

International Conference on the Cultural Industry and the Education of Art and Design: The Future of Design Education in Different Cultural Contexts

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From December 16 to 19, 2005, Shantou University Cheung Kong School of Art and Design hosted an international conference titled "International Conference on the Cultural Industry and the Education of Arts and Design," sponsored by the Hong Kong Li Ka Shing Foundation. The conference was the third of its kind, and by far the most ambitious such conference to be held at the University. Its goal was to facilitate discussion and dialogue in order to investigate the relationship between design and the cultural industries, private enterprise, government, and other social organizations from a global perspective.

Experts and academics from the U.S., the UK, Korea, New Zealand, Japan, Denmark, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and many other countries and regions attended. More than forty keynote speakers were invited including Richard Buchanan, Professor of Design and former Head of the School of Design at Carnegie Mellon University; John Heskett, Chair and Professor of Design, School of Design, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University; Lee Kun-pyo, Professor and Head of the Department of Industrial Design, Korea Advanced Institute of Science & Technology; Freeman Lau, International Academic Advisor, Shantou University Cheung Kong School of Art and Design; Thomas Sehested, Design Manager, Kontrapunkt; Nicholas Rhodes, Director of Studies in Product Design, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design; Matthew Turner, Director / Academic Head, The Art School, Hong Kong Arts Center; and Wei Shaonong, Vice Dean, Fine Arts College of Shanghai Normal University.

The three-day conference focused on three central themes: (1) Changing design for an age of knowledge economy; (2) Mode and structure for the education of arts and design from a perspective of cultural creativity; and (3) Regional development of cultural industries and education of arts and design.

International figures such as Richard Buchanan and John Heskett mainly addressed the first theme. Professor Buchanan urged us to find new forms for design in this age of information. In

discussing different aspects of life and culture, he highlighted the purpose of all kinds of design, which is to communicate. Dr. Heskett advocated a full awareness of changing design and its education in an age of change, with the accent on creative thinking and design knowledge since the designer's role is shifting from "form creator" to "system creator."

Speakers from Asia and Europe explored the second theme in depth. Using the term "culturability," Professor Lee Kun-pyo elaborated on the why, what, and how in approaching culture in design practice and education through product attribution, contextual experience, the paradigm of interaction, and cross-cultural cooperation. Thomas Sehested argued that the branding and visualizing of creativity is the future of a nation positioning itself in the global economy, and the education of arts and design thus plays a key role in providing such a nation with a creative growth engine. Wei Shaonong investigated the role of Chinese higher art education by presenting the integral mode of pedagogy based on producing, learning, and researching through his own experience of planning and restructuring the college and the reformation project of Shanghai Bakery Factory.

Local, global, and cultural themes also were widely covered by Eastern and Western experts. Freeman Lau discussed the significance of new experiments in Hong Kong laboratory-based education of arts and design, which actually contributed to the branding of Hong Kong by linking the region to the world. Matthew Turner described new trends in the art and design field: more corporate partnerships, more interdisciplinary and practice-based instruction, and their influences on cultural industries and design education. Nicolas Rhodes explored the potential impact of Asia on European product design education by comparing the perceived strengths and weaknesses of both European and Asian design practices to show how local approaches to design could be positively influenced through the exchange of ideas.

The development of the regional cultural industry also was of great concern in connection to design education. Cross-disciplinary course modules in arts and design education in Japan, New Zealand, Taiwan, and China were presented by other speakers, mirroring the exigent demands of a creative economy. In discussing different systems of arts and design education in different economical and cultural environments, both speakers and participants shared diverse experiences and insights. These exchanges will contribute to both the diversity and benchmarks of intersection of the cultural industry and the education of arts and design. Their publication in the Proceedings of the Conference is eagerly awaited.