about anything being possible and that gelled with my interest in Dada-ism, Constructivism and William Burroughs. At college I was exploring ideas outside the box and a lot of it was about breaking the rules and punk was about breaking the rules."

As he talks it's very apparent that Brody is no ordinary executive figure within the design community. He may have risen to be Dean of the School of Communications at the Royal College of Art and President of D&AD (Design and Art Direction) in its fifty-first year but his passion is still a vibrant force, always present in the commitment that's a defining characteristic of the way he speaks.

"If you are not obsessed with what you are doing you shouldn't be doing it," he says "You must be constantly driving to make yourself and what you do the best it can possible be, always understanding that you will never get there, you just have to keep pushing forward. If you are going to go into the creative industries it's an unforgiving space. The best you can achieve is to do something that inspires somebody. You can never sit down and think, right I did it."

Brody's dedication to his craft has given him a clear perspective on the industry to which given his professional three decades that as creative director *Arena* magazines, the covers for Depeche Voltaire and one behind FUSE, an in 1991 that is a bible typographers.

"I think the role of design and the responsibility of the designer is to take the hidden or invisible spaces and make them tangible and clear," he says "The role of design is to reveal not to conceal, the role of advertising is often to conceal but design was born in public service and it play in serving a public in the way that it reveals ideas and hidden messages."

This approach has not always made Brody popular –

he was almost expelled from college for designing a stamp with the Queen's head turned sideways – but his philosophy begins from the idea that popularity can often be the enemy of creativity.

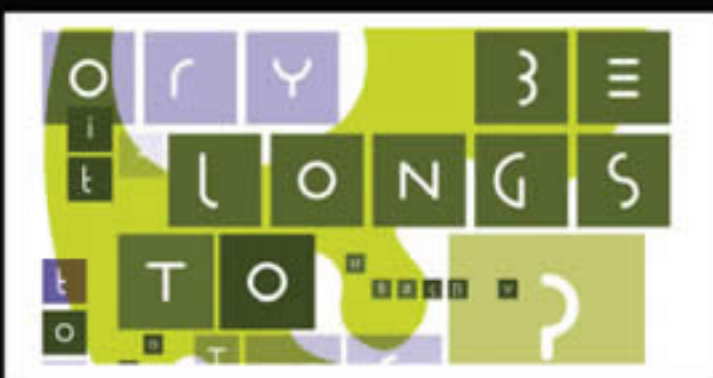
"I always thought my work was most successful when people hated it because that mean that people were bringing their own reaction to my reactive space," he says. "I always thought that people shouldn't particularly like what I do, but should be forced to question it, as soon a people starting liking what I did too much I thought it had become ineffective."

And yet many people have admired Brody's work, bringing him

PAPER  
TOGETHER

In September the HKDI Gallery played host to an exhibition of prize-winners from this year's D&AD Awards. The event brought Neville Brody to Hong Kong, where he told *Daniel Jeffreys* about his radical new perspectives on digital design, education and the future of D&AD, where he has just assumed the role of president.

RESEARCH STUDIOS



a powerful reputation and the opportunity to guide D&AD at a critical juncture in its history, as it embarks upon its second half century. Set up in 1962 to promote excellence in design and advertising, its iconic Yellow and Black Pencils are awarded to work that is groundbreaking in its field. The Awards are widely considered the Oscars of the global creative industries.

D&AD Pencils are presented to both students and professional creatives and the exhibition at HKDI featured one hundred selected pieces from both the student and professional Awards. Pencils are only awarded to work that is strong enough, so no fixed quantity of Awards is given in a particular year, with work being judged by top creative minds from around the world. Most designers would probably give their eye-teeth to be part of D&AD, but when Brody was asked to join its executive committee he responded with some conditions.

"I had never been a member of D&AD when they asked me," says Brody. "I said I would join the committee on the condition that D&AD do more to funnel its resources toward education."

The result was two years as chairman of the education subcommittee and the chance as President to implement his proposals for D&AD's future.

"I have two ideas, first that there must be a circle of learning and when you award excellence, excellence must nurture excellence. This is the idea that every pencil carries a responsibility. We want to introduce a kind of community service. Pencil winners, yellow or black would give back to the industry by mentoring emerging creative talents."

I joked that if somebody wins both a yellow and a black pencil they should spend a term as a "mentor-in-residence" at HKDI. Brody immediately endorsed the idea, because his other plan for D&AD involves doing something that HKDI is very familiar with. With design in the UK not getting the kind of governmental support that has been so vital to HKDI's attempts to embrace the whole community, Brody has had to find other means to encourage future designers whose families have few resources to fund further education.

"We have persuaded D&AD to launch a foundation," he says. "The Foundation is going to raise money to support students who want to be creatives but don't come from a moneyed background."

Brody would not be Brody if he only had two ideas for his time as D&AD. He also has plans to change the organisation's direction.

*«I always thought my work was most successful when people hated it, because that meant they were bringing their own reaction to my reactive space.»*

"D&AD has been a place to celebrate excellence before. Now I think it changes, and becomes more political. It should lobby government. It should defend and push for the rights of the creative industry, it should support creative education regardless of the government and it should stand up for the rights of the

creative space. If you want the history of great graphic design and advertising for the last 50 years, D&AD is the place to look. It's been the highest regarded of all awards. It's done a stunning job. Now it shifts, it has to become more socially responsible, community based and more international."

Which brings us back to paper, the digital world, and Brody's startling observation that his son Francis, who is 15, would never see the Internet as a place to look for creative inspiration.

"Twenty years ago the digital space was a land of possibilities," he says. "There was no precedent, so you could do what you wanted. It could be a space of creativity. But for my son it is a utility and not a space for experimentation and people are going, 'Oh my god, this is so boring.' Adrian Shaughnessy has pointed out quite correctly that the younger generation see the Internet the same way we saw phones in the 1970s. It is so utilitarian. So students are not that interested. They rather go to print. So paper might have become less and less important as a space for carrying information, but more important for being a creative and exploratory space.

Digital technology has liberated paper to become a much more radical space, as the digital space has become more homogeneous, so paper becomes more radical."

Brody has found that a growing number of his students would rather create a book made of paper that has only one edition than a digital app that might be seen by millions. He would prefer they do both, but understands the process at work.

"The one thing that's constant in design is change," he says. "My legacy is not my work, unless people can find in it some new questions. The main legacy I would like to leave is to enable creative spaces for other people."

And with that, the table began to shake again. ∞

RESEARCH STUDIOS



The HKDI is on course to become a pioneer in environmentally conscious design by embedding the concept of sustainability into fashion at the start of the creative process. **SUMMER CAO** reports.

# MOVING UP

"WHEN PEOPLE USED TO HEAR ABOUT environmentally friendly fashion, the first thing they imagined was clothes made from newspapers and plastic bottles," says Jo Lau, a lecturer in the HKDI's Fashion and Image Department. "Those were for exhibitions or catwalk shows only, and consumers would not buy them."

Much has changed since then, and HKDI has been an important force creating prototype purses, wallets, card-holders, necklaces and pendants designed by students in a process called "upcycling", that is taking otherwise useless or discarded materials and giving them new life, often as objects that are more valuable than the original incarnations.

Lau is the team leader of the Fashion Sustainability Research Project initiated by HKDI last June, in collaboration with Hong Kong's Sustainable Fashion Business Consortium, local designers, shops, rehabilitation centres and leading sustainable-fashion designers in HK and the UK. To connect so many parties on such a large scale across the fashion chain is a first for Hong Kong and has made HKDI into a pioneer.

The research being done as part of HKDI's fashion

ABOVE HORSE-SHAPED SECRETAIRE MADE OUT OF SURPLUS OAKWOOD, NASTURTIUM, CALFSKIN, ALLIGATOR AND CROCODILE FROM THE HERMÈS 2012 *PETIT H* EXHIBITION COLLECTION IN HONG KONG; RIGHT A REPOSITORY OF SURPLUS MATERIAL AT THE HERMÈS WORKSHOP

sustainability project echoes a new wave of interest in upcycling that has drawn in some of fashion's biggest names. The French brand Hermès has been among the leaders and it recently unveiled its *petit h* series, which uses leftover and rejected materials to create limited edition or one of a kind luxury products.

The term "up-cycle" was originally coined by Michael Brungard, in his book *Cradle to Cradle*, published in 2002, the point at which the phenomenon started to be important in Europe. It has since spread like wildfire.

"In London it is the hottest thing right now," says Orsola de Castro, the co-curator of Esthetica, founded by the London Fashion Council six years ago to showcase cutting-edge sustainable fashion design. "At this year's Esthetica exhibition, upcycling is where you find the most talented and directional young designers. It's also happening in Italy, but in Italy small brands are less visible as they are competing with the big guys, so there is less information about them. But it's absolutely huge in Germany."

The iconoclastic British designer Vivienne Westwood released her ethical and sustainable accessories line *Handmade With Love In Nairobi* earlier this year to give African craftsmen resources and skills, and to provide income for one of the least developed areas in the world. The handbags in this series are made from recycled materials such as electrical wiring, aluminum, plastic bags, offcuts and safari tents.

Westwood agreed in October to be a judge in the fourth annual Red Carpet Green Dress competition, founded by the *Avatar* director James Cameron's wife Suzy Amis, which aims to encourage designers to create red carpet worthy gowns made entirely from previously used or discarded materials.

At this year's Copenhagen Fashion Summit, the world's largest and most important conference on sustainable fashion and corporate social responsibility, brands such as H&M, Gucci, Hugo Boss showed they were enthusiastic about sharing their latest examples of sustainable design.

And this year's London Fashion Week gave unprecedented opportunities to De Castro and Esthetica to show off new work.

"While recycling involves generally turning textile waste into a fibre of inferior quality, up-cycling actually increases the value of the surplus through a creative process which requires minimal intervention," she says. De Castro was the first designer in London to start up a fashion brand based on sustainable principles. Called *from somewhere*, it opened in 1997 and now uses waste materials from the manufacturers in Turkey and Italy



to create clothes that are based exclusively on upcycling principles.

The desire to introduce sustainability into the design process takes into account the fact that the earth's resources are limited and sustainability is not something that can be achieved by manufacturers alone. In Hong Kong 234 tons of textiles go to the landfills everyday, according to Hong Kong Environmental Protection Department.

"The fashion industry has moved a lot of its operations to mainland China, so why is there still so much textile waste in Hong Kong?" asks Lau. "Most of the Hong Kong fashion brand manufacturers do think about how to reduce their consumption of energy, and water but they know that some of the designs they make have waste as an inevitable by-product. They can't recycle the waste by themselves without collaborating with designers and brands, because waste materials are generated by design. So they have to ask designers for help."

It thus becomes crucial for future designers to be made aware of their responsibility in terms of sustainability. And thus Lau and her colleagues are seeking ways to integrate the research results from the Fashion Sustainability Research Project into student coursework.



HERMÈS

HERMÈS

«Design is about finding solutions, and up-cycling is a design solution to an environmental challenge.»

"It is really a great chance for students to explore things that are labeled waste or not usable, and find out solutions by themselves. The whole concept of sustainability can be too much for students, and the learning process should be step by step," Lau says. "We first put our focus on the pre-consumer textile waste, samples, left-overs that can be collected through local textile and garment manufacturers, and the designs are made in collaboration with rehabilitation centres such as the St. James' Settlement and the Salvation Army. Then we sold the pieces through local stores or social enterprises."

"You can't imagine the materials cost, it is really low. It also helps to create job opportunities and promote the idea that disadvantaged and disabled people have the ability to do great things. The students are happy to see their designs brought to life and I always tell the students that the project shows them how to communicate with the local community and to see how their designs can integrate with the skills that are available."

The student's projects have gained support from prominent brands such as Chocolate Rain, founded by Prudence Mak and Reclaim to Wear, founded by Orsola de Castro. The MTR began exhibiting HKDI's up-cycled fashion designs at Telford Plaza on November 11 with the help of Chocolate Rain and Reclaim to Wear. Telford Plaza is now applying for a Guinness World Record for the largest up-cycled dress, shown on a 3-metre tall dummy, and the largest up-cycling installation, featuring 12 dummies and a real model.

Students have also been encouraged to submit their designs to the EcoChic Design Awards and this year Angus Tsui from HKDI was the winner of the competition's People's Award while Kelvin Wan won the Most Promising Student Award.

"Sustainability consists of environmental, social and financial issues and the balance among these three elements," says Lau. "We call it triple-bottom-line. That's why we have engaged the local community in the up-cycling process and made it



STOOLS MADE OUT OF SURPLUS BEECHWOOD, CALFSKIN, NASTURTIUM, CALFSKIN, BULL CALF, ANTHRACITE, CROCODILE FROM THE HERMÈS 2012 PETIT H EXHIBITION COLLECTION IN HONG KONG

HERMÈS



ABOVE ENVELOPE BAG, PURSE, NAME CARD AND PASSPORT HOLDER MADE FROM HEAD-ENDS (THE BEGINNING AND END OF A FABRIC BALE) AS PART OF A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BETWEEN HKDI AND CIRBAF; MIDDLE A WALLET, PENDENT AND NECKLACE DESIGNED BY HKDI STUDENT IP WAN HAN USING CLOTHING WASTE; BELOW HERMÈS "SQUELETTE" BAG MADE OUT OF SURPLUS CALFSKIN AND WOOL FELT FROM THE 2012 PETIT H EXHIBITION

HKDI AND HERMÈS

profitable. That must be the fundamental concept of all sustainable projects."

In the UK the public response to upcycling has been strong. "Up-cycling is about uniqueness, message, rarity and memory, so it actually shares a lot with the luxury sector," says De Castro. "In the UK there is more demand than availability for up-cycled collections, so it's not hard to persuade customers of the value of this principle."

Lau predicts Hong Kong will soon follow suit. "At the moment, brands in the UK and US are playing a leading role in sustainable fashion design, but we are starting to collaborate with industry, local designers, and our communities in implementing the concept," she says. "It is going to be popular in Hong Kong. The pioneers in the UK have shown that there is no need to highlight eco-fashion anymore, because it is a given. Fashion should always be fashion, no matter what materials it employs. People may have started to wear up-cycled products before they realise. If you always talk about eco-fashion, people will be afraid."

De Castro has important advice for young designers who want to be creative and ethical at the same time. "Don't compromise your creativity but don't be afraid to explore, innovate and break the rules," she says. "Design is about finding solutions, and up-cycling is a design solution to an environmental challenge." ©



# PLAY TIME

In October IVE (Lee Wai Lee)'s Department of Multimedia and Internet Technology played host to more than one hundred computer enthusiasts who came together with the sole aim of creating dozens of new games in just 48 hours. As **SUMMER CAO** reports, Hong Kong's inaugural Game Jam was a thumping success.



THE MIT GAME JAM 2012 held at HKDI and IVE (Lee Wai Lee) from October 19 to 21 attracted more than 140 participants from local universities, secondary schools, local industry and overseas. The three-day competition generated 27 games, and the prize for the most creative went to a French team led by Frantz Lasorne and Nicolas Guyon, founders of Visionaires777 Ltd.

A Game Jam is a gathering of developers, artists and creatives who freely form groups and create games in a short period of time. The earliest dates back to 2002 when the *0th Indie Game Jam* was held from March 15 to 18. The *Nordic Game Jam* is the biggest event in the Game Jam calendar and the next one will take place in January 2013.


The *MIT Game Jam* was organised by game engine developer Unity 3D and representatives from the Hong Kong game industry. Its aim was to gather together talent to create games and to establish game prototypes. The Hong Kong event's theme was "Primitive Life", and participants had to create their games within two days.

The French winning duo employed the cutting-

edge technology Augmented Reality which allows interaction between digital content and the physical environment, and allows players to interact with virtual content in the real world. The iOS game that the French team designed during the Game Jam could recognise lines and dots drawn on a piece of A3 paper as elements of a map of Hong Kong, and could use them to draw a three-dimensional plan of the city on screen. Players can also navigate a Chinese dragon to explore the virtual Hong Kong.

The competition was not short of talents like Lasorne and Guyon, who are pioneers at integrating Augmented Reality technology into Apple games. And the gathering of so much IT talent for such a productive weekend greatly benefited local students and the community.

"There were over 50 participants from the industry and game developers from Europe and the US," says Aaron Yuen, a game and animation lecturer from the MIT. "Students got the chance to form groups with them, and gain precious game design and development experience from the experts.

"The co-organisers, Unity Technologies gave free professional licenses to all the participants during the Game Jam, and that is valuable to the community. The MIT Game Jam also brought in professional knowledge and experience from idea sketching to concept development, and these will help promote creative, innovative and unprecedented game development opportunities in the region." 



POSTERS FROM THE INAUGURAL MIT GAME JAM IN HONG KONG AND THE 6TH NORDIC GAME JAM IN COPENHAGEN



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«ONLY WORK WHICH IS THE PRODUCT OF INNER COMPULSION CAN HAVE SPIRITUAL MEANING.»

WALTER GROPIUS