Graphic designers as cultural innovators: Case studies of Henry Steiner and KAN Tai Keung

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Introduction

• Chinese graphic design frequently copies
• Masters are still able to use Chinese culture in a creative way.
• Definition of ‘masters’

http://www.5tu.cn/thread-14539-1-1.html
Designers as Innovators of culture

• The designer’s role in culture-based innovation

• The theoretical framework:
  The designer as an interpreter of culture
The designer’s role in culture-based innovation

- The author devotes in this research from the artist’s perspective
- The relationship between informant and artist or scholar
- Innovation in folk culture
The theoretical framework

Tradition

- Interpret of tradition vs modernity?
- How can I innovate with tradition?
- Research of color, shape, physical objects ... interpretation
- What can I do with new techniques?

Innovation

Outcomes: balances two peleneries
Methodology

• Research methods

• Guiding assumption

• Analytic induction
Research methods-data collection

- Snowball sampling
- Secondary materials
- Interviewing
- Photographs and videos
Research methods-data sorting and analysis
Guiding assumption

Culture could be a significant inspiration to arouse designer’s innovation.

No relevance of designer masters’ method of culture interpretation and their location.

Design philosophy, teacher relationship, growth background and working environment will influence …
Analytic induction

Preliminary hypothesis

Analyze negative cases that fit to the emerging preliminary hypothesis only with difficulty. Proceed until all cases have been analyzed. (Koskinen et al., 2003)
Case study 1 - Henry Steiner

‘The king of graphic design’ in Hong Kong.

- **1934** BORN INTO a middle-class Jewish family in Austria
- BA: Majored in science fiction, Hunter College,
  MA: Majored in graphic design, Yale University, taught by Paul Rand

Henry Steiner's client list through the years has included **Asiaweek, Citic Pacific, Dah Sing Bank, Dow Jones, Duty Free Shoppers, the Far Eastern Economic Review, The Hong Kong Jockey Club, Hongkong Land, IBM, Lane Crawford...**
1 minute Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tY2wQyn9x04

Humorous
Gentle
Collections
The formation of his design philosophy: Contrast

Reference from Henry Steiner’s talk- ‘How to make money?’
Case study 2 – KAN Tai Keung

Professor KAN was proficient in traditional Chinese culture and philosophy.

- 1942 BORN INTO an art family in Fanyu, Guangdong province, CHINA
- He used to be a tailor and learn graphic design in evening school
- 1957 Settled in Hong Kong, and study graphic design in The Hong Kong Chinese University from LV Shoukun and Wang Wuxie

KAN Tai Keung’s client list through the years has included China Bank, Wastons, Chongqing City Brand, Qingdao Beer, Hong Kong Zodiac Stamps and Series ink painting posters...
The relationship between design philosophy and Chinese culture

- Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism

- Western philosophy: humans masters /controllers of nature
  Eastern philosophy: humans are viewed as part of nature

- A feeling of 'stability';
  To show the attitudes of the Chinese people towards life
Culture is a situation-specific source of a designer’s innovation, and its role is located in and built on by the nature of the work.

A designer’s educational experience and growth background form the foundation of the design philosophy that is hidden in his or her artwork.

Design masters have their own unique design philosophies that persist for many years;

The working environment, collections, relationships or personalities all have reference value for studying how designers are inspired.

However, in the actual design of a project, other factors may be given primary consideration, such as the needs of the customers or the market.
Discussion and Conclusion

Contributions

• In terms of design, it helps to draw a clear map for designers to know how they gain inspiration, and why the master designers’ innovative work wins them excellent reputations all over the world.

• For society, the categories of innovation are continuously updated and their scope is further expanded.

Future work

• The next stages of this research will involve a focused approach to further define the constructs of innovation, the meaning of culture and the tension between tradition and innovation for the design masters.
Thanks!
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