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Editor's letter

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 EDITOR'S LETTER

INSIGHT

THE PAINTER VINCENT Van Gogh created profoundly innovative paintings but he also developed some extraordinary ideas about design, ethics and education in a famous series of letters to his brother Theo, a Parisian art dealer.

On April 3 1878 Van Gogh wrote these lines to Theo from Amsterdam, "If one is master of one thing, one has at the same time insight into many things" and he thereby revealed that to master any activity requires discipline - to acquire basic principles - and creativity - to adopt those principles to one's own circumstances. And insight, the theme of this sixth edition of *SIGNED* magazine, is what happens when discipline and creativity combine to create a fresh approach.

The word insight first appeared in English during the 12th century, when it meant, "to see with the eyes of the mind." By the late 16th century it had evolved to mean a "penetrating understanding into character or hidden nature." For a designer it's best to absorb both of these definitions to develop visions that create new ways of crafting materials or shaping space. A great designer must be able to see things from within, with all of their intellect and senses engaged. And they must be able to see things that are hidden from others, be it a way that two fabrics can be combined or a means of arranging space so that human beings can work more harmoniously together.

In this edition Mao Jihong (*The Dragon Stirs*), one of China's most insightful fashion innovators talks about how high standards can form the foundation of a revolution in design quality. In *Striking a Balance* the work of HKDI students and staff for the school's annual design show reveals the importance of self-disciplined reflection in choosing the right mix of technique and creativity in. And in *Drive Time, Space*

to Grow and *The Voice* Ford designer and HKDI alumnus Chelsia Lau, interior designer Rosan Bosch and filmmaker Ruby Yang demonstrate how insight and its cousin intuition are the driving force behind great cars, inspiring environments and life-changing documentaries.

This edition is completed by stories about the "hidden nature" of Hong Kong's tiny apartments, iconic-designer Barney Cheng using his sharp "mind's eye" to advise HKDI's budding couturiers and the "penetrating understanding" to be found in modern reinterpretations of Classic Chinese paintings.

The great Russian humanist and author Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote "...we make mistakes because the easiest and most comfortable course is to seek insight where it accords with our emotions - especially selfish ones." He meant that true insight comes when creative people act selflessly and seek for inspiration outside their comfort zone. That's the kind of insight that Van Gogh sought in his painful explorations of his own limitations. Where there's no pain, there's no gain - and no insight.

DANIEL JEFFREYS
Editor-In-Chief

«WHEN YOU WANT INSIGHT AS BADLY AS YOU WANT TO BREATHE, THEN YOU SHALL HAVE IT.»

SOCRATES