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Mothers of invention

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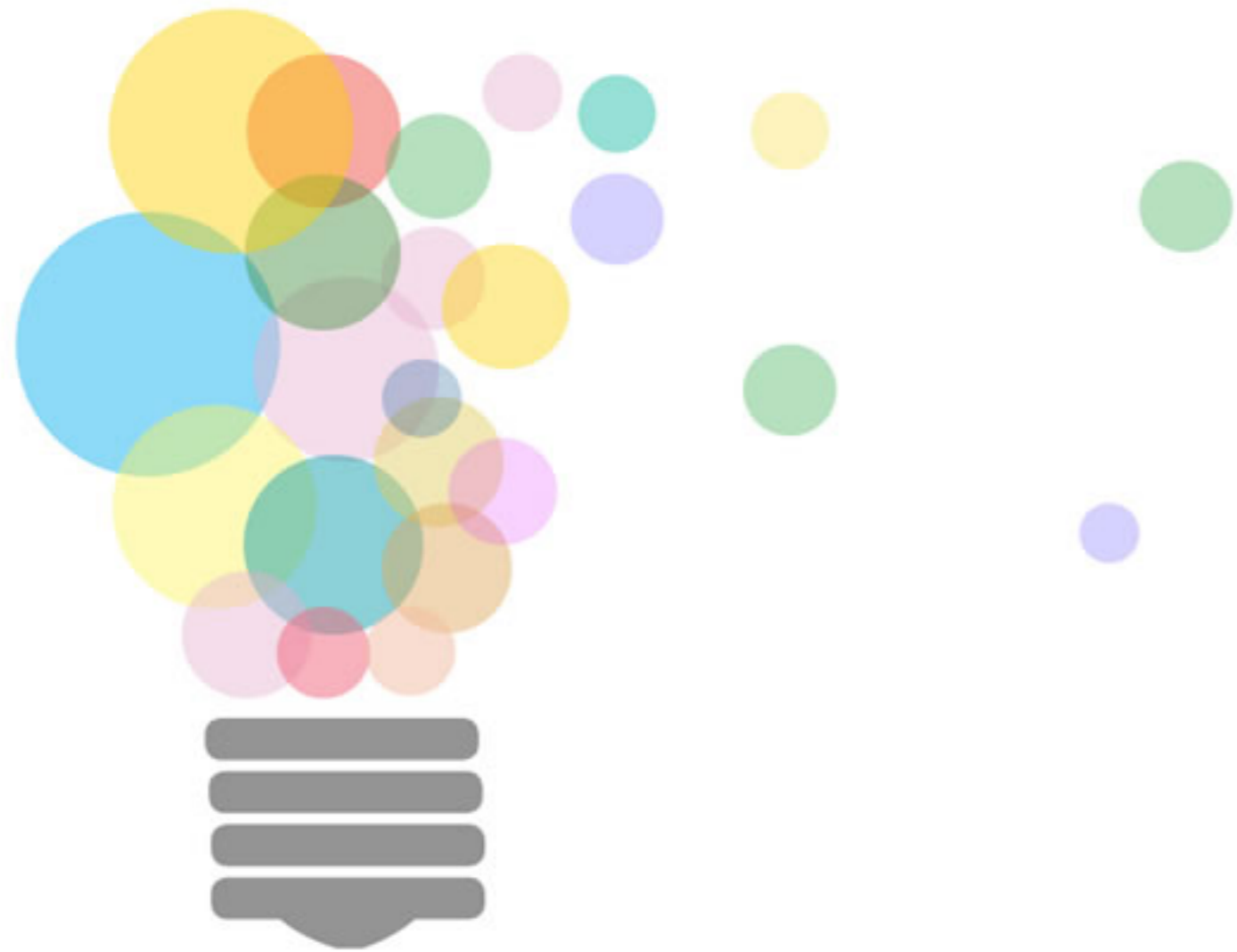
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MOTHERS OF INVENTION



reddot design award

To explore the beauty of an object is to engage with the genius behind its creation and as RIK GLAUERT reports, the exhibition "Every Product Tells a Story" at HKDI is a window into the elusive mind of the designer.

Whether it's derived from a sleek form or an impressive functionality, good design is intriguing. A well-crafted object invites an exploration of how it was conceived, why certain choices of form or material were made and how the item arrived at its final form. In the exhibition "Every Product Tells a Story - Untold Matters of Red Dot Award-Winning Designs" at HKDI a selection of Red Dot Award winning designs invite visitors to

immerse themselves in the complex act of designing. There's an old saying that necessity is the mother but in truth the process of creativity has multiple parents, depending on the degree of functionality or decoration required and the context in which the object will be used. A design's inception may lie in a single idea or concept but it will always be informed by something external. Inspiration may be derived from a certain aesthetic, a desire to

solve a specific problem or to evoke discussion. Axor Starck Organic is a bathroom fitting that emanates tree branches – the designer has found inspiration in one of nature's most iconic shapes. The form of the tree has acted as a muse, and bringing the iconic shape into the modern bathroom prompts subtle questions about the power of water in nature and the reasons why this resource must be protected and nurtured. Similarly, the Lucky chair's open backrest mimics a smiling face, one

ABOVETOP AXOR STARCK ORGANIC, BATHROOM FITTING DESIGNED BY STARCK NETWORK (PHILIPPE STARCK) AND MANUFACTURED BY HANSGRÖHE SE, RED DOT AWARD 2014
ABOVE X MARK II, CALCULATOR DESIGNED BY CHAK YUN HEI AND REX HUNG HOI (HKDI ALUMNI), MANUFACTURED BY CANON ELECTRONIC BUSINESS MACHINES (H.K.) COMPANY LIMITED, RED DOT: BEST OF THE BEST AWARD 2013
LEFT LUCKY, CHAIR DESIGNED BY DESIGN BALLENDAT AND MANUFACTURED BY TONON & C. SPA, RED DOT AWARD 2014

« WHAT YOU SEE IS LESS THAN WHAT YOU GET. »

RIGHT EZYSTOVE, WOOD-BURNING STOVE DESIGNED BY VERYDAY AND MANUFACTURED BY VERYDAY AB, RED DOT: BEST OF THE BEST AWARD 2012

OPPOSITE NEST, STEWPOT DESIGNED BY 3+2 DESIGNSTUDIO AND MANUFACTURED BY SHU&W'S CERA, RED DOT AWARD 2014

OPPOSITE BELOW CAN-WATCH DESIGNED BY CHING YIN KAT LING, TIEN SUM SAMUEL SIU AND CHUN KIN KENNETH HO, MANUFACTURED BY ALCHEMIST CREATIONS COMPANY LIMITED, RED DOT: BEST OF THE BEST AWARD 2013



of the most recognisable signs in the world around us. The smile evokes an open, calming and joyful feeling regardless of culture or language. In both Axor Starck Organic and Lucky simple signifiers from nature have acted as strong references for designs. These products display an ancient and easily recognisable shape that is re-appropriated to invigorate the depth and meaning of a household item.

Other objects portray evidence of a more pragmatic approach. Some designs are clearly conceived as a solution to a specific problem or complication that the designer has witnessed. The design story told in these products is a process of problem solving. The designer of EzyStove observed that around 3 billion people worldwide still cook over simple wood fires. Firewood is a precious resource and smoke from open fires is responsible for respiratory diseases. It was with this specific problem in mind that EzyStove was created.

EzyStove features a metal chamber for the combustion of wood or other fuel and an outer support

frame to hold a pot or pan. The simple yet effective design means that generating heat for cooking requires 40 percent less fuel and emissions of noxious fumes are cut by up to 80 percent. It is also cheap to make and can be packed flat for transportation. The solving of a problem may be the inspiration behind the product, but ingenuity and dedication are needed throughout the design process to ensure this aim is achieved, giving an insight into the perseverance and adaptability of the design mind.

Other designers draw inspiration not from tackling a specific physical challenge but rather to evoke discussion on an aspect of society or culture. A product's design can be conceived as a commentary on a perceived discrepancy in the way society works with its form and function being used to engage in a dialogue that may ultimately change habits. The Nest pot is a carefully conceived piece of tableware that brings families together to eat around the dining table. In a world

of individualism, Nest aims to revive communal eating and highlight the importance of familial relations.

Functionally, the heavy clay and gravel of the pot keeps the food warm for an extended period, meaning that families have time to gather and to remain at the dinner table. Its large size means it is designed to be placed in the middle of the table and encourage communal engagement. On an aesthetic level, the organic welcoming shape and its heaviness evoke a sense of support, endurance and homeliness. The accompanying nest-like rest references a bird's nest and notions of family ties and unity.

Similarly, designers of X Mark II, HKDI alumni Chak Yun Hei and Rex Hung Hoi have reinvigorated the pocket calculator in a bid to focus the mind on single tasks. They see the calculator as "a reliable monolith, solid as a rock in a turbulent sea of over-abundant information." The high-quality design and modern aesthetic celebrates single-function devices in an era where electronics are often dispensable.

A designer's intention is expressed not only through its colour and form, but also through careful decisions regarding material and manufacturing. A designer's vision does not end with sketches and prototypes. For example, the Can-Watch promotes social engagement and sustainability not just through its visual design but also through the choice of material and fabrication.

The aluminium base of the Can-Watch is crafted from recycled beverage cans whilst the leather strap is formed from residual pieces from sofa and handbag production. The watch is put together in workshops that offer employment to disabled people. As the designer puts it, "what you see is less than what you get." The Can-Watch reminds us that a design's value lies not just in the aesthetics but also in choices made during construction.

The individual intricate processes of the design mind may never be fully understood, but "Every Product Tells a Story - Untold Matters of Red Dot Award-Winning Designs" allows visitors to come face to face with them. The exhibition puts ground-breaking contemporary design work under close inspection and encourages intense contemplations of the inspirations, factors and processes that go into creating award-winning design. ©

Every Product Tells a Story - Untold Matters of Red Dot Award-Winning Designs
Exhibition period: 28 Nov 2014 - 31 May 2015
Venue: HKDI Gallery

