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New to PMQ

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NEW TO PMQ

Image Lab 360° is an innovative and entrepreneurial concept that combines creative savvy with business sensibility

When we flip through fashion magazines and walk past billboards of gorgeous models, it's often easy to forget that behind one charming face are dozens of professionals, dedicated to ensuring that she looks her best. With modern culture becoming more and more visually based, the look of things has become indisputably important.

Hong Kong is one of the most vibrant and international fashion hubs of the world and has been a nurturing ground for professional fashion designers, photographers, make-up artists and stylists. So it comes as no surprise that an experimental space has been set up in the creative hub that is PMQ. The collection of trendy, independent designer shops, artistic boutiques and quality restaurants is the perfect location and regularly holds pop-up events and exhibitions on art and design. Established by the Hong Kong Design Institute and supported by the Linda Yip Charitable Foundation, the long-awaited space is called Image Lab 360°. As the name suggests, it's all about creating an image – a personal image, branding image, photographic image or other – and it aims to provide a service to suit all needs. "We had always wanted to create an environment where our students can get real-life experiences and industry attachment within their education," Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader of Fashion Image Design at HKDI Shaun Cheung explains. "Setting up Image Lab 360° at PMQ not only enhances the purpose of PMQ as a centre of creativity, it also allows our students to interact with customers, their peers and industry professionals. As there are a lot of retail shops at PMQ, we thought that creating a space that provides styling, make-up and photography services would be a good complement to the mix."

More than 300 students study Fashion Image Design (both in the Styling and Photography Stream and the Hair and Make-up Styling stream) each year, and are required to do a certain amount of hours as an intern to learn from real life situations and alumni professionals. Image Lab 360° is the perfect platform that they need. It will post opportunities and job openings within their internal group, and interested students can then apply with a personal profile and portfolio

for screening. "Those selected will have the opportunity to work with internal tutors, such as celebrity make-up stylist and fashion blogger Carrie Kwok and hair and make-up stylist Cecilia Pritchard," says Cheung. "They will also be supported by advisors who are highly regarded in their industry." It's the perfect springboard for students to experience the professional world of fashion and design.

Though Image Lab 360° was set up with students' practical experience in mind, nothing is meaningful without a client. "We pride ourselves as a service provider to the public," emphasises Cheung. "Many of our customers are looking for services for their personal image, from hair and make-up design to photographic portraits and we've done quite a lot for bloggers and celebrities. Our students really enjoy interacting with their clients. It's really encouraging to see that the Lab and its services have been well received." The Lab's goal is to be a self-sustainable, viable business, and it seems that it is off to a pretty good start. It has been working with the Hong Kong Institute of Professional Photographers in their projects, and is currently working with a Korean cosmetics brand to style its live event participants, and collaborating to provide styling support for singers in its concerts. But celebrities are not the only ones who enjoy the luxury of an endless wardrobe and ever-changing looks – anyone who wants to explore a fresh image can make a reservation at the Lab. To enhance and promote image design as a profession, it also offers courses in styling for individuals and corporate clients alike.

"Fashion design is one element of the industry but fashion styling and image consulting can also be assimilated," concludes Cheung. "It's the goal of Image Lab 360° to nurture and provide internship opportunities for our students. We are enabling current students to work with alumni and professionals in this field. And are also supporting the industry by providing students with work experience ahead of their graduation." With more and more talented young students getting a taste of the professional life, it's impossible to imagine Hong Kong ever not being one of the most popular and stimulating fashion hubs in the world.

