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Editorial

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EDITORIAL

DESIGN MINDSET FOSTERS TRANSMISSION AND INNOVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

設計思維主導文化遺產的傳承和創新

For three consecutive issues, SIGNED has followed the main theme of conserving and transmitting cultural legacy, aiming to explore cultural innovation in the scopes of lifestyle, art and in this issue – digitisation. We have gathered various use cases of conserving and innovating culture.

Interestingly and coincidentally, our search in these three areas at home and abroad has unveiled a common first step – a technology-enabled digital platform to conserve and to innovate. All our interviewees have leveraged different digital technologies to rationalise, preserve and reimagine their cultural treasures. Their creative approaches have been made possible by lightspeed technological advancements and exponential increase in computing power.

Indeed, the Palace Museum in Beijing launched an array of creative branded cultural products inspired from its collections some 10 years ago. These products resulted in a popular trend, which was followed by the introduction of digital technology and subsequently revolutionised the public's experience with "cultural heritage" of Chinese traditions. No wonder the museum's success is now a textbook case much discussed in design schools. These show us that cultural heritage has in fact been passed on and innovated from a tangible aspect to a virtual one – a transformation that is in line with the increased amount of time we are spending on digital platforms every day.

Now that the new era of AI and big data is here, we can foresee that every aspect of our lives – including the conservation and innovation of cultural heritage – will be affected qualitatively and quantitatively. Indeed, there have been many debates about whether AI will replace humans. However, as long as we stay true with our design mindset, we will be able to always consider the needs of humans first, and not lose track or be bounded by digital technology.

Leveraging empathy, the first and foremost attribute of the design mindset, we could underscore the unique qualities of humans. Cultural heritage is an experience co-created and co-experienced by humans, design ideas based on human bonds will bring about enriching imagination. It also explains why many countries are invested in the transmission and innovation of cultural heritage.

《SIGNED》一連三期，以「文化遺產」的保育和傳承作為主軸，以「文化創新」作為探討的方向和目標，先後探索了生活方式、藝術和今期的數碼化等不同領域，為讀者搜羅各種傳承及創新的案例。

有趣的是，雖然我們針對三個不同領域的海外及本地「文化遺產」保育和傳承例子作出採訪，結果一致發現，它們都不約而同通過科技在數碼平台上，踏出了傳承的闊步，並利用不同的數碼技術，梳理、保存及重新呈現這些文化瑰寶，當中使用的創新手法，全賴近年進步神速的科技和幾何級數提升的電腦運算能力。

其實早於10多年前，北京故宮博物院便開始推出靈感源自館藏珍品的各種文化創意產品，並牽起風潮，跟着開始引入數碼科技，刷新大眾接觸中國傳統重要「文化遺產」的體驗，難怪成為不少設計學院的案例研究對象。由此我們可以看到，「文化遺產」的傳承和創新，其實早已由現實層面拓展至虛擬層面，這從我們每天花愈來愈多時間在數碼平台的情況，可謂不謀而合。

隨著人工智能和大數據時代的來臨，可以預見不單「文化遺產」的傳承和創新，我們生活的方方面面都必然受到量和質的變化，更引發了人工智能能否取代人類的爭論。但只要我們能堅持以「設計思維」為初心來面對問題，事事以人為本，便不會被數碼科技牽著鼻子走，而迷失方向。

人們如果能利用「設計思維」把同理心放在首要的位置，便能突出作為萬物之靈的獨一無二的特質，因為「文化遺產」都是人類共同創造和經歷的體驗，從情感出發的設計思考，自然充滿豐富多彩的想像力。這更解釋了為何全球不同國家都關注它的傳承和創新。

