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# THE YS MAN

*YOHJI YAMAMOTO is one of the most revered designers in fashion with a cult following in his native Japan and acolytes all over the world. When it came to launching YNOT, he turned to the HKDI's Fashion and Image Department for help. MEI TING CHEUNG reports.*



I was thrilled when I heard that the HKDI was going to work with Yohji Yamamoto, Mixmind's Mao Ji Hong (the owner of Exception) and Stanley Wong to give branding and marketing advice on the launch of Y-Not.

And I was delighted when I was invited to a workshop in May with the designer at a store on Star Street that the HKDI's Fashion and Image department had helped select and style.

At the start of the workshop the room was full of people sitting on the floor, eagerly anticipating the designer's arrival. It was like waiting for a play to start in the theatre. A group of people in black & white appeared, moving with calm determination, just like Japanese samurai going on a mission in a quiet and mysterious way. I knew this was Yohji's samurai team and he is the general: A very smart, talented general but one with a kind and low profile.

His samurai led him to his seat where he sat down and crossed his legs in a way that was quiet and elegant. I was surprised when Yohji began to speak. His voice is so soft and slow, like a girl whispering. It feels gentle and comfortable. While everyone was paying attention

to the speech, somebody's phone began to ring and it broke the calm atmosphere. It turned out the phone belonged to Yohji. He took it out and checked and said, "It is my girlfriend". Everybody laughed. I realise that he has more than one talent – he is a subtle comedian as well as a great designer. The rest of the workshop rode smoothly on the back of his warm sense of humor.

An important aspect of the project between HKDI, Mr Yamamoto and Mixmind is that the designer will have a series of sessions with students. We have so much to learn from such a design master and it is a treasure for the HKDI community to have this opportunity. During the Q&A session on Star Street, students had a chance to ask about the secrets of success in the design industry. One student asked how to explain a design concept to people who seem like they don't understand. He said 'there is no need to tell them.' This student was confused and asked if that meant she didn't need to explain her work to her teachers in future. One of the guests at the event explained for her. "I understand Yohji's answer," she said. "There will always be somebody who doesn't understand our designs or even don't like them. However,

we shouldn't give up but keep moving forward and insist on our beliefs. People's opinion is subjective especially with regard to art and fashion and there will be someone who likes your work if you believe in it enough."

Throughout the session Yohji kept reminding us that the key to success as a designer is to be very hard working. He said if we need to be creative, we should go out and explore the world, not just sit in front of the computer all the time. He's right. Technology has become advanced and convenient but it has made people lazy and less sensitive because they lack the motivation to feel, touch and sense the beautiful things that are around us. The Internet's knowledge is limited, but knowledge in the universe is infinite. As Yohji said, if we want to be creative and have unlimited inspiration, the best way is to travel extensively, just as he has. I was so glad to have had the opportunity to attend this workshop and learn from Yohji Yamamoto, Japan's elegant king of noir. ☺

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