

## Copyright Undertaking

This thesis is protected by copyright, with all rights reserved.

**By reading and using the thesis, the reader understands and agrees to the following terms:**

1. The reader will abide by the rules and legal ordinances governing copyright regarding the use of the thesis.
2. The reader will use the thesis for the purpose of research or private study only and not for distribution or further reproduction or any other purpose.
3. The reader agrees to indemnify and hold the University harmless from and against any loss, damage, cost, liability or expenses arising from copyright infringement or unauthorized usage.

### IMPORTANT

If you have reasons to believe that any materials in this thesis are deemed not suitable to be distributed in this form, or a copyright owner having difficulty with the material being included in our database, please contact [lbsys@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:lbsys@polyu.edu.hk) providing details. The Library will look into your claim and consider taking remedial action upon receipt of the written requests.

THE CULTURAL INTERPRETATION FRAMEWORK: HOW  
EXPERIENCED GRAPHIC DESIGNERS INNOVATE CHINESE  
CULTURE?

CASE STUDY OF SIX EXPERIENCED CHINESE DESIGNERS

TIAN YAO

PhD

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

2021

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

School of Design

The Cultural Interpretation Framework: How Experienced Graphic Designers  
Innovate Chinese Culture?

Case Study Of Six Experienced Chinese Designers

TIAN YAO

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

October 2019

## CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it reproduces no material previously published or written, nor material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Student: TIAN YAO

## Abstract

The main origin of this thesis is a common concern that Chinese graphic designers (especially young ones) frequently see many Chinese graphic designs that are copied either directly or indirectly from foreign or other Chinese designers. However, there have always been some successful designers who have found ways of incorporating Chinese elements into their work in novel ways to establish unique identities. In this thesis, they are referred to as experienced designers. The term experienced underlines their status as designers, one that junior designers respect and follow. The aim of this research is to study how culture can play an important role in helping designers form their identity. While the issue of developing cultural identities in graphic design is universal, it is more important in the context of Chinese design because the current generation of Chinese graphic designers have not formed such identities. This study on internationally experienced designers can provide a resource from which young and junior graphic designers can derive useful strategies in graphic design, helping them become more innovative.

Overall, the research design builds on analytic induction. The research topic is to form a core of knowledge that can help junior designers in the field of graphic design to learn how to establish a strong basis for understanding and utilising cultural values or heritage in their design work. The researcher focused on six internationally established experienced designers (three from Hong Kong and three from Mainland China). There are two main research questions: Do designers take their cultural background into account when innovating and How do they innovate Chinese cultural characteristics. In this research it is assumed that a designer's

ability to innovate in their professional practice is related to their understanding of the values of culture, which is used in the design process to form their style and strength over time.

Through in-depth interviews and analyses supported by detailed pre-studies of their background and professional careers, several common ways in which these experienced designers approach Chinese culture in their work are revealed. Further, by comparing all their work and design methods, several external factors emerged that can provide explanations for their creativity and uniqueness. Another finding of this research is that differences in their ways of working within cultural contexts are greater than the similarities of their styles and identities. This reveals that the ability to use cultural knowledge is personal and can be difficult to formulate as guidelines or principles.

One of the main results of this study is that the experienced designers' way of interpreting Chinese culture centres around 'design philosophy', a term many experienced designers like to use when talking about their understanding and utilisation of culture. This design philosophy is based their personal views of the world and their interactions with users of their work. Such a view evolves as they build their creations with acclaimed outcomes (in terms of both artistic and commercial value) after decades of practice and reflection.

The main contribution of this research is a cultural interpretation framework. This framework is also related largely to the formulation of this design philosophy. This thesis concludes there are primarily two different explanations for the uniqueness of the studied experienced designers in their utilisation or interpretation of culture. First, visual and psychological contrast is widely used by the interviewed designers, which can be considered an interpretive

method derived mainly from Western philosophy. Second, peace and harmony are emphasised as the main emotional expressions of the designers' inner worlds, achieved through their cultural understanding of such worlds. This is in contrast to the first philosophy and can be considered a Chinese or Eastern interpretative method for culture. A balance of five senses (or elements) is typically in this category of philosophies. The cultural interpretation framework proposed in this thesis is based on these three representative design philosophies, from which six practical methods for cultural interpretation are derived.

The results of this research expand our knowledge of culture in graphic design. Moreover, the thesis provides a framework for understanding how experienced designers make sense of Chinese culture and how they have developed a philosophy that identifies their work. The framework is grounded in empathic design and can provide inspiration for junior designers (especially young ones) to take philosophical learning seriously and to develop their own ways of approaching design that can utilise the rich Chinese culture. The road from culture to innovation is not direct and there is no systematic way it can be found. From the framework developed in this thesis, together with the examples and life-long stories of the six designers, it is possible for junior graphic designers to learn and develop their own identity and style.

## Acknowledgement

First and foremost, many thanks to all my teachers. My supervisor (academic father), Prof. Ilpo KOSKINEN, without your patient guidance and encouragement, the thesis couldn't be achieved. By exploring my interest, drawing pieces of manuscripts to help me analyse and instructing me much practical skills in analysing and revising paper, you taught me so much, whether the logical thinking ability or the professional research and analysis, as well as the skill of communication. Another supervisor (academic mother), Sandy NG, whenever I need help or feel confused and anxious, you are always there. Thanks to your great support and active recommendation to my research, I have got more practical experience in sharing and teaching. Prof. TANG Mingxi, you also treated me as your own PhD student, discovered and recognized my design skills and inspired my interest in the combination of traditional culture and design practice. Besides, Prof. Cees de Bont, Huaxin WEI and Kenny Chow, your valuable comments in my confirmation and academic discussions also helped me a lot to move forward. I am so lucky to meet all of you there.

I would also extend my sincere thanks to nine interviewees, masters in graphic design, Henry Steiner, KAN Tai Keung, WANG Min, Tommy LI, LU Jing Ren, HAN Jia Ying, JIANG Hua, HE Hao and Stanley WONG. Thank you for your valuable time, for your interesting, moving and even private stories, and for your detailed design thinking and creative process sharing. I really cherish and enjoy the time chatting with you. Also the two design masters, Alan CHAN and WANG Xu, who are warm hearted and helpful, but it was a pity your time was not allowed to accept the interview.



Of course, thanks to my respected teacher, ZHANG Zhi Wei and friends who helped me in preparing for the interview. Prof. ZHANG, you discussed the research topic with me, shared your new design work, and personally introduced design master LU Jingren to me. Paul, Calvin and Siyu who helped me to check and rehearsal the academic interview, and CAI Zhuo Jun, ZHOU Ting, LIU Shi Hao, Vivian, Dennis, and ZHANG Yi Xin helped to introduce and made appointments with busy masters.

Also, I have to mention these friends, Bobby, Cynthia, Dora, Iris, Jiayi, Lilia, Liv, Miao, Minzhi, Peiyao, Quincy, Sunny, Tianjiao, Yiyuan and Yuyang, without your company and help during the interview trip and research progress, I cannot finish the study confidently and smoothly.

Finally, the last but most important thanks to my parents and family members. Words fail me to express my deep love and gratitude to you. Your selfless love, moral and material support enrich me with more confidence and motivation during the past four years.

Yao TIAN,

August, 2019

## Table of contents

Abstract .....	i
Acknowledgement.....	iv
List of figures .....	v
List of tables .....	x
1. Introduction .....	1
1.1. Research background .....	1
1.2. Research questions.....	6
1.3. Research objectives .....	7
1.4. Chinese culture as a topic.....	8
1.5. Guiding assumption .....	9
1.6. The structure of this thesis .....	13
2. Literature review .....	14
2.1. Culture as a resource for innovation .....	14
2.1.1. 'Innovation' as diffusion.....	15
2.1.2. Technological and economic interpretations of innovations .....	16
2.1.3. Business model as innovation .....	18
2.1.4. Design innovation: innovation through meaning? .....	20
2.2. Designers as innovators of culture .....	24
2.2.1. Xin on Product Innovation in a Cultural Context.....	26
2.2.2. Kärt Summatavet's study of folk artists as innovators in Estonia .....	29
2.2.3. Towards a definition of innovation .....	35
2.2.4. Designers as interpreters of culture .....	36
2.3. Cultural innovation application processes.....	39
2.4. Tradition and modernity.....	43
2.4.1. Modernity in Asia .....	43
2.4.2. The value of tradition in design.....	46
2.4.3. The meaning of learning traditional culture in modernity .....	53
3. Data and methods .....	56
3.1. Research design.....	56
3.2. Data collection.....	59
3.2.1. Elite interview .....	59
3.2.2. Photos and videos.....	60

3.2.3.	Secondary material .....	63
3.2.4.	Snowball sampling process .....	65
3.3.	Data sorting .....	69
3.4.	Data Analysis.....	73
3.4.1.	Reliability and validity .....	73
3.4.2.	Constant comparison of Grounded theory .....	75
4.	Six designers from Hong Kong and Mainland China .....	79
4.1.	Henry Steiner .....	81
4.1.1.	Experience & background .....	81
4.1.2.	Acknowledgement to culture.....	85
4.1.3.	Observation.....	87
4.1.4.	Theory notes .....	88
4.2.	KAN Tai Keung.....	91
4.2.1.	Experience & background .....	91
4.2.2.	Observation.....	98
4.2.3.	Acknowledgement to culture.....	101
4.2.4.	Theory notes .....	104
4.3.	Stanley WONG .....	111
4.3.1.	Experience and background.....	111
4.3.2.	Observation.....	113
4.3.3.	Acknowledgement to culture.....	115
4.3.4.	Theory notes .....	118
4.4.	WANG Min.....	124
4.4.1.	Experience & background .....	124
4.4.2.	Observations .....	127
4.4.3.	Acknowledgement to culture.....	129
4.4.4.	Theory notes .....	133
4.5.	HAN Jiaying .....	137
4.5.1.	Experience and background.....	137
4.5.2.	Observation.....	139
4.5.3.	Acknowledgement of Culture .....	147
4.5.4.	Theory notes .....	147
4.6.	JIANG Hua .....	151
4.6.1.	Experience and background.....	151
4.6.2.	Acknowledgement to culture.....	154
4.6.3.	Observations .....	157

4.6.4.	Theory notes .....	161
4.7.	Critical evaluation of designers' cultural application .....	163
4.7.1.	Whether culture could be a significant inspiration .....	163
4.7.2.	Could cultural interpretation be an innovative approach? .....	166
5.	Explanations for innovative approaches to cultural interpretation .....	168
5.1.	External causes .....	168
5.1.1.	Family background .....	168
5.1.2.	Educational background and relationships to mentors .....	172
5.1.3.	Group relationship and professional associations .....	177
5.1.4.	Chinese modernity: Hong Kong and the Mainland .....	181
5.1.5.	Do external causes explain cultural innovation? .....	187
5.2.	Internal causes .....	189
5.2.1.	Cultural innovation and design philosophy .....	189
5.2.2.	The importance of contrast .....	192
5.2.3.	Peace and harmony: the art of the sublime .....	198
5.2.4.	How experienced designers define their approach to philosophy .....	203
5.2.5.	Theoretical analysis of their design philosophy .....	205
6.	The cultural interpretation framework .....	209
6.1.	Theoretical analysis of cultural interpretation approaches .....	210
6.2.	The cultural interpretation processes .....	213
6.2.1.	Henry Steiner .....	216
6.2.2.	KAN Tai Keung .....	219
6.2.3.	Stanley WONG .....	222
6.2.4.	WANG Min .....	224
6.2.5.	HAN Jiaying .....	227
6.2.6.	JIANG Hua .....	229
6.3.	Contrast: .....	231
6.3.1.	Interaction but independence .....	231
6.3.2.	Integration .....	232
6.4.	Peace and harmony: .....	232
6.4.1.	Combination .....	233
6.4.2.	Eastern path .....	234
6.4.3.	Aesthetic conscious .....	235
6.5.	The cultural interpretation framework .....	235
7	Conclusions and discussions .....	238
7.1	Conclusions .....	242

7.1.1	Do Chinese designers copy Chinese elements? .....	242
7.1.2	'Philosophy' as the source of innovation.....	244
7.1.3	Significance.....	246
7.2	Discussions.....	247
7.2.1	Suggestions for future studies.....	249
7.2.2	Limitations.....	250
Appendix .....		252
Interview introduction before interview .....		252
Interview outline of Henry Steiner.....		253
Interview outline of KAN Tai Keung .....		255
Interview outline of WAN Min .....		257
Interview outline of HAN Jia Ying.....		259
Interview outline of JIANG Hua.....		261
Interview outline of Stanley WONG.....		263
References.....		264

## List of figures<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1.1-1 Restart campaign of Chinese brand, Li-ning .....	1
Figure 1.1-2 Unleash campaign of US brand, Nike .....	1
Figure 1.1-3 Mooncake advertisement of Kee Wah and comparison of Sun Jun's work(right) .....	2
Figure 1.1-4 Adobe logo designed by WANG Min .....	3
Figure 1.5-1 Research question and guiding assumption in this research .....	10
Figure 2.1-1 Technical innovation and meanings.....	22
Figure 2.1-2 Italian furniture to show meanings in innovation in Verganti's boo .....	23
Figure 2.2-1 Xin used a diagram to show cultural influences (X. Xin, 2006).....	27
Figure 2.2-3 The bearers of tradition and user groups (Summatavet, 2005) .....	38
Figure 2.3-1 A model for Chinese Cultural innovation decision process in graphic design (Dahl, 2004; Leong & Clark, 2003; Rogers, 1962) .....	40
Figure 2.3-2 A model for Chinese Cultural decision process in graphic design (X. He, 1992; Leong & Clark, 2003; Rogers, 1962) .....	42
Figure 2.4-1 Cherry blossom viewing activities poster designed by BAU.....	48
Figure 2.4-2 Ukiyo-e paintings from Japan.....	49
Figure 2.4-3 (left)Cherry blossom viewing activities poster .....	50
Figure 2.4-4 (left) Composition II with Red, Blue, and Yellow draw by Piet Mondrian, retrieved by <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piet_Mondrian">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piet_Mondrian</a> .....	54
Figure 3.1-1 Process of Analytic induction (Koskinen et al., 2003).....	56
Figure 3.2-1 Displays in the office of Henry Steiner in Hong Kong.....	61
Figure 3.2-2 Notebook and drafts of Henry Steiner's working process .....	63
Figure 3.2-3 Hong Kong Banknote design by Henry Steiner.....	66
Figure 3.3-1 Data box of the Henry Steiner interview.....	70
Figure 3.3-2 Guideline of data box in this research .....	71
Figure 3.3-3 Analysis model by memorandums in this research (Koskinen et al., 2003) .....	72
Figure 3.4-1 The Researcher help to host Henry Steiner's presentation in AGI China Seminar .....	80
Figure 3.4-2 AGI China seminar, April, 2018 .....	80

---

<sup>1</sup> All the pictures in this reference without citation are took by the researcher, or permitted or sent directly by the experienced designers (interviewees in this research)

Figure 3.4-3 The three orders of signification & the three orders of cultural signification (Wong, 2013)	81
Figure 4.1-1 Henry Steiner in 1939, aged about five(Lazarus, 2014)	82
Figure 4.1-2 Sketches and visual identity of Human Rights Press Awards 2015 (Steiner, 2016a)	85
Figure 4.1-3 Henry Steiner's sketch	88
Figure 4.1-4 Banknote design of Henry Steiner (Steiner, 2016a)	90
Figure 4.2-1 Parts of Awards in KAN's partnership company	92
Figure 4.2-2 Chen Clan Ancestral Hall by Kan's grandfather (Retrieved from <a href="https://cn.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g298555-d311546-i141111813-Chen_Clan_Ancestral_Hall_Folk_Craft_Museum-Guangzhou_Guangdong.html">https://cn.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g298555-d311546-i141111813-Chen_Clan_Ancestral_Hall_Folk_Craft_Museum-Guangzhou_Guangdong.html</a> )	93
Figure 4.2-3 Ruban temple in Guang Dong Province by KAN's grandfather(G. L. XIAO, 2018)	93
Figure 4.2-4 KAN Tai Keung's family relationship (Kan, 2012)	94
Figure 4.2-5 Lui Shou-kwan's ink painting	95
Figure 4.2-6 Posters designed by KAN Tai Keung	95
Figure 4.2-7 Series of Chinese Typography poster	97
Figure 4.2-8 KAN Tai Keung's collections	98
Figure 4.2-9 Photos of KAN Tai Keung's home	99
Figure 4.2-10 Photos of KAN Tai Keung in 2009 Beijing ICOGRADA	101
Figure 4.2-11 Silverware design of Hong Kong Return by KAN Tai Keung	101
Figure 4.2-12 Logo design by KAN Tai Keung Bank of China ( Hong Kong )(Kan, 2000)	103
Figure 4.2-13 Logo design of brand, ZHENG Mingming, by KAN Tai Keung(Kan, 2014)	103
Figure 4.2-14 Chongqing City Branding by KAN Tai Keung	105
Figure 4.2-15 Lafang Logo designed by KAN Tai Keung	105
Figure 4.2-16 Rooster toys collected by KAN Tai Keung as inspirations	106
Figure 4.2-17 KAN's inspiration and stamps designed by him(Hu, 2017)	106
Figure 4.2-18 The stamp design of the year of mouse in 1972 by KAN (ON.CC, 2013)	108
Figure 4.2-19 The stamp design of the year of pig in 1971 by KAN(ON.CC, 2013)	108
Figure 4.2-20 Logo design of Yidan Prize by KAN Tai Keung	109
Figure 4.2-21 Poster exhibition on the Book of changes: Qian (left) and The eight diagrams of The Book of Changes(right)	110
Figure 4.3-1 Stanley WONG aged 10(Whitehead, 2017)	111
Figure 4.3-2 Stanley and his wife, Jessie in 1981 and 2015 (Whitehead, 2017)	113
Figure 4.3-3 'Dance Goes On' showing and sharing	114
Figure 4.3-4 Stanley wrote his key points during the interview seriously	115

Figure 4.3-5 Culture poster: the living heritage,2001 .....	116
Figure 4.3-6 Tea and chat, in Venice, Italy, 2005 .....	116
Figure 4.3-7 Back to the future project, 2006 .....	117
Figure 4.3-8 Artistic brand 'red white blue 330', 2011 .....	117
Figure 4.3-9 New life psychiatric rehabilitation association, 2012.....	117
Figure 4.3-10 MIHO museum in Japan.....	119
Figure 4.3-11 'impermanence' furniture design by Stanley WONG in 2012 .....	120
Figure 4.3-12 'To begin with, there's no matter' photography by Stanley in 2010.....	120
Figure 4.3-13 Lanwei photographs: Illegal residence in Bangkok (left two) and beasts in Shanghai(right).....	122
Figure 4.3-14 Ifc brand campaign video: Life is beautiful.....	123
Figure 4.3-15 Rebranding of Café de Coral by Stanley WONG .....	124
Figure 4.4-1 DETAO Building where WANG Min worked in .....	128
Figure 4.4-2 WANG Min and Boer Studio.....	128
Figure 4.4-3 WANG Min tried to find many references during the interview.....	129
Figure 4.4-4 Cultural symbols and innovation in typeface design'A' .....	131
Figure 4.4-5 Han-style dragon in tile stone .....	131
Figure 4.4-6 Dragons in different dynasties in China .....	132
Figure 4.4-7 The visual identity of The Forbidden City by WANG Min (Richard B. Doubleday, 2008c) .....	132
Figure 4.4-8 Jade medal design for Beijing Olympic Games by WANG Min .....	135
Figure 4.4-9 Jade 'Huang 璜' with a double dragon pattern (left) and jade wore by baron 佩玉 (right) .....	135
Figure 4.5-1 Exhibition design, A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains, by HAN Jiaying design company .....	140
Figure 4.5-2 HAN Jia Ying's individual exhibition 'Reflection' in 2013 (Yi, 2013) .....	142
Figure 4.5-3 HAN Jia Ying's book, 5000×50×500 .....	143
Figure 4.5-4 HAN Jia Ying's office in his Shenzhen company.....	145
Figure 4.5-5 Taihu stone in Chinese garden and Japanese rock garden (right).....	145
Figure 4.5-6 Tianya Magazine design by HAN Jia Ying.....	146
Figure 4.5-7 'Celebrate Our Planet' theme poster designed by HAN Jia Ying(ICA, 2017) .....	147
Figure 4.5-8 Forms of Words on Heaven and Earth poster designed by HAN Jia Ying (ICA, 2017) ....	149
Figure 4.5-9 Series design for Vanke Pavilion in Milan by HAN Jia Ying (Tezign, 2017).....	150
Figure 4.5-10 The Gain of Society for Tianya Magazine by HAN Jia Ying (Tezign, 2017). ....	151



Figure 4.6-1 'Die Revolution sind wir' Poster design (left) .....	152
Figure 4.6-2 Poster design by JIANG Hua .....	153
Figure 4.6-3 'Landscape on the paper'(纸上江山) A series gifts, seal cutting designed and engraved by .....	154
Figure 4.6-4 Hong Kong Return poster design by JIANG Hua .....	155
Figure 4.6-5 Radical patterns: The birth of Chinese Modern Typography .....	156
Figure 4.6-6 JIANG Hua's office in CAFA.....	158
Figure 4.6-7 Student's artwork.....	159
Figure 4.6-8 A letter for students' in the last period of the course .....	160
Figure 4.6-9 Student works and exhibition of JIANG Hua's course in CAFA .....	160
Figure 4.6-10 Dream Lotus Poetry designed by JIANG Hua (AD518, 2017) .....	161
Figure 4.7-1 Beijing Olympic Games and Shanghai city branding design .....	165
Figure 5.1-1 Teaching relationship of designers in this research .....	173
Figure 5.1-2 Poster design by KAN Tai Keung to mourn Paul Rand.....	179
Figure 5.2-1 Poster design Hong Kong at Comis-Eurotricot by Henry Steiner (1972) .....	193
Figure 5.2-2 Cover design for Idea Magazine by Henry Steiner (1980).....	194
Figure 5.2-3 Poster of Japanese type setting company by Henry Steiner (1991).....	194
Figure 5.2-4 Souvenir T-shirt of Forbidden City designed by WANG Min (J. Xin, 2017) .....	195
Figure 5.2-5 Chinese student poster designed by WANG Min .....	196
Figure 5.2-6 Us-Korean poster by WANG Min .....	196
Figure 5.2-7 Corporate identity for a Korean Conglomerate by Henry Steiner (1989) (Haas & Steiner, 1995) .....	197
Figure 5.2-8 Comparison of implicit meaning of Henry and WANG Min's design work.....	197
Figure 5.2-9 KAN Tai Keung's poster design .....	199
Figure 5.2-10 International Dance Poster (1989) designed by KAN Tai Keung .....	200
Figure 5.2-11 Courageously break the rules, poster designed by KAN Tai Keung (1992) .....	200
Figure 5.2-12 GDC13 visual identity design by HAN Jiaying .....	201
Figure 5.2-13 Series poster design of Tianya Magazine by HAN Jia Ying (1997) .....	202
Figure 6.2-1 Cultural interpretation of Hong Kong Banknote design by Henry Steiner .....	217
Figure 6.2-2 Henry Steiner's cultural interpretation methods in graphic design .....	218
Figure 6.2-3 The design work of Henry Steiner .....	218
Figure 6.2-4 AIC logo design by KAN in 1972 (Kan, 2014) .....	220
Figure 6.2-5 Chinese cultural interpretation method of AIC investment company by KAN Tai Keung .....	220

Figure 6.2-6 Chinese cultural interpretation method of Prosperity Press Logo design by KAN Tai Keung .....	221
Figure 6.2-7 Prosperity Press Logo design by KAN Tai Keung.....	221
Figure 6.2-8 Led video installation: Dropping pearls of CHANEL.....	223
Figure 6.2-9 Cultural interpretation of dropping pearls designed by Stanley Wong.....	223
Figure 6.2-10 US & Korea Trade Association logo .....	225
Figure 6.2-11 Cultural design features in US & Korea Trade Association logo design by WANG Min..	225
Figure 6.2-12 Cultural interpretation process in US & Korea Trade Association logo design by WANG Min .....	226
Figure 6.2-13 Hermès Shenzhen window design by HAN Jia Ying (ICAA, 2017) .....	228
Figure 6.2-14 Cultural interpretation in Hermes window design by HAN Jiaying(Left) .....	229
Figure 6.2-15 Cultural interpretation process of Hong Kong returning poster designed by JIANG Hua .....	230
Figure 6.2-16 Hong Kong returning poster (left).....	231
Figure 6.5-1 Cultural interpretation framework in graphic design.....	236

## List of tables

Table 1-1 General review of interviewees in this research .....	67
Table 4-1 Underlying consideration in design .....	164
Table 6-1 Experienced Designers' views of cultural interpretation.....	191
Table 6-1 Henry Steiner's Culture innovation decision process.....	216
Table 6-2 KAN Tai Keung's Culture innovation decision process.....	219
Table 6-3 Stanley WONG's Culture innovation decision process .....	222
Table 6-4 WANG Min's Culture innovation decision process .....	224
Table 7-5 HAN Jiaying's Culture innovation decision process .....	227
Table 6-6 JIANG Hua's Culture innovation decision process .....	229

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research background

Although China produces the largest number of design graduates in the world every year, only a small number of top designers have made their reputation outside China. As shown in Figure 1.1-1, the Chinese brand Li Ning's restart campaign was designed by Leo Burnett (Shanghai) and launched in the Chinese market in May, 2008. While the design of this poster looks vivid and vibrant, in terms of layout, patterns, and colours it is very similar to the poster of the American brand Nike's Unleash event held in Singapore prior to April, 2008 (Figure 1.1-2). The pattern of the Lion is a symbol of Singapore, drawn by Imaginary Friends Studio of Singapore. This 'highly coincident design' is not uncommon in China.



*Figure 1.1-1 Restart campaign of Chinese brand, Li-ning  
(Retrieved from <http://5y6s.blog.sohu.com/89054283.html>)*



*Figure 1.1-2 Unleash campaign of US brand, Nike  
(Retrieved from <http://imaginaryfs.sg/portfolio/nike-unleash-campaign/>  
<http://mrb-gks.blogspot.com/2008/04/nike-lions-campaign-billboards.html>)*

Another example is the plagiarism scandal of the famous food brand Kee Wah Bakery of Hong Kong. The advertisement design directly copied a Chinese photographer (Sun Jun) without any system research of the elements' meaning in Chinese culture, as shown in Figure 1.1-3. This was the mooncake advertisement for a Chinese mid-autumn festival that represents gathering, thanksgiving, and praying, while the ominous icons of Manjusaka (white lotus and an oil paper umbrella) in Chinese culture were all applied.



*Figure 1.1-3 Mooncake advertisement of Kee Wah and comparison of Sun Jun's work(right)*  
 (Retrieved from <https://news.mingpao.com/ins/港聞/article/20170919/s00001/1505827434121>  
<https://news.mingpao.com/ins/港聞/article/20170921/s00001/1505959172047>)

There are many similar examples, which was the observation behind this study. The study initially focused on explaining the reasons why Chinese design is satisfied with copying designs from China and other countries. In essence, the aim of the study was to determine why Chinese design keeps repeating some patterns and avoids innovation.

As the study progressed, the question shifted from lack of innovation to innovation. It was clear there have always been some successful designers who had their own

creative ways of utilising their culture resources and were able to establish their own unique identities in their graphic work. A good example of this is the logo design in Figure 1.1-4, which is an internationally recognised logo. It was designed by WANG Min (a famous Chinese designer and design educator) for Adobe, a global design software company. WANG Min's design is full of oriental charm and balances black and white with Yin and Yang (which is the symbol of Tai Chi) as successfully as it balances internationally accepted Latin fonts. This design shows that Chinese cultural elements can be used in creative ways. By implication, it also indicates there are Chinese designers who can bring uniquely Chinese elements into design that speak to a worldwide audience.



*Figure 1.1-4 Adobe logo designed by WANG Min*

This observation resulted in the following train of thought about the role of Chinese culture. The starting point of the study contained a grain of truth. One of the main problems facing Chinese designers and design educators is that they seem to have treated the cultural heritage of China as a side-lined resource. They seem to have ignored the fact that many internationally successful designers have always been able to use their own culture to build a strong identity as designers, either through their

design work or research methods (Hang, He, & Kan, 2005). This suggests that an understanding of one's own cultural origin and utilisation of cultural heritage (directly or indirectly) when designing is an essential quality of internationally established designers (L. Lu, Etzkowitz, Lu, & Etzkowitz, 2008; Xu, Smith, Bower, & Chew, 2004). On closer examination, this should also be the case in China.

Designers and design educators are not the only ones to blame in China, because they often have to work within a system developed by the government (L. Lu et al., 2008; Xu et al., 2004). The system of judging good design in rapidly expanding China remains imperfect and standards are unestablished. While there have been many research projects in design and business from the perspective of innovation, they have always ended up being commercial projects or ones that only showcase the government's successes. Meanwhile, there has been a considerable amount of research on design thinking, the design process, and design for social and cultural sustainability in the West over the past few decades (Brown, 2008). These studies consistently addressed the issues of authenticity, originality, identity, and differentiation through design thinking, which shapes the behaviour (and practice) of designers when designing products, systems, or services with their own styles. These studies are based on concrete research methodologies (Altshuller, Shulyak, & Rodman, 1999).

Graphic design is a good form of social production (Frascara, 1988) and has been widely involved in all aspects of Chinese society (W. S. Wong, 2001). It has contributed to the design wisdom in major national public projects (such as the Olympic Games in Beijing and the World Expo in Shanghai) and has continuously been employed for innovative brand images of many famous Chinese enterprises. Design has also

contributed extensively to the fields of culture, art, media, community innovation, social enterprise, and traditional craftsmanship (Philip B Meggs & Purvis, 2011). This extensive social production proves that graphic design is currently very much alive and can be an innovative form that builds on Chinese history and events.

This train of thought had several implications to my research. Conducting research from a designer's perspective became an important motivation that helped me to incorporate my own background in graphic design and to see research as a form of design. In this study, the background and progress of six experienced designers was carefully studied. These designers are recognised in the design profession as practitioners who have managed to bring their knowledge of Chinese culture into their design work and used it as a source of innovation. They are also well known as teachers and mentors—further justifying the term experienced designer. Professor Cross (2004), a British academic, design researcher, and educator stated, 'Studying outstanding or exceptional designers may give us different, and more relevant, insights and understanding of design expertise.' The high levels of creativity and talent of experienced designers mean they stand out from their professional peer groups and are more cognitive than novice designers (Kavakli & Gero, 2002).

I have carefully studied their careers, listed a series of questions, conducted interviews, visited their studios and places of inspiration, and analysed their life and work to summarise their innovative approach to design. In brief, their creative way of treating Chinese culture as comprehensible knowledge has guided their practice and provided a reference point for young designers and design educators.



## 1.2. Research questions

This research topic addresses the lack of innovation in graphic design among Chinese designers directly. Further, it emphasises the importance of cultural factors in the design process by the application of a systematic and culture-based innovation methodology (Hang et al., 2005).

It is common to see Chinese graphic designers copy foreign models and other designers. Maybe these designers have fixed thinking to work instead of meeting the ongoing challenges of finding ways to innovate. However, there are experienced designers who have been able to use Chinese culture creatively. Hence, it is necessary to determine their differences and wisdom to teach other designers, especially those of future generations.

These internationally established graphic designers are perceived as experienced designers in their country and have extensive portfolios that have earned them a high reputation in the design community. They are also recognised by customers as designers who can enhance commercial value in the market while being sensitive to their cultural origin. Hence, their way of interpreting Chinese culture in graphic design can be instructive and meaningful for others. The ways in which these experienced designers see Chinese culture as a theme in their designs and the effective ways they symbolise cultural material is the topic of this study. The overall question to be explored as part of this research is as follows:

*‘How experienced designers interpret culture and utilise their own cultural knowledge of China to create innovative graphic work?’*

There are also the following two sub-questions:

- 1) *Do designers take their cultural background into account when innovating?*
- 2) *How do they innovate Chinese cultural characteristics?*

### 1.3. Research objectives

The main objective of this research:

To develop a framework that helps us to understand how Chinese culture can be turned into a potential innovative strategy for the purposes of graphic design.

Culture can be considered as having two levels: an invisible level (such as values) and a visible level, which includes behaviours or artefacts Dahl (2004). As Hall (1996) argued in his research, the aim of cultural research should not be limited to providing explanations for cultural and social practices ('visible culture'), because transforming the existing cultural power structure ('invisible culture') is equally important. Therefore, within the proposed framework that links design and culture, going beyond widely accepted cultural superficial expressions and exploring how to embed the core elements of culture in design products are required (Moalosi, Popovic, & Hickling-Hudson, 2010). To develop a cultural interpretation framework that has both practical and theoretical values, there are two affiliated objectives:

- 1) Understanding the philosophies that guide their designs.
- 2) Abstracting useful ideas from the experienced designers for junior designers to combine Chinese culture with global values and universal standards of design.

#### 1.4. Chinese culture as a topic

The topic of this thesis is how some well-known graphic designers use their knowledge of Chinese culture in their work. While the selection of 'culture' as a topic is somewhat arbitrary, there are several good reasons for placing culture at the centre of this thesis.

The practical reason is that a study such as this needs a focus because it is impossible to study a famous designer (such as KAN Tai Keung) from every angle. The best a researcher can do is to focus on one aspect of his work and build a study around that aspect. Another reason is topical. As observed by Lee (2004), the main theme of cultural design is still limited to identifying aesthetic stereotypes, such as ethnic forms or colours. There are many clichés about China in the design world. When Chinese elements are used in design, they are usually things that are easy to spot, such as dragon motifs, junk boats, ink paintings, iconography, bright red and yellow colours, the skyline of Shanghai, and highly decorative objects of practically any sort. Most design by implication depicts China as a cliché, similar to France containing only berets and baguettes, everyone in the USA wearing cowboy hats, and Brazil constantly holding carnivals. In truth, China is a vast civilization with endless nuances that are lost if turned into clichés for marketing purposes.

By contrast, the designers studied in this thesis have exhibited an ability to go beyond these clichés for decades. They treat China creatively and with intelligence. They have also shown that Chinese visual themes, technologies, techniques, materials, and even clichés can be turned into innovative designs that treat China respectfully. The important question is how their ability is attained, as this the impetus for studying their ways of approaching Chinese culture.

### 1.5. Guiding assumption

In the literature, there are many discussions on how a hypothesis needs to be carefully defined before research can be planned and conducted. Peirce (1958) stated that a hypothesis is constructed and is an experimental process of inductive reasoning. Further, Bang et al. claimed that hypotheses limit the validity of the study and constitute the prospect of methodology (Bang, Krogh, Ludvigsen, & Markussen, 2012). Moreover, the research hypothesis relates to the methodology adopted to proceed with the research. The hypothesis for this study is explained in detail in [Chapter 3.1 Research design](#). In Bang et al. (2012), a constructive design research model was used in which they introduced a hierarchical structure in the process of constructive design research. I have borrowed their model to explain the relationship between the hypothesis, research question, and experiment. The central ideas in this model are that the hypothesis is considered a continuous process. This is framed by the overall research motivation, carried out in a continuous process centred around the experiments, and is closely linked to the research questions.

In my research, the clear motivation is to understand how Chinese culture can play a role in helping to derive potentially innovative design strategies. My area of specialism is graphic design; hence, it was used as an example from the design field. However, it should be emphasised that the findings can be generalised to suit other fields of design. Figure 1.5-1 outlines how the assumption model of Bang et al. (2012) is related to my research themes.

The initial assumption is the starting point. To advance the research, two contextual explanations became available after initial studies on the designers. Such explanations

helped the process of generalisation through further analyses of the interview results, to search for better explanations to reflect on and to re-define the real hypothesis. In designers' model, when the real hypothesis is overturned by 'experiments' (case studies and data analyses in this study), a new hypothesis may emerge (as shown in Figure 1.5-1).

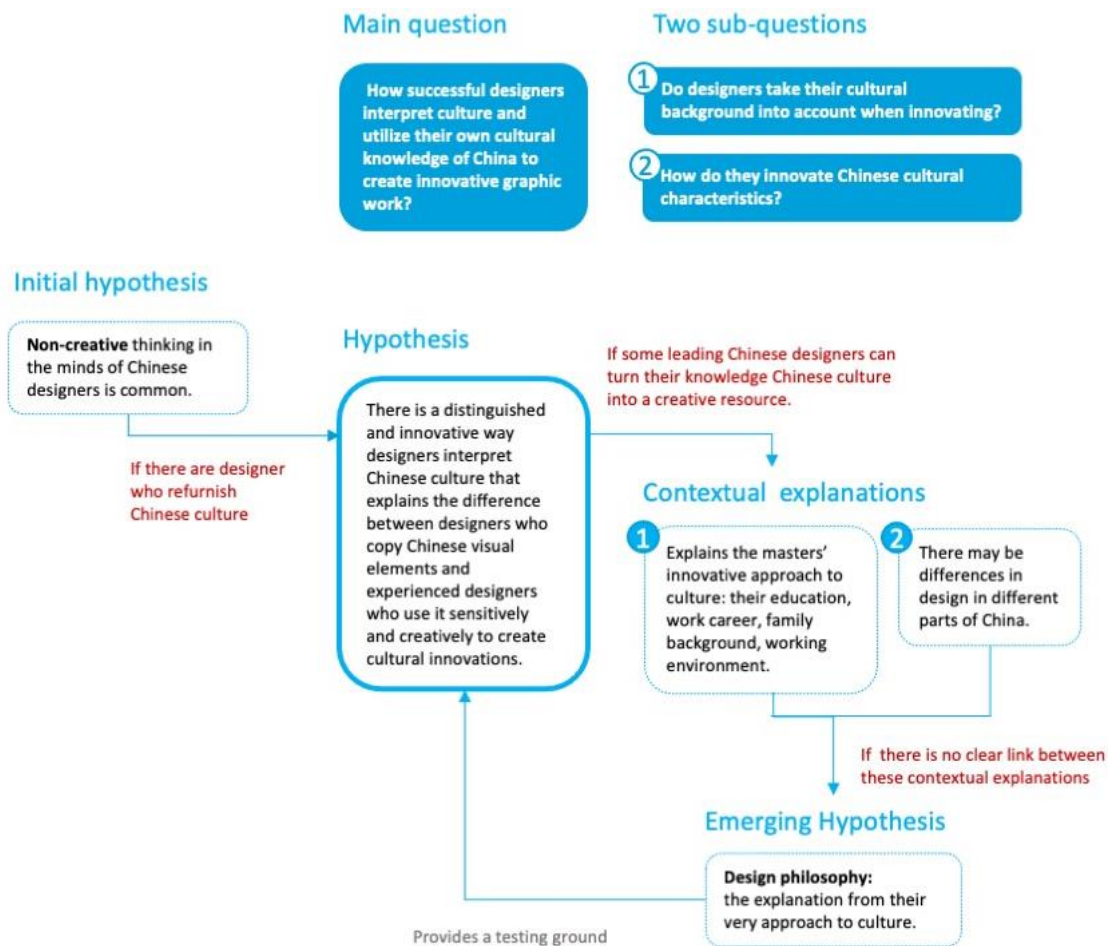


Figure 1.5-1 Research question and guiding assumption in this research

Initially, the researcher assumed that non-creative thinking is common in the minds of Chinese designers. Therefore, it was initially perceived as necessary to find out the broken links in their design processes to enhance their abilities in innovation for designing better products, systems, and services. However, this hypothesis changed as the study progressed. The researcher discovered many innovative ways in which

Chinese culture can become a creative component in the graphic design process and empower creativity into a visual strength, as demonstrated by those experienced designers who were interviewed and analysed. Therefore, it was necessary to proceed with a new hypothesis:

There is a distinguished and innovative way designers interpret Chinese culture that explains the difference between designers who copy Chinese visual elements and experienced designers who use it sensitively and creatively to create cultural innovations.

Figure 1.5-1 shows the generic process of how a real hypothesis emerges from an initial assumption and how such a process is related to the main research questions.

Accordingly, exploring how famous Chinese graphic designers interpret Chinese culture, how they use it in their graphic work, and finding out what explains their innovativeness became the focal points of this research. If there are designers who refurbish Chinese culture, then the initial hypothesis is wrong. However, if it is determined that some leading Chinese designers can turn their knowledge of Chinese culture into a creative resource, then the alternative hypothesis is correct: there are ways to avoid copying existing cultural forms and China does not have to be a cliché in design.

Both hypotheses resulted in an emerging hypothesis, which is also examined in this study. In terms of the initial analysis being based on secondary materials and interviews, two sets of contextual explanations for innovation are studied:

- 1) One set of studies examines if there is something contextual that explains the innovative approach of experienced designers to culture—whether it is their education, work career, family background, or working environment.
- 2) A larger contextual hypothesis divides China for a comparison, because it is an old civilization and there may be differences in design in different parts of China. To study this possible explanation of creativity, designers from Hong Kong and Mainland China are compared.

If there is no clear link between these contextual explanations, it is better to search for the explanation from their respective approaches to culture, which will be referred to as their design philosophy.

To judge the relative merits of these hypotheses, appropriate theories and data collections were required to understand how experienced designers define their design problems and identify constraints. In other words, this study focused on the work processes of experienced designers. Although unique and perhaps subjective, this provides a testing ground for the primary hypotheses. The focus on experienced designers also meant the study became time-consuming, as the first step was to gain intimate knowledge of the thinking processes and extensive bodies of work of the designers. This understanding also had to be contextualised to their respective working environments: the hyper-commercial world of Hong Kong and the rapidly modernising and expanding world of Mainland China.

## 1.6. The structure of this thesis

[Chapter 1](#) introduces the research from the starting point to the research question and objectives. [Chapter 2](#) presents the literature review related to culture, current innovations, tradition and modernity, states of designers in creativity, and the cultural innovation application process. The research design is described in [Chapter 3](#), including how to collect the data, how the data should be sorted and analysed, and reliability and validity checking.

[Chapter 4](#) presents a descriptive analysis based on the primary data collected from secondary materials and interviews with the experienced designers, which was employed to test the guiding assumptions—whether culture could be the significant factors that inspires designers to innovate. Further, the question of whether cultural interpretation could be an innovative approach is also discussed in [Chapter 4](#).

[Chapter 5](#) turns from a description into searching for explanations, including possible external reasons that might explain the innovative approaches of the experienced designers to Chinese culture, their concepts and inner thoughts, and internal causes, how to build a design philosophy that they use to guide their design work. [Chapter 6](#) presents an analysis and conclusions pertaining to the cultural interpretation framework. [Chapter 7](#) contains a summary of the results, the significance and limitations of the study, applications, and suggested future studies.



## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Culture as a resource for innovation

Chapter 1 provided the background of this study and presented the outline of the thesis. The major focus of this research is the tension that exists between tradition and innovation in the design process. Based on the background research, culture has always been the key point in graphic design, determining the visual strength of and contributing to innovative design work. Cultural inspiration and the design philosophy of experienced designers who can interpret culture skilfully can provide good lessons for young designers.

This section focuses on the current categories of innovation and supposed culture as innovative forms in design. Culture has always been a key point in graphic design, whether in the form of particular way of life, regional and global commercial cultures (usually American), or intellectual and artistic activities that are codified and rarefied by taste elites in art galleries and (ultimately) museums (Williams, 1985).

Looking back at the different forms of innovation, we can identify several arguments about the relationship between tradition and innovation (Freeman, 1995; Gusfield, 1967; Mikesell, 1978). Initially, innovation was considered an invention in people's minds, and technology-based innovation played an important role in the 1980s (Utterback, 1994). In addition, business model changes and new meanings (such as the unexpected appearance of product designs or different forms of the original function) were innovative methods in recent years. In terms of innovation in graphic design, we can also follow Rogers (1962) and trace communication channels and the

social system that creates these channels, which opens the possibility that innovation has roots outside the science, technology, and business models.

Innovations may simply be new meanings if we follow the argument of Verganti (2009) about design-driven innovation. Moreover, cultural innovation can be also found in folklore and crafts, where it adopts more subtle forms than in Verganti's study where innovation came from the application of practices from the art world to product design. The literature shows that graphic designers can innovate in many ways and most work closer to culture than the traditional theories of innovation suggest with their focus on science, technology, and commercial practices. As suggested in this section, the closer we approach graphic design practice the more seriously we may need to take culture as a source of innovation, which is the topic of subsequent sections (Summatavet, 2005; X. Xin, 2006).

#### 2.1.1. 'Innovation' as diffusion

The anthropologist Barnett (1953) stated that innovation is the result of a process, a new 'thought, action, or thing', from conception to realisation, 'that is qualitatively different from the existing form'. Sociologist Rogers (2010) further broadens the definition by referring to innovation as 'an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption' (Robertson, 1967). In his book *Diffusion of Innovations*, he proposed a theory that attempts to explain how and why new ideas and technologies spread. For him, diffusion is a social system that innovates the process of communicating between members through certain channels. The four main elements in the diffusion of innovation are innovation, communication channels, time, and a social system.

In contrast, an OECD publication entitled Co-operation and Development (1991) proposed that innovation is an iterative process that is initiated by the perception of new markets and/or service opportunities for technology-based inventions to achieve commercial success in terms of development, production, and marketing. This definition involves two important factors: [1] The innovation process involves inventing a new technological development, then adopting and diffusing the invention into the end user market; and [2] the innovation process is iterative in nature, automatically including the introduction of new innovations for the first time and the reintroduction of improved innovation. In view of the difference between innovation and the innovation process, this research mainly focuses on the innovative application of culture in graphic design. Accordingly, the definition of innovation in this research places more emphasis on the innovation process (i.e., communication channels and the social system in Roger's theory).

#### 2.1.2. Technological and economic interpretations of innovations

Innovation, creativity, and design are certainly the most used and abused words in business today, especially because excellence in these areas is widely recognised as being related to business success (Von Stamm, 2008). According to theoretical and empirical testing, varying degrees of novelty and discontinuities resulting from high innovation will change important factors in the design of new products (Freeman, 1994; Robertson, 1967; Song & Montoya-Weiss, 1998). Moreover, they are often categorised as different types to identify their innovative characteristics or degree of innovation (Garcia & Calantone, 2002).

Innovation differs from inventions by providing economic value and spreading beyond the discoverer (Garcia & Calantone, 2002). Initially, innovation only existed in science, chemistry, biology, and physics in early literature, which created new discoveries. Perhaps this is why the invention of electric lights and trains caused a sensation in the world. In the 1980s, technology-based innovation played an important role, as mentioned in the book *Mastering the Dynamics of Innovation* by MIT professor Utterback (1994). In recent years, the transformation of business models as a new innovative approach has also been considered design problem solving, although it still relies on technical or scientific innovation. However, good performance in the market is mainly based on the new relationship between customers and businesses. Apple's outstanding stock performance a few years ago is widely used as an example, as are companies such as Uber and Grab.

Many studies have shown that technological innovation can have a positive impact and improve the competitiveness of enterprises (Dierickx & Cool, 1989; Guan & Ma, 2003). For instance, the UK Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) argues that technological innovation is one of the driving forces of national competitiveness and has explored the use of incentives to encourage companies to develop and improve innovation (Yam, Guan, Pun, & Tang, 2004). There have also been a number of technological innovation applications in large enterprises. However, new technology can bring industrial discontinuities and new competitors, with the IBM-developed electric typewriter used as an example of a radical innovation (Utterback, 1994). However, the terminology varies among

researchers: Kleinschmidt and Cooper (1991) would label the typewriter technology evolution a moderate innovation, while Abernathy and Clark (1985) would call it a revolutionary innovation. Another example is the electric lamp designed by Edison, which displaced oil or gas lamps. Edison's company (GE) made the leap in fluorescents that provided the basis of their future development (Utterback, 1994). Another example is the Canon laser photocopier, which utilised digital signals that could be electronically processed, stored, or transmitted simultaneously to a number of distant slave printers (Garcia & Calantone, 2002).

Technological change is a key factor, both as a source of creativity for the growth of companies and as a disruptive force for that same company to be competitive (Utterback, 1994). Moreover, its importance is reflected in different countries. The development, diffusion, and implementation of technological innovation in Chinese enterprises have significantly improved the economic and entrepreneurial reforms of the past two decades (Guan & Ma, 2003). Similarly, the first phase of the Russian economic transition (from the beginning of the 1990s) encountered great difficulties, especially in the overall system of industrial research, design, and technological innovation. Further, Russia has struggled to create innovations that would turn it into global innovator ever since (Dynkin & Ivanova, 1998).

#### 2.1.3. Business model as innovation

Innovative business models can create new markets and allow companies to create and exploit new opportunities in existing markets (Amit & Zott, 2012). This

new environment increases the need to consider how to meet customer needs more shrewdly and how to benefit from the provision of new products and service values. Business innovation can occur in a number of ways. First, it can add novel activities, such as through forward or backward integration, as a new activity system content. Second, it can link activities in novel ways. This form of business model innovation is considered a new structure of activity systems. Third, it can change one or more parties that perform any of the activities. This form of business model innovation is a new activity system through governance (Teece, 2010).

Novel business models have been explicitly introduced into public awareness over the past decade. The driving factors included the growth of the emerging knowledge economy, the Internet and e-commerce, outsourcing and offshoring of many business activities, and restructuring of the financial services industry around the world (Teece, 2010). Similar logic has also applied to Uber and other taxi applications in recent years. Although the taxi industry's business model has existed for many years and has become stable, the new economic service model caused by the rental industry has led to major disruption of the industry across the world. It has changed the traditional sense of the taxi, whereby the customer has the initiative to call a taxi and the taxi driver waits in the road. The taxi program also allows drivers to have the initiative to find passengers (regardless of where they are); hence, the driver can find passengers more efficiently. This ensures their interactions are more convenient, improving passenger travel rates and driver capacity. Another kind of business model is evident in the sportswear

industry, in which sponsorship is a key component of today's business model. Nike, Adidas, Reebok, Canterbury, and other sponsors of football and rugby clubs and teams are providing packages, sponsorship money, and royalty streams from the sales of their products.

Although the emergence of innovative methods in different times and fields has substantially enriched researcher cognition, there is still no clear answer to the question of innovation in graphic design. Researchers have suggested some reasons for the gap with dialectical thinking. First, perhaps the different textures and materials for the print innovation has played a certain role, leading to the new experience of five human senses. Second, the emergence of new technologies, such as the transformation of printing technology from newspapers to smart phone applications, has changed people's reading habits. Third, corporate images and new brand concepts constantly appear and change. While these three factors, different textures, new technology and brand concepts, seem related to previous categories of innovation, there are still some concepts in graphic design that cannot be explained in terms of science, technology, business models, or new meanings. These doubts and blank areas have evoked the curiosity of researchers.

#### 2.1.4. Design innovation: innovation through meaning?

Related to design, Heskett (2002) proposed that utilitarian dimensions involve function and performance, and equally important dimensions involve signs, identities, and emotions (meaning). For example, both food and durable goods are meaningful. In the case of Nokia, the meaning of mobile phones changed

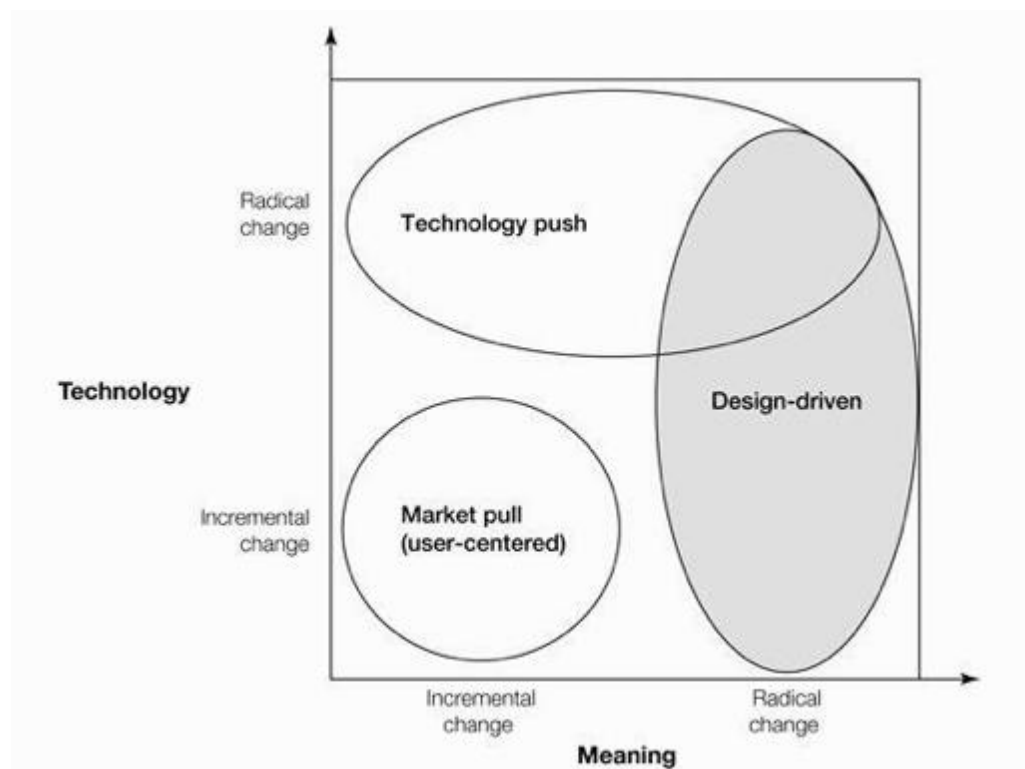
from the merchant's equipment into the general public products. Services are also using design as an innovative competence. There is a new significance to the shift, such as from traditional banks to online banking, from low-cost carriers to air travel, or from car sharing as a semi-public transportation system. Each product has its meaning, and sociological and anthropological research on consumption emphasises the role of people and their interactions in defining the symbolism and meaning of the product.

In addition, another new form of innovation has received scrutiny, especially in product design where performance is particularly prominent. This form of innovation maintains the original function but provides new meanings through design. From the success of Italian furniture products, the Metamorfosi Lamp, and Francfranc (the Japanese daily brand), it is clear that meaning is important in innovation. Moreover, even if it is more expensive than similar products with the same function, people are willing to pay for extra significance, a novel form, a surprising texture, or an unexpected colour.

The most important interpretation of design innovation in literature is probably from Verganti (2009), who insists there are two major innovations: radical innovation and incremental innovation. He used different case studies to demonstrate the implications of design-driven innovation in technology and design innovation, such as comparative game development companies (i.e., Sony, Microsoft, and Nintendo).



The modernist and rationalist manifesto tells us that form should follow function and meaning has always been a fundamental element in design innovation. In addition to market segmentation and industry-specific designs, all products have meaning, and these meanings are not limited to specific market segments. Extensive research in marketing and consumer behaviour has shown that the emotional and symbolic dimensions of consumption are as important as the utilitarian aspects emphasised in classical economic models (Verganti, 2009) (Figure 2.1-1).



*Figure 2.1-1 Technical innovation and meanings*

As an example, McDonald's changed the meaning of food, even though they serve similar food to their predecessors. It became a place where you can receive your food quicker while trusting it is safe, clean, and reliable. Similarly, Starbucks

changed the meaning of the coffee shop, from a place to buy coffee to a place where people meet and socialise—a home outside the home (Verganti, 2009).

However, Verganti's work was essentially based on Italian design of the 1990s (Figure 2.1-2), rather than taking a more general point of view. Accordingly, it is minimally applicable outside that context and the scope of innovation is substantially biased in design. Therefore, how designers innovate and inspire need will be further explained and explored in this research.



*Figure 2.1-2 Italian furniture to show meanings in innovation in Verganti's book*

## 2.2. Designers as innovators of culture

Verganti's analysis of semantic innovation in Italian design in the 1980s indicated some of the roles culture can adopt as a design resource. He persuasively demonstrated that designers can sometimes create innovation by interpreting culture and by bringing more culture into technology. While this interpretation has been influential in design literature, it also has several problems.

Some of the critiques are straightforward. Verganti builds on a very narrow understanding of innovation and sees it primarily in technological terms. His interpretation also trivialises design as a source of innovation by seeing it in semantic terms. In terms of research, the reasons for these flaws are easy to establish. His book builds on a special case (Italian design in the 1980s and early 1990s), which was based more on semantic reinterpretations than technical, social, or cultural innovations. However, generalising from this narrow base is another matter and goes against evidence from other (broader) innovation literature. His analysis is unnecessarily dramatic, and his selection of cases gives the idea that design-driven innovations are always like Mendini's collages—radical shifts of meaning. As his framework shows, this is only a part of the truth, because many innovations are incremental and barely noticeable.

The root cause of these problems is deeper. Verganti is an engineer who looks at design from the outside. His study builds on broad historical observations rather than a detailed analysis of how designers work in the studio. He mainly focuses on success stories in the marketplace, meaning the analysis leaves many gaps in some of the most

crucial sources of innovation familiar from the literature on creativity. These sources include the work processes, studio contexts, collections, lifestyle, and the social context of designers. While Verganti is aware of the problem, his answer is only partial.

One thing missing from the definitions in [Chapter 2.1](#) is the role culture and cultural knowledge play in innovation. This is crucial to graphic designers, who play with meanings but seldom innovate business processes, rarely innovate technologies, and practically never make innovations through science.

Culture is defined by the behaviour, beliefs, and traditions of social entities or communities, which are uniquely linked to history and the environment. Further, they are cultivated purposely to sustain the survival and identity of ethnic entities or groups (Edensor, 2002; Hsu, Lin, & Lin, 2011). Geertz (1973), an American anthropologist, stated 'Culture analysis is guessing at meanings, accessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses.' From this, it can be seen that the study of culture is complicated and needs collaborative analysis in time, space, or with people (Johnson, 1986). For example, people are central to any designs that change society into a better environment. It could be inferred that conducting design research or formulating designs always involves thinking of others (Dreyfuss, 2003; Krippendorff, 2007; Mattelmäki, Vaajakallio, & Koskinen, 2014; Norman, 2013, p. 8). In this research, it can be said that each designer's behaviour is limited by different factors (both external and internal). When some of these change, the outcomes of analysing each designer will be different, which will in turn make the framework completely different (Sosa & Gero, 2004).

Few researchers who are close to the design world have analysed innovation from inside. Accordingly, this section describes two PhD theses: one by Kärt Summatavet, an Estonian goldsmith (Summatavet, 2005), and one by a Chinese product designer and scholar, Professor Xin Xiangyang (X. Xin, 2006). Kärt's research topic was 'Folk tradition and Artistic inspiration', and she aimed to provide artistic inspiration by thoroughly researching a woman's life in traditional Estonia Jewellery and Crafts, as told by Anne and Roosi. While 'Product innovation in a cultural context' is Xin's research topic, his goal of research was to develop a method that can be applied to Chinese product design and development. It would appear that Xin's research had more reference value to me since the researcher also paid attention to cultural interpretation and Chinese factors. However, although Kärt preferred to conduct the research from an artist's perspective and concentrated on Estonian culture, her complete and systematic methods and theoretical bases were equally meaningful to this research. A comparative analysis of these two main theses is presented in the following paragraphs (Collins, Joseph, & Bielaczyc, 2004).

#### 2.2.1. Xin on Product Innovation in a Cultural Context

The PhD thesis by Professor Xin (Carnegie Mellon University) is a particularly relevant study of designers as innovators of culture. The goals of the research were to develop methods and tools for decoding the complexity of Chinese traditions with a formal cultural-based product development process and to understand how cultural knowledge can be transformed into contemporary product designs. Xin insisted that people could not appropriately apply or meaningfully interpret Chinese culture, although an increasing number of

designs have used Chinese culture to attract customer attention or win favour with foreigners. Knowing about Chinese culture requires extensive knowledge and profound scholarship. Therefore, it is not easy for designers who did not major in cultural history or related culture research to integrate fantastic cultural elements in their designs. Accordingly, Xin's research started with a comprehensive summary and classification of Chinese culture (Figure 2.2-1).

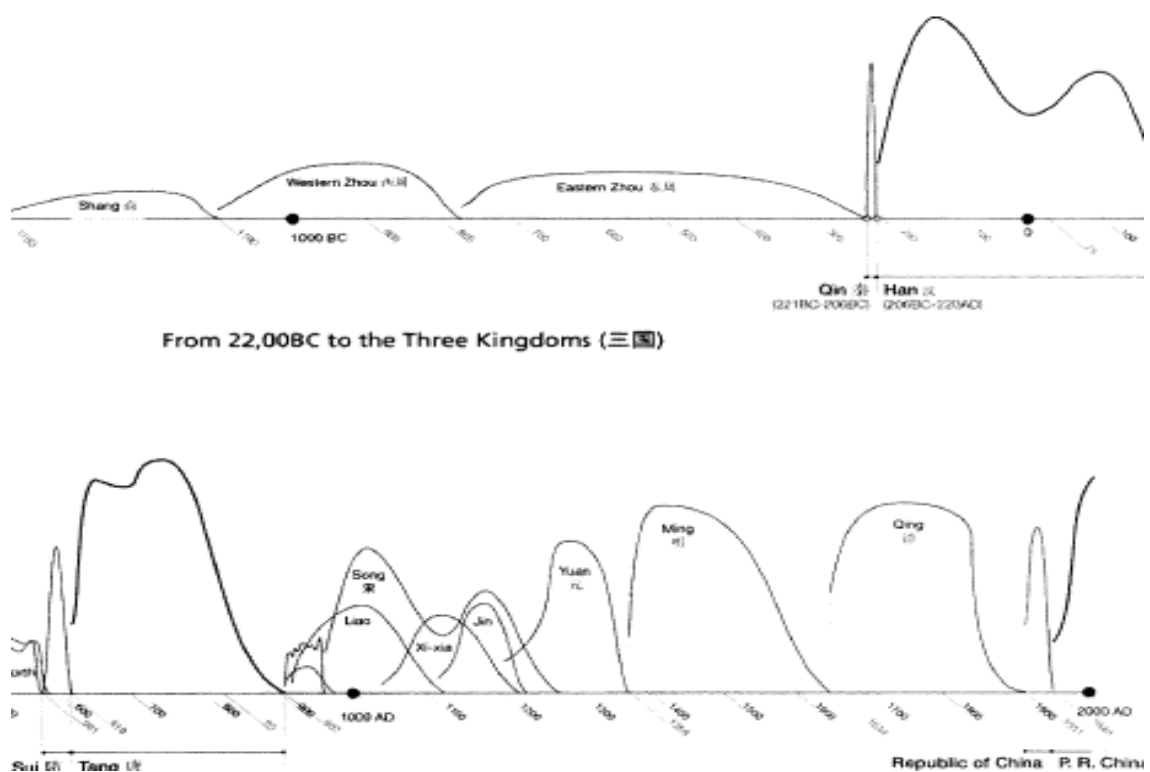


Figure 2.2-1 Xin used a diagram to show cultural influences (X. Xin, 2006)

Different methods were employed to correspond to different research steps in Xin's research. In the first phase, a literature review, observations, interviews, field trips, and watching documentary films were all employed to gain background knowledge and to collect materials for creating a Chinese atmosphere. The literature review mainly focused on Chinese artefacts (The

history of Chinese crafts and philosophy on Chinese Art of Crafts), Chinese behaviour (The wisdom of China and India, customer behaviour, and culture) and product development (Creating Breakthrough Products and Product design and development). Some authoritative bibliography about Chinese crafts and history was also researched. The second phase of the analysis relied on mostly qualitative methods to connect the fragmented cultural facts, to interpret the gained knowledge and build a solid knowledge base for the subsequent effort of developing methodologies. The final phase focused on creating cultural products and developing methods and tools for interpreting cultural artefacts and behaviour. Mapping and diagramming were extensively employed as methods in this phase since this allows easy understanding and sharing of information. In addition, case studies were chosen to prove and test the developed methods and tools.

For the theoretic model in this research, the concept of cultural-based innovation was defined as developing products with a visual and conceptual reflection of the cultural backgrounds of people. The aim was to give products cultural identities that are appropriate to the culture contexts. Criteria (or guidelines) for product concept generation need to be developed by tools, methods, and a process from the abstract cultural knowledge transformation to actionable culture insights. XIN says. In addition, culture was specially defined in the first phase of the research—influential traditions of the development of contemporary lifestyles and cultural behaviours that affect product choices and the way customers use the products. A series of tools or diagrams to evaluate

culture value were listed, including tools for identifying influential factors of interpreting culture behaviour, culture product initiatives, or a culture positioning matrix.

Xin's thesis is divided into seven chapters, with the first two proposing the task of culture-based innovation and a method with which it can be summarised. Interpreting traditions concluded Chapters 3 and 4, which were about understanding traditions and interpreting cultural artefacts. Compared to understanding conventions in different perspectives, understanding people that exhibited culture behaviour in Chapter 5 was equally important. Before understanding cultural behaviour (to understand the context of reactions), the motives for the behaviour (and the resulting new behaviour) were required. The framework of dominant, emergent, and residual cultural behaviours provided a new way of understanding the dynamic relationships between different behaviours. Finally, formal product development was conducted in the final two chapters. The goal was to create culturally sensitive products that could be evaluated by human-centred design theory and a case study.

### 2.2.2. Kärt Summatavet's study of folk artists as innovators in Estonia

#### *Research methods*

Kärt's Summatavet's study about tradition and innovation among folk artists in Estonia is exemplary in terms of its methods. It was a folkloristic study that focused on two traditional craftswomen of the Liivinmaa region of Estonia: Anne and Roos. She studied their knowledge of traditional Estonian



mythology and culture, and being a skilled jewellery designer herself, she used knowledge learned in three exhibitions that focused on cultural symbolism in three stages of a woman's life: girlhood, maturity, and old age. Participant observations and comparative research methods were the main methods used in the study. Her ethnographic folkloristic method proceeded from a human being, her achievements, and thinking (which provided her creative artist research material) to the ideas and content in her exhibitions. A careful recording of folklore enabled her to check facts and avoid merging the researcher's ideas and participant information into a mixture that was more than traditional.

The aim of Kärt's fieldwork was to engage with talented women belonging to a traditional community. Anne and Roosi's expertise and their individual attitudes towards their tradition required long and close cooperation that continued outside the framework of material collecting and fieldwork. Drawing and measuring were mostly conducted in museum collections. With the disappearance of traditional costumes, we are dependent on museum collections. However, using fieldwork as a method gave Kärt (as an artist) a chance and the confidence to take new paths in her work. The knowledge obtained in the fieldwork triggered a deeper interest in the bearers of tradition.

Her work built on a long methodical tradition in folklore and anthropology. According to Lévi-Strauss (2008),

'The aim of ethnologist is to try to put himself/herself in the place of the people from another culture, to understand the essence and the rhythm

of their aspirations, to comprehend an epoch or a culture as a meaningful whole.'

Moreover, Honko (1998) insisted that it is no less important to study the feelings, opinions, and behaviour associated with these projects. The process of Kärt's fieldwork created a connection with other courses in the lives of people and objects, which is a precise base for understanding the collected data and for explaining the emotional impulses that inspired the artist. The visible and audible intellectual exchange between the artist and the informant has continued beyond the fieldwork, acquiring more mature characteristics. Anne and Roosi's way of thinking has deepened Kärt's creative process. By combining fieldwork and the artist's project, both artistic inspiration and the ability to synthesise are needed.' tells Kärt.

According to Kärt's experience of fieldwork, women in traditional communities use at least two methods in their handicrafts. One method depends on ready-made models—making a precise copy of an existing pattern. The other method involves spontaneity, where the actual pattern is changed, some details are cast aside, and new elements are added. Whereas fieldwork in cultural anthropology usually deals with the studies of others, modern folklore and ethnology has shifted towards studying the researchers' own ethnic groups. This period of waiting and the fact that the collected material was studied repeatedly provided preconditions for the ripening and development of fieldwork and the emergence of new questions.

Honko (1998) found that our knowledge of any traditional phenomenon is derived from two sources: members of the studied traditional community and the researcher's standing outside this community. Kärt developed a close relationship with two bearers of tradition in Estonia. With Anne, the relationship was close and personal, and recording her experiences was almost a side activity. With Roosi, a warm and friendly formalised 'working contact' developed. In the course of her research, Kärt learned about Roosi's collection of handicrafts and her knowledge of Kihnu traditions, documenting both before creating her own interpretation of the meanings of symbolism for the woman's life cycle.

Traditional issues accompanied the women throughout their life, including family relationships, local customs, and even the hierarchy of different patterns, all of which inspired their interpretation of culture. Kärt's relationship with Anne and Roosi built on their personalities and their natural way of self-expression without scientific limitation. The way of thinking and the model of self-expression suggested by these two women helped Kärt in her efforts to build the knowledge necessary for interpreting folkloristic texts. Further, this new knowledge was then incorporated into her own creative process.

#### *The researcher as an artist*

Kärt is a skilled jewellery designer whose work can be found in both private collections and museums. She analysed the relationship between modern jewellery and tradition using her creativity and self-expression, partly because

researchers and artist-artisans have different approaches to traditional material and different aims. There are two reasons why an artist conducts research: to collect information about handicraft techniques and applications, and to relate the research results to her work (or objects) that need promoting. However, the work for a researcher is to discover the authentic part of the tradition and present the results using the approaches of previous research.

To become involved with the interpretation process in a traditional community and to reveal more information as accurately as possible, Kärt almost became a family member. However, she also knew it was necessary to maintain a distance as an artist-researcher and avoid interfering in the self-analysis of the inner memory structures of members of a traditional community. As an artist who represents a culture that is partly familiar to her (and partly unfamiliar), she also needed to maintain a distance from Anne and Roosi. Honko (1998) noted that the definition of 'other' means that the wish to know comes from an environment of the studied phenomenon. This created an extraordinary and crossing subordination relationship, forming the precondition of a stylish research outcome.

Kärt mapped ill-understood Estonian symbology that is based on both tradition and following her own inspiration. Materials and technologies should not limit the creative freedom of an artist. Moreover, an artist who can understand the influence of an instructor on creative work better than a member of a traditional community is well equipped to create folklore art, even if their primary intention is to create knowledge. Lévi-Strauss and Sisask (2001) noted

that fieldwork (or every chance of scientific self-improvement through research) will add new didactic-pedagogical and cognitive levels to the artist's existing knowledge. Therefore, an artist becomes the means and the mediator to whom it is possible to interpret one's culture reality and the system of values during the research.

### *Innovation in folk culture*

As explained previously, an artist should not become involved in the interpretation process because the models of the relationship between an interviewer and interviewee can vary. Contemporary folklore studies have shifted from studying text to studying context and performance and from text analysis to ethnographic research. Anne and Roosi were intensive and creative personalities, and the relationship between them and the artist defied habitual conversation models. Further, the cooperation between the bearer of the tradition and the artist made it possible for the researcher to see the ideas shaping the nature of inspiring traditional phenomena through the eyes of the two women. The artist–researcher and the subjects seemed to have a dialogue of opposites in the fieldwork.

However, when the researcher operated with analytic terms, her attitude created a methodologically significant distance to her informants. The subjects possess meanings that have the weight of reality, whereas the scholar's approach to the culture of the 'other' will remain abstract and hypothetical. Moreover, its connection to those cultural artefacts they perceive and describe remain foreign. Her job was to translate (not transmit) culture.

### 2.2.3. Towards a definition of innovation

The definition used in this study was inspired by the experienced designers. This can be called culture-based innovation from the perspective of their cultural cognition, cultural interpretation in design work, and some external influencing factors. An example of these factors is the effect of exotic growth experiences and different cultural backgrounds on learning, which have been determined (by people such as Henry Steiner) as important in gaining international recognition. Traditional Chinese philosophy (Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism) or the concept of harmony between man and nature have had a significant impact on KAN Tai Keung's harmonious and 'full of Chinese flavour' design ideas. These philosophical ideas behind their design work are unique. In other words, this is the breakthrough in innovation in graphic design. At the end of the study, there will be more interviews and knowledge gained from design gurus to determine the final definition of cultural innovation.

After many failed experiences and through comparative studies of successful designs, KAN Tai Keung found that all his previous work involved blindly following trends in the West without any local cultural elements. Being Chinese, he cannot be better than Western designers at mastering the essence of Western culture. Therefore, after more years of experience and accumulation, he found that the designer of inherent cultural heritage in the design of the performance is extremely important. An inexperienced designer may simply design using the basic rules to meet customer needs, without achieving any unique goals. It is difficult to study and explore the design philosophy hidden in successful design

work without a deep understanding of the designers. Hence, the researcher plays the role of informant to use theoretical methods that transfer knowledge from different aspects of experienced designers.

#### 2.2.4. Designers as interpreters of culture

The analyses of Kärt and Xin help to fill the gap in studies such as Verganti (2009). In particular, Kärt shows in detail how craftswomen work with the tension between tradition and innovation. For skilled craftswomen, tradition is both an essential resource and a source of strength. Moreover, the best craftswomen also play with tradition. Although they are familiar with tradition, they also change it, creating small-scale innovations that keep it alive. These innovations emanate from many types of interpretive acts, such as intimate knowledge of the customer's circumstances. If Kärt is correct, knowledge of culture can be a significant design resource. More importantly, it is an interpretive resource. Culture does not guide Estonian traditional goldsmiths or craftsperson like gravity pulls apples from a tree. Knowledge of culture is an interpretive resource that needs to be built into design (Moalosi, Popovic, Hickling-Hudson, & Kumar, 2005).

As a target group in research, designers should be treated subjectively. As mentioned in Kärt's research, the roles of informant, artist, and bearer are different, meaning it is impossible for a designer to think in the same way as a researcher. Even if they successfully find inspiration for their design work, it can be difficult for them to explain how their design processes are formulated explicitly. This is because all the experienced designers' ways of working are

characterised by independent styles that can be surprisingly simple or sophisticated for others (Defazio, 2008). Deep engagement through interviews and analysis, supported by careful pre-studies of their background and progressive process in their professional careers, can reveal important information. This can be used to generate and generalise design wisdoms or styles into understandable knowledge, which that can help others in their design studies or practice.

The idea that designers are interpreters has a history in design research. It has been articulated particularly well in empathic design, a tradition that Kärt knows from her studies in the University of Art and Design in Helsinki. In empathic design, the idea of interpretation built on a version of symbolic interactionism by Herbert Blumer (1986), which is an interpretive sociological tradition:

‘sees meaning as something that is created by people interacting with others in the world. Symbolic interactionism is based on three main principles: people act upon and towards things according to the meanings they have for them; these meanings arise from interaction with other people; and these meanings are handled in and modified by people in an interpretive process’ (Battarbee & Koskinen, 2005; Blumer, 1986).

These principles have resulted in a significant research program (Mattelmäki et al., 2014). However, of more importance to this thesis, they show that to understand how designers use culture as a creative resource we have to study the meanings they attribute to it when interacting with clients and other designers. Since this study focuses on some of the best-known Chinese graphic



designers, it is important to stress that they are the source of these interpretations. A student in the classroom understands meaning primarily from clichés and works through them by interacting with other students and teachers. However, the leaders of the design profession have surpassed that stage and have built their own philosophy that guides their work. As argued later in this book, to understand the ways in which experienced designers work with Chinese themes we have to acknowledge their approach to design is singular. To understand their innovative use of traditional Chinese themes and motifs, we should understand their history and design philosophy. They do not repeat Chinese themes mindlessly. Like the craftswomen studied by Kärt, they interpret themes with sensitivity and bring them to new heights when they are successful.

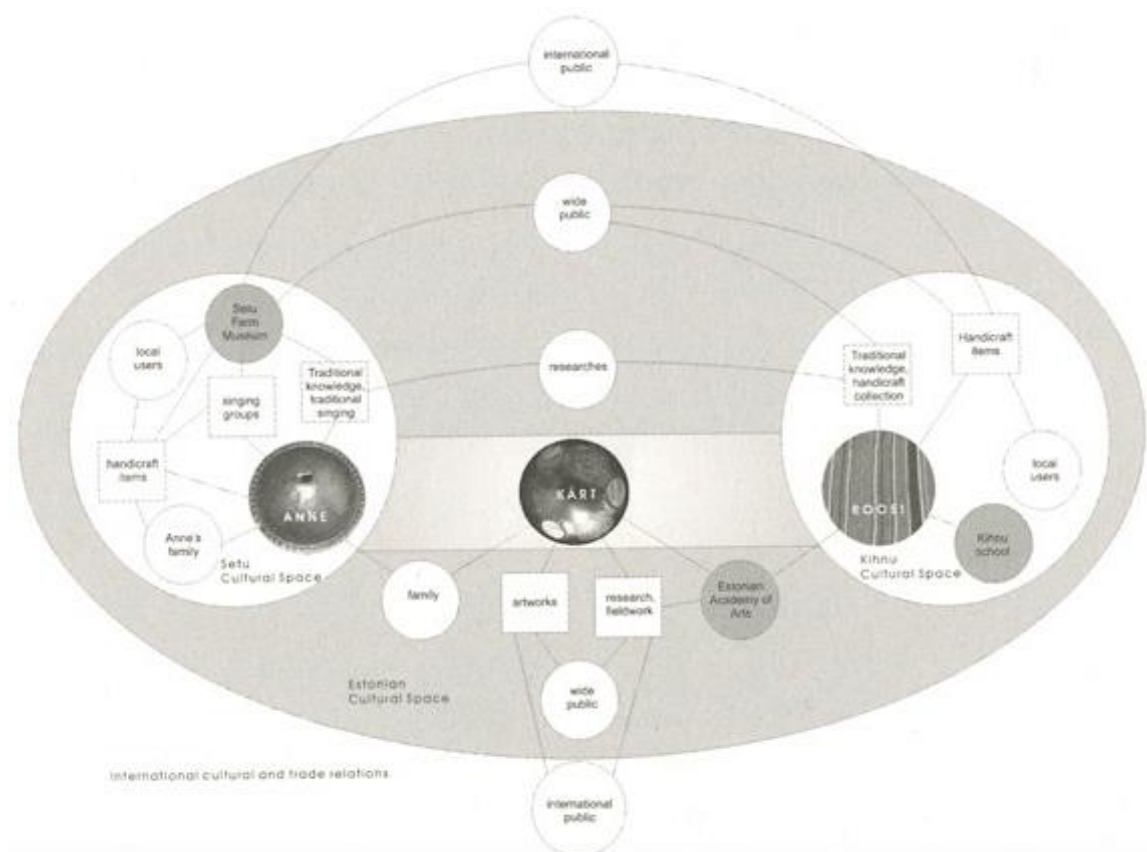


Figure 2.2-2 The bearers of tradition and user groups (Summatavet, 2005)

These insights should also be applied in this research. For example, the interviewees in this study are experienced designers with rich experience and sophisticated imagination. Although I am a graphic designer and knew the history of her interviewees in detail, I maintained a distance in many ways. For example, I did not ask the designers any questions using references from the research method or methodology. This was because the designers clearly know the core principles and methods of the design process and I did not want to make them second-guess the academic meanings of terms (as they do not have this type of constructive knowledge in their minds).

For Kärt, her fieldwork in the form of dialogue helped her to find what was inspirational for the artist in the world of a woman belonging to a traditional community. The knowledge of the women made it clear that ornaments have a deeper meaning and are only seemingly simple and decorative. Relating to my research, the secondary document collection during interviews with designers served the same purpose. Without photographs of their working environment, their sketches, or their favourite issues, research will remain hypothetical and strong emotions in documented interview knowledge. My methodological choices will be revisited in Chapter 4.

### 2.3. Cultural innovation application processes

Based on the hypothesis of this study, traditional culture can be used as an important element to strengthen visual power, to the designer's point of view to put forward a series of research-related issues. Designers can use visual language to express how they derive inspiration from tradition, how they judge the relationship between

tradition and modernity, or how they perceive new technology. It is also the main objectives of this study to understand the details of work by experienced designers and their ways of thinking. This will help in understanding how well they have made breakthroughs in evolving from tradition to modernity.

A model for the decision process of cultural innovation from a designer's perspective is employed in this research, which is borrowed from the innovation–decision process model presented by Rogers (1962) in his book *Diffusion of Innovations*. Roger's conceptualised model consists of five stages: 1) knowledge, 2) Persuasion, 3) Decision, 4) Implementation, and 5) Confirmation. It is a process from the initial understanding of innovation to the formation of an attitude towards innovation, to the decision of adoption or rejection, to the implementation of new ideas, and to the confirmation of this decision. According to the hypothesis of this research (experienced graphic designers approach Chinese culture in sensitive and creative ways), understanding the culture values and the relevant knowledge in the field of graphic design can be considered the first stage.

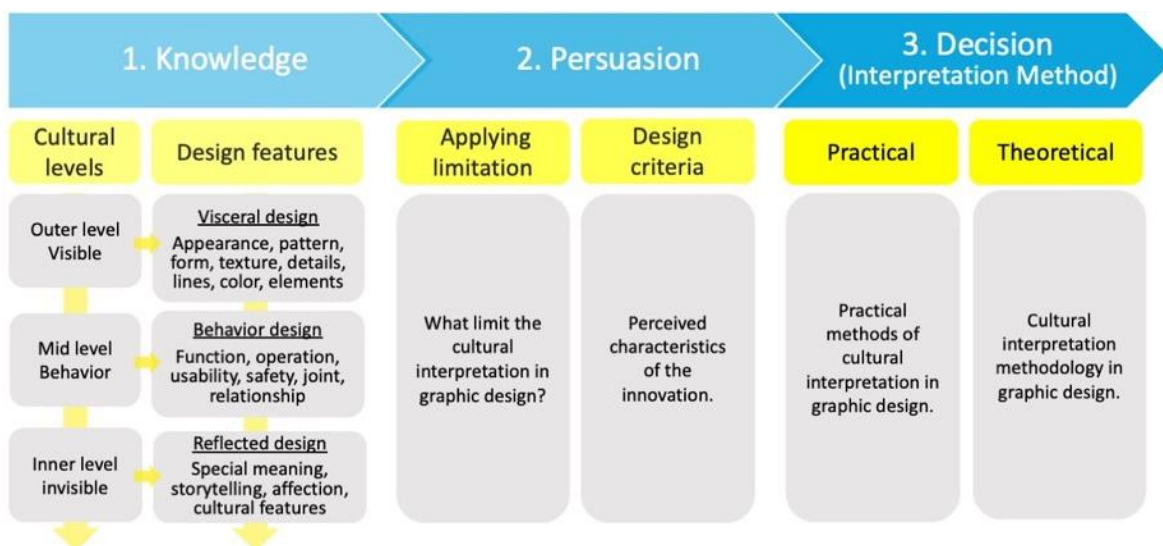


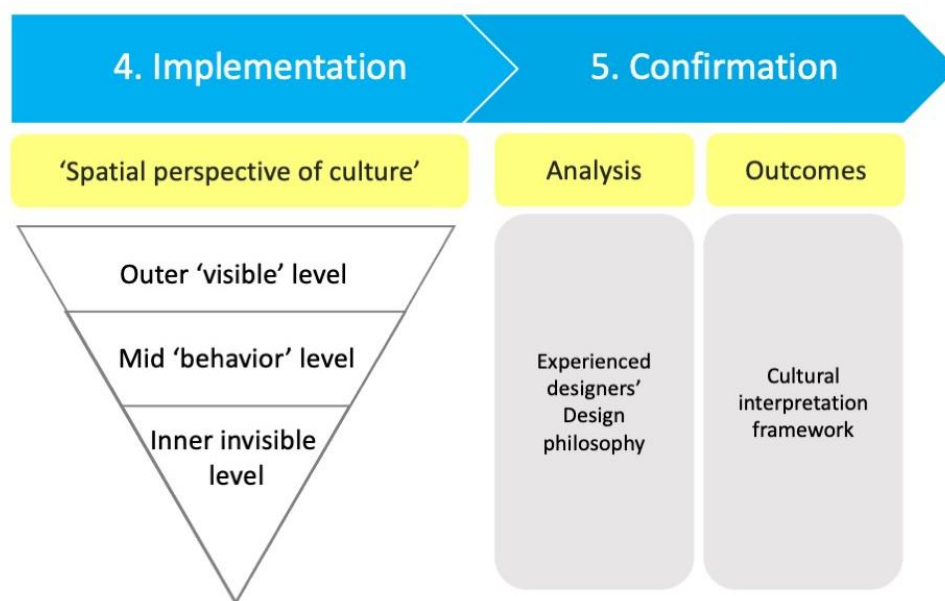
Figure 2.3-1 A model for Chinese Cultural innovation decision process in graphic design (Dahl, 2004; Leong & Clark, 2003; Rogers, 1962)

To understand culture application rationally, Hsu et al. (2011) proposed a framework that listed design features corresponding to different cultural levels for studying cultural objects in the knowledge stage. However, the three cultural levels in Hsu's framework (tangible, behaviour, and intangible), which was summarised from Leong and Clark (2003), were based on cultural knowledge of new design thinking in product design. Hence, it is not directly applicable to graphic design. As nearly all problems in graphic design are communicated visually, the tangible and intangible levels were replaced by visible and invisible in this research (Figure 2.3-1). The terms visible and invisible were proposed by Dahl (2004), which the researcher considered directly relevant to this study.

In the persuasion stage, the attitudes of experienced designers to cultural innovation should be learned from the perspectives of objectivity and subjectivity. Objectively, it is necessary to examine the limits of their cultural interpretation processes in the field of graphic design. Subjectively, the question of what their perceived characteristics or design criteria are should be answered. In the third stage (decision), by analysing the interview data and secondary material (which will be introduced in detail in Section 3.3), the cultural interpretation methods are introduced theoretically and practically. These methods are discussed in the context of a model of 'spatial perspective of culture', which was proposed by X. He (1992).

For the fourth stage, Roger's model refers to the adoption or rejection of innovation by individuals (or other decision-making departments), which is termed implementation. This was not involved in this study because the purpose is not to

create new designs following the styles of experienced designers. Instead, the cultural interpretation methods summarised in the decision-making stage are used to analyse the work of experienced designers to understand how they innovate by utilising culture values and cultural resources. In the research of (Leong & Clark, 2003, p. author year), with rich design experience and relevant experiments, they used a cultural space perspective model to show how culture integrates into product design. Their model provided ideas for this study on how to show cultural interpretation methods using the analyses of related works. The final stage is to confirm the cultural interpretation methods in the decision stage (Figure 2.3-2).



*Figure 2.3-2 A model for Chinese Cultural decision process in graphic design (X. He, 1992; Leong & Clark, 2003; Rogers, 1962)*

The method made it possible to test emerging hypotheses in several ways. The pilot study was conducted in Hong Kong with two designers: Henry Steiner and Kan Tai Keung. After analysing these two interviews to identify possible themes, the study expanded to Mainland China. By comparing the result from the Hong Kong study to

those from the Mainland, I was able to determine whether the difference between these two contexts is relevant. Thus, the study proceeded in phases.

By comparing the designers based in Hong Kong and Mainland China, I could also learn about any differences between them. For instance, after learning that the first two interviewees considered their training and some parts of their philosophy relevant for understanding their work, I formulated a hypothesis suggested philosophy is relevant for understanding how designers navigate the line between tradition and innovation. Several other possible hypotheses were also created, including the location of the designers and external factors such as teachers, customers, marketing needs, educational levels, and growth background. By treating these as hypotheses, the study proceeded to determining which ones survived the test against new cases. The results are presented in [Chapter 7.1](#).

## 2.4. Tradition and modernity

### 2.4.1. Modernity in Asia

Modernity is a unique mode of civilisation that is the opposite of tradition. It has spread from the West to the rest of the world and strengthens itself in a homogenous form (Baudrillard, 1987). Modernity has traits rather than laws. It emerged in Europe during the 16th century Renaissance period and reached its full meaning in the 19th century during the Industrial Revolution (Eisenstadt, 2017). At first, modernity was considered Western because it was ostensibly derived from Western processes and inspired by Western cultural traditions

(Beasley, 1980). However, in Asia, it emerged around the end of the 19th century in Japan under the reign of Emperor Meiji.

According to Wajiro (2015), the Japanese designer, scholar and educator renowned as the father of 'modernology', Japanese society during Meiji's lifetime underwent enormous changes as the state and its industry were restructured to develop a modern consumer economy. Starting in the Meiji era (1868–1912), Japanese art and design progressed through three distinct periods, from a booming economy under Meiji, to the hardships of the Great Kanto earthquake in 1923, followed by World War II in the 1940s. The first period encompassed the nationalist renaissance of Japanese crafts and art from the 1870s to the 1890s. The second period followed the Paris Exposition of 1900, when the old Japanese methods were largely replaced by new, more systematic ideas of design and production. In addition, different forms of modernist thinking were introduced to the art world. Western European art also experienced rapid changes, and there were multiple aesthetics, such as those of Renoir and Cézanne, and movements, such as Fauvism, cubism, expressionism, Dadaism and abstractionism (Wang, 2002). The third period began in the 1920s and extends to the present, during which Japan experienced reconstruction after the earthquake and World War II. Functional design, the core concept of Bauhaus, was introduced to Japan with the development of modern design (Moholy-Nagy, 2012).

In the 1930s, the concept of Bauhaus and Russian constructivism was brought into the public view through exhibitions and poster designs by Japanese artists

and designers who had studied in Germany and the Soviet Union (Wajiro, 2015). In Wajiro's view, due to the rapidly changing economic environment, Japanese design philosophy is mainly derived from the viewpoint of Western philosophy, which he considered undesirable. He proposed that design concepts should ideally be based on people's daily lives. Beasley (1980) proposed that the Japanese distinguish tradition from modernity by their past rather than by the traditions of Western countries. Modernity is imported, and Japanese designers have been able to preserve their own traditions and also incorporate Western modernisation.

However, in East Asia, China's modernisation is lagging behind that of Japan, begging the question of how modernity can progress in China. According to Dirlik (2002), Confucianism is the historical source of the Chinese national identity, and an obstacle to the development of the Chinese state. For the Chinese, legitimate rule depended not only on law but also on ethics: the emperor's power and status had to be rooted in Confucian traditions. The Japanese, although heavily inspired by Confucianism, never accepted this argument (Beasley, 1980). Confucianism is the product of a combination of mainstream thought and contemporary beliefs, such as the traditional ideas of responsibility, loyalty and filial piety, which originated from a combination of Confucianism and feudal rule (Weber & Gerth, 1953). Although Confucianism is an important aspect of Chinese traditional culture, it makes it difficult for China to accept new things, and thus, to some extent, hinders the modernisation process. For this reason, Confucianism was condemned by Chinese people and Chinese scholars for more



than half a century. Its ideology gradually disappeared as China became modern, until Confucianism again gained attention and began to be revived in the 1980s with the cultural awakening of the Orient (Dirlik, 1995).

On a global scale, Chinese modernity is a controversial topic. The different experiences of modern people result from different cultural politics whereby the conquest of modernity is the ultimate reward. China's (or more broadly, East Asia's) claims on modernity have played an important role in undermining European-centred universalist claims on modernity, forcing people to rethink the relationship between culture and modernity (Dirlik, 2002). As in Japan, the development of modern design in China is based on the preservation and protection of its own traditional culture, which is completely different from traditional Western modernist thinking. Nevertheless, China has been greatly influenced by the development of modernity in Japanese design.

#### 2.4.2. The value of tradition in design

In the previous discussion on Kärt's research, tradition was identified as an important term when studying culture in art and design. In his book *The Invention of Tradition*, noted historian Hobsbawm (2012) cites reliable sources to answer some important questions about tradition. These questions include: What is the definition of tradition? How is tradition distinguished from custom or convention? What is the meaning of learning tradition? Hobsbawm defined tradition as 'invented tradition', referring to traditions that have been invented, constructed and formally established, versus traditions that have emerged or become established over a short time. The following two characteristics distinguish

tradition from customs, routines and conventions. First, unlike customs, the goals and characteristics of tradition are immutable. The relation of these traditions to the past brings certain fixed activities (such as repetitive ones) and implies continuity with the past. Second, unlike conventions and routines, tradition has significant ritual or symbolic functions.

Historians have discovered that invented tradition can be found in any era and region, and can be facilitated by three important factors: 1) a social model, meaning a new social model to which old traditions cannot adapt; 2) institutional carriers and communicators, which dated traditions are not adaptable or flexible enough to accommodate; and 3) considerable change in the demand or supply side (Hobsbawm, 2012, pp. 6-8). Correspondingly, when traditions are changed due to the emergence of a new purpose, two aspects are retained and adjusted to maintain a connection with the previous tradition: the old use is adjusted for the new model, and the old material is used to construct a new form (Hobsbawm, 2012, p. 10). In relation to the present study, the changes to traditions and innovative inventions are equally applicable to design. As described in the previous section, the arrival of modernity (influenced by the West) has changed our model of civilisation, and its concept is opposed to tradition (Baudrillard, 1987). Yet, the immutability of old design traditions has always been retained in our lives. To adapt to the new social civilisation model, the tradition of relating new inventions to old traditions appears in the new design concepts.

Japan has retained well-preserved traditions while embracing modern design. For example, the posters in **Figure 2.4-1** were designed for a zoo in Japan to promote

cherry blossom viewing activities. They were designed by the famous Japanese company BAU, and the poster designs are deeply rooted in the hearts of Japanese people. In the context of Japanese culture, it is not difficult to see the influence of ukiyo-e artworks from the end of the 18th century when ukiyo-e was in its heyday (Kobayashi, 1997, p. 91). Figure 2.4-2 shows three representative works: a 1794 woodblock print of kabuki actor *Ōtani Oniji III* as *Yakko Edobei* in the play *The Colored Reins of a Loving Wife* (*Koi nyōbō somewake tazuna*) by Tōshūsai Sharaku; *Beauty Looking Back*, painted by Hishikawa Moronobu in the 17th century; and the 1793 woodblock print *Three Beauties of the Present Day* (*Toji san bijin*) by Kitagawa Utamaro. Although the posters in Figure 2.4-2 do not directly replicate the ukiyo-e designs, the vivid eyes, movement and positioning of the vivacious animals show their influence.



Figure 2.4-1 Cherry blossom viewing activities poster designed by BAU  
(Retrieved from <https://www.digitaling.com/articles/36734.html>)



*Figure 2.4-2 Ukiyo-e artworks from Japan*  
 (Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukiyo-e>)

Ukiyo-e, or ‘pictures of the floating world’ is an art style that incorporates two genres, woodblock printing and painting, which were popular in Japan from the late 17th to late 19th centuries (Harris, 2012, p. 9). Ukiyo-e depicts geishas, sumo wrestlers, landscapes with ancient buildings and folk tales, along with flora, fauna and erotic scenes. It reflects the prosperity of life, scenery and entertainment in Edo (the old name for Tokyo) and encompasses all aspects of traditional Japanese life (Harris, 2012). Woodblock printing was the main form of ukiyo-e that targeted citizens on the lowest rung of the social ladder. Originally, ukiyo-e artists were influenced by the compositional principles and painting style of classical Chinese paintings. Later, these artists rejected China’s influence and gradually formed a style specific to Japan (Penkoff, 1964, pp. 9-11). The defining features of most ukiyo-e prints are sharp, bold and flat lines, and the line element is dominant in both monochrome and polychrome printings (Bell, 2004, p. IV; Michener, 2013, pp. 11-12). However, these characteristics of ukiyo-e are not shown directly on the poster in Figure 2.3-2. How then does the ukiyo-e culture factor into and inspire expression in design?



*Figure 2.4-3 (left) Cherry blossom viewing activities poster  
(right) Three beauties of the present day by Kitagawa Utamaro*

Taking the poster of the monkeys as an example, the ukiyo-e works cited in it were drawn and printed by Kitagawa Utamaro, one of the most respected ukiyo-e artists known for his meticulous close-up portrayals of beautiful women's heads and torsos (**Figure 2.4-3 right**). His work was also well known in France and influenced the European Impressionists (Ives, 1974). In the above sections, 'the spatial perspective of culture' model in design (**Figure 2.3-2**), based on the analysis and conclusions of Dahl (2004) and the theories of Leong and Clark (2003) and Rogers (2010), was conducted to analyse how traditional Japanese culture was incorporated in the modern poster design. The spatial perspective of culture model comprises three levels of traditional culture in graphic design: the visible outer level, the behavioural middle level and the invisible inner level. The poster design of the monkey can be analysed based on these levels.

The visible outer level shows the upper half of the tightly grouped cartoon monkeys, lively colours, a cherry blossom pattern and an ancient tower. Compared with the obvious lines in the ukiyo-e artworks, the simple colour blocks of the cartoon characters are more likely to appeal to a modern audience (Heiser, Sierra, & Torres, 2008). In terms of design features, the patterns in the poster are attractive in function. At the behavioural middle level, the position of the three monkeys evokes a pageant. The animals' eyes, movement and positioning are vivid. At the invisible inner level, the meaning of the ukiyo-e works resonates with the audience. The three monkeys bring to mind the three famous beauties of the Edo period, a geisha and two teahouse girls, with their eyes slightly open as if looking forward to their own happy future (Kobayashi, 1993). Regarding the poster design, while the monkeys represent the zoo, the design also conveys the zoo's peace and beauty.

Harris (2012, p. 219) wrote in his book *Ukiyo-e: The Art of the Japanese Print*,  
Utamaro is an icon in Japanese culture and, alone among his contemporaries ...  
[his] work is purely Japanese. There are no outside influences. Unfortunately,  
to those who have never stepped foot in Japan the nuances of eroticism and  
sensuality are only superficially realised in Utamaro's pictures.

In a Japanese context, viewers identify Utamaro's woodblock prints of the three beauties as a symbol of feminine charm. Therefore, in the poster, the reference to the ukiyo-e artwork is both a sign of respect for Japanese tradition and culture,

which resonates with the audience, and a traditional symbol. Thus referencing ukiyo-e works makes modern graphic designs more meaningful.

The factors Hobsbawm (2012) listed as necessary to update old traditions can also be applied to analyse the Japanese poster. First, the carrier and disseminator have become posters promoting a zoo's cherry blossom viewing activities. Second, the demand has changed: the target audience now consists of tourists in modern society. Third, after hundreds of years, the social and cultural context in which they live has also changed. Therefore, the characters in the ukiyo-e (old tradition) have been simplified to small childlike animals and large colour blocks (characteristic of modernity). Nevertheless, the old tradition (ukiyo-e character) has been retained in the poster to connect the modern design to traditional culture. The demeanour of the animal in the middle makes the poster look more traditionally Japanese and is more acceptable to the audience.

According to prior research and analysis of Japanese graphic design, tradition and modernity are mutually supportive rather than mutually exclusive. The tradition of invention carries social significance, symbolising cultural development that evolves over time. Furthermore, it clarifies the relationship between individuals and society as a whole and increases the audience's sense of identity under the same national cultural background (Hobsbawm, 2012). Modern thinking renders the traditional aspect of design more adaptable to the new social model of civilisation, more acceptable to the audience and more communicative in terms

of graphic effects (Barnard, 2013). The next section explains in more detail the significance of tradition and modernity in Chinese design.

#### 2.4.3. The meaning of learning traditional culture in modernity

Modernity is common in contemporary society, but along with its development, traditional culture has become indispensable. According to Wittrock (2000) and Eisenstadt (2017), modernity is a universal condition in every corner of society today, marked on all levels by avant-garde sociological phenomena and the broad destruction of traditional forms to produce an innovative aesthetic. However, in the field of anthropology, modernity is never a radical change or revolution, because tradition always plays a subtle cultural role in the process of integration and adaptation (Baudrillard, 1987). Furthermore, modernity cannot eliminate tradition, because modernity is itself irreversible. Instead, tradition is sporadically introduced into new things (Beasley, 1980). Modernity always emerges in the revival of tradition, although the tradition may have lost its original meaning (Baudrillard, 1987).

While traditional culture is crucial in the development of modernity, the cultural differences are diminishing in modern countries. The disadvantage is that if countries break away from their various cultural traditions, they become increasingly similar and less distinct from one another (Beasley, 1980). As industrialisation eliminates the identifiable cultural differences, people grow concerned about the cultural identity the country will use to construct its own narrative as a reference point for individual self-evaluation. Similar to the



development of Japanese design mentioned in the previous section, Japan has retained its own cultural identity amid the wave of modernity.

This is exemplified in a poster design created by Ikko Tanaka (Figure 2.4-4 centre) with the face of a traditional Japanese geisha (Figure 2.4-4 right) as the theme. It is composed of square and round elements with simple colours in an obviously constructivist style. However, the asymmetrical arrangement of the colour blocks and the symmetrical layout retain a consistency with Japanese aesthetic habits. The influence of Dutch De Stijl painter Piet Mondrian (Figure 2.4-4 left) can be observed in the colour-block splicing (Kun, 2017; Ling-hong, 2007), yet within the mechanised and rational composition, the author tilts the two semicircles representing the eyes inward. This breaks the horizontal and vertical stiffness to gently express the softness of Japanese women between these two separate points.



*Figure 2.4-4 (Left) Composition II with Red, Blue and Yellow painted by Piet Mondrian, retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piet\\_Mondrian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piet_Mondrian)*  
*(Centre) Nihon Buyo performance poster designed by Ikko Tanaka, retrieved from <http://www.designishistory.com/1960/ikko-tanaka/>*  
*(Right) A geisha in Japan, retrieved from <http://www.ritao123.com/why/wh/1094.html>*

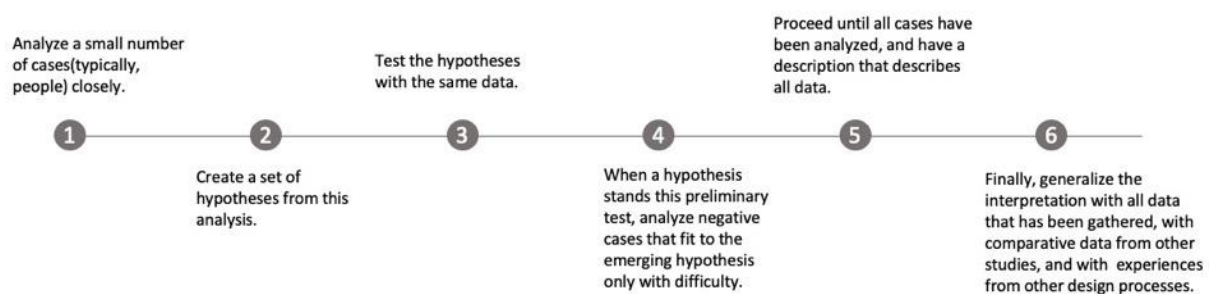
When modernity first began to influence Asian people, amid the eagerness to imitate Western thought (Bauhaus or constructivism), Wajiro (2015) proposed an unusual path. He neither reiterated the value of traditional craftsmanship nor fully accepted modernism. Instead, he encouraged designers to study people's actual lifestyles and their relationships with their own lifestyles, environment and household goods, using close investigation and observation to incorporate Japan's own cultural structure and life traditions into modern design.

According to Crouch (2010), cultural structures must adapt to change, just as trees in a storm must bend with the wind; otherwise, they will not withstand the test of time. This is also the significance of this study, which aims to determine how experienced graphic designers are able to integrate traditional Chinese culture into modern works, providing a reference for China's relatively slow-developing modern design.

### 3. Data and methods

#### 3.1. Research design

The methods used in this study build on observations from Kärt Summatavet's work in Estonia. The aim of the study is to interpret the most important ways in which experienced designers find inspiration and design elements from Chinese culture. Following the empathic tradition, the methods are qualitative, and the aim is to study the experienced designers inductively. This method is a variation of elite interviews (which provided the practical methods) and an insight form Kärt's study, which demonstrated the need to study skilled design work in context. The research delved deeply into the work and minds of the designers, which made it necessary to restrict the number of designers to a handful.



*Figure 3.1-1 Process of Analytic induction (Koskinen et al., 2003)*

The overall research design builds on analytic induction, as shown in Figure 3.1-1 (Koskinen et al., 2003). It is a process of inference rather than a complete knowledge system that can be applied to the data being analysed. The initial concepts are assumed from the data analysed at the beginning, which are continually tested until the designers can obtain a thorough description of the data. A set of hypotheses are then created (based on the analysis of a small number of cases), which are then tested against new cases. The essence of the approach is to design a process through which

researchers can create interpretations and test hypotheses with new data. In this process, the starting point is to analyse a small group of typical cases and provide intuition and inspiration. Creativity is very important at this stage.

When these assumptions pass the initial test, the opposites of existing assumptions are used for further matches. A description of the method set forth all of the data will obtain until the whole set of cases are analysed. Finally, the task is to generalise and compare all the data and test them until an interpretation can be verified. However, as noted by Koskinen et al. (2003), it is preferable to treat generalisation as a separate goal.

With this process, a researcher can analyse data to create hypotheses about the relationship between tradition and innovation, and then test these hypotheses until all cases have been completed. With this method, it is possible to learn about the similarities of and differences between the experienced designers.

In concrete terms, the method shaped this research in the following ways. Designers from different areas of China had been listed based on the initial analysis. The process of the study is shown which explains the expansion of the study from two interviews in Hong Kong to the full study of six designers in Hong Kong and Mainland China. According to the method of analytic induction proposed by Professor Koskinen et al. (2003), constant comparisons are conducted through the small group of cases, collecting data from interviewing three experienced designers in Hong Kong.

The method made it possible to test emerging hypotheses in several ways. The pilot study was conducted in Hong Kong with two designers—Henry Steiner and KAN Tai Keung. After analysing these two interviews to identify possible themes, the study expanded to Mainland China. By comparing the results from the Hong Kong and Mainland research, I was able to determine whether the difference between these two contexts was relevant. Thus, the study proceeded in phases.

By comparing the designers based in Hong Kong and Mainland China, I could also learn about the differences between designers. For instance, after learning that the first two interviewees (Henry Steiner and KAN Tai Keung) saw their training and some parts of their philosophy relevant for understanding their work, I formulated a hypothesis that philosophy is relevant for understanding how designers navigate the line between tradition and innovation. Several other possible hypotheses were also created, including the location of the designers and external factors such as teachers, customer and marketing needs, educational level, and growth background. By treating these as hypotheses, the study proceeded to determine which ones survived the test against new cases. The results are presented in [Chapter 4.7](#)

## 3.2. Data collection

### 3.2.1. Elite interview

The main method of the study was elite interviewing. Most literature on elite interviewing is from the social sciences. The best-known studies have dealt with lawyers (Smigel, 1958) and businessmen and politicians (Jackall, 1988; Robinson, 1960). In design, elite interviews have typically been employed in studies that have mapped problem-solving techniques (Dorst, 2015).

The choice of the method informed four decisions:

1. *Access*. While elite designers are easy to locate, obtaining their permission for the study may be difficult. Contacting them requires reading through their previous work to reveal appropriate communication channels.
2. *The importance of preparation*. It is customary in elite interviewing to conduct a copious amount of preparatory work using secondary materials, which slows the research process.
3. *Managing the interview situation*. Careful preparation helps to manage interview times and to target questions toward topics that are not answerable through secondary sources.
4. *The importance of visual walkthroughs*. Designers work with many visual materials, which need to be documented. For example, the meaning of an old sketch may be impossible to understand for outsiders. Therefore, design researchers need to document them with a camera and walk through them with the interviewee.

A few principles for preparing an interview have been suggested by Thompson (2000). First, it is necessary to prepare the interview carefully beforehand by conducting extensive research on the interviewees and related topics. Second, keeping the atmosphere of interview easy and flexible and making the questions natural are important. The professional oral historian should not dehumanise the interviewees by reading the questions with a numb face. With a rigid inflexible questionnaire style, it is difficult to establish interaction and rapport with interviewees, which is required when probing sensitive issues such as business failures. Finally, although a rigid style is not welcomed in interviewing, the free form style may also be misleading. The primary purpose of an interview is to record narratives that describe the interviewees subjective understanding of their life. Hence, it is preferable to set as few limits as possible for the interviewee. The interview guide of the early interviews is shown on the next page, which is divided into three parts. questions is, the better. As the study progressed, some questions were revised according to each experienced designer's experiences and background (see [Appendix](#)).

### 3.2.2. Photos and videos

As noted previously, to understand designers it is important to capture physical and visual artefacts in their working environment with photographs. The importance of a rich visual record was confirmed in the very first interview. Photographs of Henry Steiner's collections of souvenirs and memorabilia proved to be an important way of identifying his way of understanding China and its culture. While most of the pieces he had collected over the years were financially

worthless, their value lay in those memories and stories they evoked when he was facing a design problem. As Eckert and Stacey noted, 'a designer's inspiration comes from everything'. Sources of inspiration play an important role in the design process, defining both the context of the new design and the creation of individual designs (Cooperrider & Fry, 2010; Eckert & Stacey, 2000). As Eckert and Stacey (2000) also noted, new designs are often construed from a rich source of inspiration.

This was certainly true of Steiner, as the researcher quickly learned. To understand his work, hundreds of photographs about his working environment, collections, and sketches were taken. His material served as an inspiration to design specific cultural references and helped him to keep memories and stories fresh in his mind. Steiner's office was filled with handicrafts from Western countries, Chinese illustrations, and furniture that was both Western and Oriental. When talking with him, the researcher started to see how these materials were related to his philosophy of contrasting thinking and harmony



*Figure 3.2-1 Displays in the office of Henry Steiner in Hong Kong*

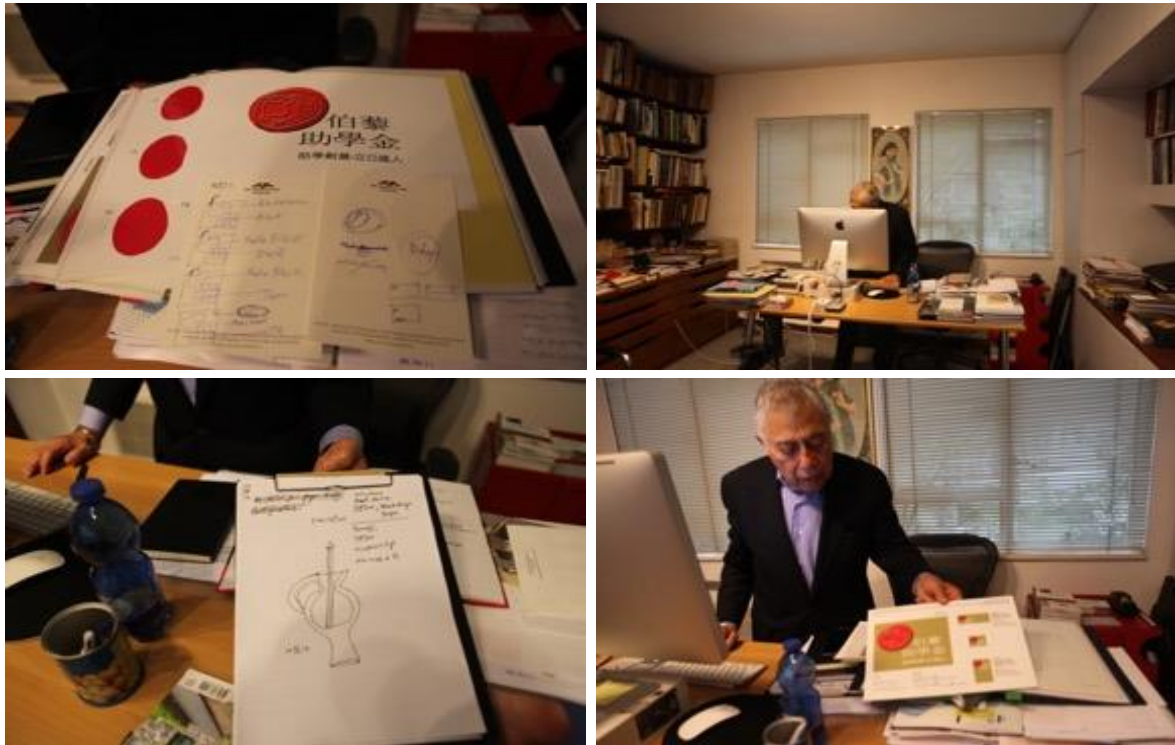


rather than just mixing or blending Eastern and Western cultures. This is demonstrated by the contrast in two of his previous posters (Figure 3.2-1).

Importantly, these visual walkthroughs started to tell a story about the experienced designers' sources of inspiration. However, more importantly they revealed the designer's work habits and philosophy. For example, the four photographs in Figure 3.2-2 demonstrate how new technology has figured in Steiner's design process. He had many notebooks and books on his desk and a high-quality personal computer. However, all the drafts and sketches were notes in his notebook and memos in his pocket. He was enthusiastic about new technology and confirmed this during the interview. However, he also believes that computers cannot replace people's work when expressing creativity. Steiner started his career in the 1960s without any access to modern CAD tools. Perhaps because of his experience with pre-CAD techniques, he still believes that tasks such as the selection of paper texture or brush width in Chinese calligraphy cannot be emulated by computers. This was his response when the researcher asked about his office environment.

When deciding when to take photographs and record videos, it is common to ask for permission after an initial interview or in a conversation after the two parties have established a working relationship. With this trust and respect in place, it is easier to ask about taking photographs or recording videos. After the interview, the interviewee is also familiar with the interviewer's subject. Knowing their aspirations, the interviewee can then provide the interviewer with richer and

more targeted references. Interviewers also know the references better after the interview.



*Figure 3.2-2 Notebook and drafts of Henry Steiner's working process*

### 3.2.3. Secondary material

One characteristic of elites is that they produce a substantial amount of secondary material that can be gathered in the preparation phase. They write books and columns for newspapers, give interviews, and have typically been studied before. Referring to several well-known students of elites, the Finnish political scientist (Mykkänen, 2001) writes

‘Experienced researchers of elites recommend caution and a careful mapping of alternative tactics for data gathering before conducting the interviews (Dexter, 1970). Referring to his own experiences, Thomas (1993) advises researchers to study newspaper clippings, professional publications, biographies, statistics,

registers, and databases. Further, talking to people who are close to the elites (such as journalists and business analysts) is also recommended. Only after these studies can the researcher evaluate the need for interviews. Without this background knowledge, interviews may result in little new information. The interviewer may ask questions that are widely known, which could be construed as indifference toward the interviewee. Such indifference is also indicated by questions that can be answered from other sources. Elites know their value, and this is something the researcher must consider about when preparing for the interviews (Kincaid & Bright, 1957; Searing, 1994; Zuckerman, 1972). ‘

Preparation will render the interview questions more intelligent, show that the researcher cannot be fooled with standard responses, and avoid wasting time on topics that could have easily been researched from other sources. As Erwin Smigel (1958) stated, his first interviewees in Wall Street law firms talked to him as if he was a junior intern. When he had amassed more knowledge about the firms, his questions became more intelligent and he was taken seriously by the most senior ranks.

In this study, the preparation of secondary material was very important. Experienced designers are different from other elites in that they have many design works that need understanding in advance. An in-depth understanding of the characteristics of their design work (such as colour, typesetting, and presentation) helps to associate and understand the interview when they talk about their relevant design theories and philosophies. In addition, as Thomas (1993) stated, these elites will have read a wide variety of books and will have

conducted several interviews, such as the second interviewee in this study (KAN Tai kung). KAN Tai Keung has been responsible for many well-known designs. His personal data bank consists of nearly 40 interview reports and videos that are online, and he has written 36 books. By reading and listening to this body of work I could find many of the answers to my questions; hence, I did not need to use interview time on these questions. If the researcher does not know the secondary material in advance, precious interview time will be lost.

#### 3.2.4. Snowball sampling process

This study focused on some of the best-known Chinese graphic designers. They were selected for the interviews using a three-step process. First, the researcher listed their names from the initial analysis of secondary materials. Second, after each interview the interviewees were asked to recommend some other designers suitable for this research topic. Third, several seminars and conferences were attended, which helped to double-check the selection of interviewees in this research.

The names on the list were compiled in the following way. The researcher paid attention to the number of mentions in the design field among their colleagues, the number of major project invitations by governments or big brands, the number of citations and exposures, the number and quality of their publications, and their institutional position within graphic design societies.

For example, Henry Steiner and KAN Tai Keung were selected in the following way. Henry Steiner has been called the 'King of graphic design' in Hong Kong and

a ‘communicator’ of graphic design in China. He is known as being a skilful user of Chinese culture in design, such as his use of Chinese elements in the banknotes he designed for the Hong Kong Standard Chartered Bank (Figure 3.2-3). While KAN Tai Keung was the first generation of Chinese graphic designers to live in Hong Kong, his craft was not limited to the design field. His work also extended to pedagogy, ink painting, and founding design competitions. The visual identity of the largest nationalised bank (the Bank of China) was designed by him, and the visual identity system was widely used for thousands of Bank of China branches all over the world.



*Figure 3.2-3 Hong Kong Banknote design by Henry Steiner*

Therefore, apart from the significant number of secondary materials described in Table 3-1 (based on the data of Google scholar, Baidu scholar, and provided by the experienced designers until June 2018), a good reputation and recommendations from experienced designers and scholars became the main initial selection criteria. For example, KAN Tai Keung had been cited 237. Eventually, the six experienced designers were finally listed and interviewed in this research. Coincidentally, six designers were all recognised as members of Alliance Graphique Internationale (AGI), which is a club of the world’s leading

graphic artists and designers. Further, all the three presidents of AGI China (Henry Steiner, WANG Min, and HAN Jia Ying) were among the interviewees.

*Table 3-1 General review of interviewees in this research*

<i>Interview order</i>	<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Number of reports</i>	<i>Citations in research</i>	<i>Research Articles</i>	<i>Published books</i>	<i>AGI member and year</i>
1	Henry Steiner	4	16	-	<i>Cross-cultural design: communicating in the global marketplace</i>	1980 (Previous president in China)
2	KAN Tai Keung	38	237	8	36	1997
4	WANG Min	7	4	6	<i>Square Two Design</i>	2004 (Previous president in China)
5	HAN Jiaying	9	14		<i>Reflection 5000 X 500 X 50</i>	2007 (Current president in China)
7	JIANG Hua	13	2	9	1	2006
9	Stanley WONG	9	7	1	<i>What's next 30 X 30 Red while blue</i>	2004

Snowball sampling offers one answer to a classic question in qualitative research, which is ‘how many cases is enough’. Of course, several answers to this question are possible. For example, if we follow the experiments by Baker and Edwards (2012) with 2 transcriptions in 20 interviewees and 6 in 60 of same interview group, the number is small. They claim that code definition is quite stable after analysing 12 respondents.

Another answer lies in the very notion of elite interviewing, because the number of Elites (by definition) is small. The purpose of this study was to identify and interview a small group of China’s leading graphic designers known for their sensitive approach to Chinese culture. Several members of this elite group are known to all Chinese graphic design students, and there are very few people who have served as role models shaping the way in which Chinese cultural elements are turned into graphic designs.

There is also a more formal procedure for deciding the actual number of people needed for a study such as this, which builds on the idea of constant comparison by Glaser and Strauss (2009) who explained

no additional data are found whereby the researcher can develop properties of the category. As he sees similar instances over and over again, the researcher becomes empirically confident that a category is saturate when one is saturated, nothing remains but to go on to new groups for data on other classifications and attempt to saturate these categories also.'

A sufficient sample depends on how broad and diverse a selection the researcher hopes to develop. In turn, this depends on how many questions the researcher would like to study. The best method for collecting the sample is called snowball sampling, which builds on chain referral. At the end of one interview, the researcher can simply ask the interviewee to nominate people who he thinks should be studied next. When this question is asked of several people during the study, the list will stabilise into a few names. This method is known as snowball sampling, which is a form of purposive, non-randomised sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

Finally, whenever the researcher attended Chinese graphic design conferences, participants were interviewed and asked to identify their role models in the graphic design community of China. This extended the list of designers to Taiwan and Japan and (more importantly) provided an independent source of suggestions to ratify the final selection of experienced designers.

Therefore, the number of interviewees depends on the approach of researchers (in terms of how they wish to use the data) and their intentions. There is no exact number that could be decided in advance. While purposive samples need to be carefully selected, this provides a robust outcome. Further, although the number of people examined may vary significantly between studies, in a study such as this with one main research question and an elite strategy, the number has to be small even in China with its vast population. Moreover, the number of people who shape one of its more sophisticated forms of culture must be small by necessity.

### 3.3. Data sorting

As the data in this research is qualitative in nature, organising these data becomes a challenge. There is no simple principle that can be applied for efficient data analysis. Each query is different and the results depend on the skill, insight, analysis, and researcher's ability to style (Hoskins & Mariano, 2004). In addition, as the resources for data collection are extensive and complicated, the main resource is collected from interviews and supplemented by information from blogs, books, or newspapers.

With such a diverse set of material, it is possible to develop a situation where it is impossible to find pieces of data after a few months and impossible to describe the path of analysis when the study is being written. Even though the data may be excellent, the analysis will be impressionistic and susceptible to bias and errors without a proper order.



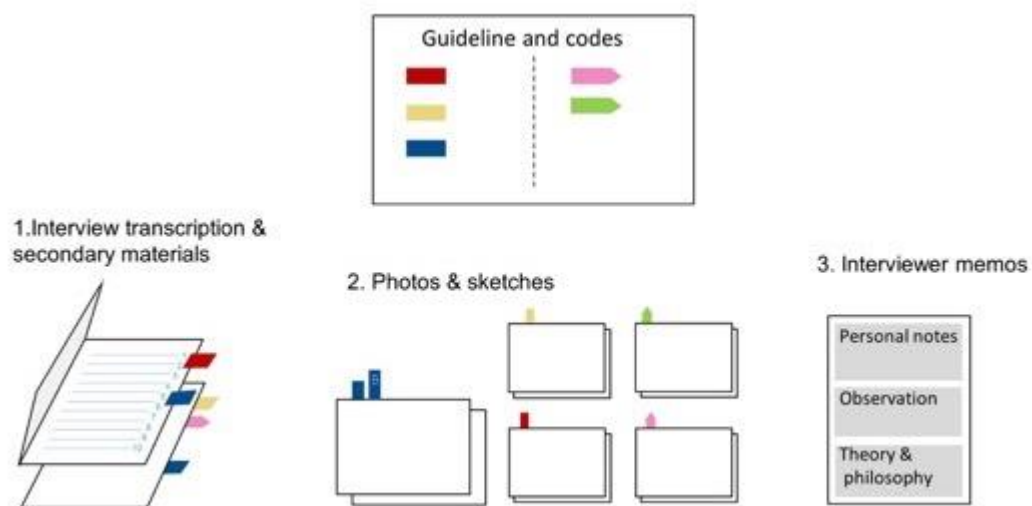
Therefore, verifying trustworthiness is the most important step of data checking, which cannot be ignored. First, the content of the results is described by categories, meaning the significance of the content category. It is important to make inferences that are defensible based on valid and reliable data collection (R. P. Weber, 1990). Moreover, reliable references can also be used to increase the trustworthiness of the study and researchers need to know exactly where and what type of original data are best for summarising (Patton, 1990).

To make these data easily analysable and findable, I had to develop a method of sorting and analysing. In this study, the main method of sorting and coding the data took the physical form of a data box (Figure 3.3-1). All data from every interview were placed into a large semi-transparent box, which was divided into sections that decomposed the data. The upper left corner was reserved for clips from art works and secondary materials, while the lower left side was for photographs. The right side had the interviews, and various memorandums written by the researcher were below. The box provided an easy-to-see visual order of the data.



*Figure 3.3-1 Data box of the Henry Steiner interview*

The guideline of this box was colourful flags and numbers (Figure 3.3-2). After an initial analysis, the codes are generally divided in two groups: design philosophy and external factors in design work. The codes from different groups were distinguished by flags, and the relevant texts and pictures were shown with these flags. To find related pictures effectively, each sentence edited in the booklets was assigned a number and related pictures were then signed with the same number and colour. Taking Henry Steiner’s case as an example, if the researcher wished to check their design philosophy with the key word ‘contrast’, it was only necessary to find the purple flag in the data box. The box created clarity at a glance, and the order of the box was one of the main reliability devices of the study.

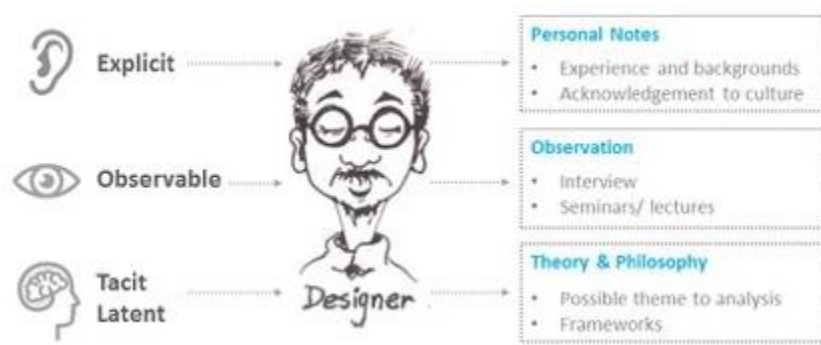


*Figure 3.3-2 Guideline of data box in this research*

The box also had another function—supporting hypothesis building. Links between various parts of the box were created with coloured post-it notes, with the function of tracking emerging themes from the multitude of data points in the study. These

themes were collected into memorandums that were then treated as hypotheses to be tested against new data in the manner taught by analytic induction.

As Elizabeth and Dandavate (1999) proposed, there are several ways to learn about experience. For example, researchers can listen to, watch, interpret, or observe people, with each revealing different parts of the picture. While listening to what people say only provides us with what they want us to hear, it demonstrates what they are able to express in words. Different from verbal data, it is quite objective to obtain observable information by watching what people do and by observing what they use. However, knowing what people say, think, do, and use is not enough (Sanders, 1992)—discovering people's thoughts and knowledge provides us with a perspective of their experience. This cognitive approach provides tacit knowledge that cannot always be expressed in words (Polanyi, 2009). Therefore, in terms of the data in this research, it could be gathered in three forms: verbal, behavioural, and constructive. To keep the process on track, the memorandums that collected these observations were written into cards (Figure 3.3-3). These memorandums were then linked to the data boxes, which became the starting points of the analysis as the study progressed and ultimately gave form to the chapters of this book.



*Figure 3.3-3 Analysis model by memorandums in this research (Koskinen et al., 2003)*

### 3.4. Data Analysis

#### 3.4.1. Reliability and validity

This study has several inbuilt validity checks. Most importantly, the study uses several methods of data collection and analysis, which is known formally as triangulation (Denzin, 1978). This is a powerful method that helps to validate data by cross-validation from two or more sources (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Further, having multiple data points helps the researcher to cross-check data against other pieces of data. As the main method of data collection was interviewing (Denzin, 1978), the interviews were prepared meticulously and checked carefully afterwards in several ways.

The interviewee selection in this research was divided into three levels. First, the researcher listed the experienced designers by their reputation and regular themes of their artworks, which is closely related to research topic (how do experienced designers interpret Chinese culture). The references were from reports, videos, previous interview materials, newspapers, lectures, exhibitions, and books, both written by them and about them. These experienced designers are highly respected by their peers, and their works have won wide acclaim around the world and are well accepted in the market. After each interview, the researcher asked the interviewees to recommend some names they thought might be suitable for this research to double check the validity of the initial selection. Moreover, several research conferences and seminars were attended to double check the stories told by the experienced designers. For example, one conference was in Thailand (Yao, 2016), where two professors from Taiwan

provided valuable feedback about the interviewee selection and furnished names of experienced designers in China and Taiwan. These procedures made interviewee selection more robust.

Second, to ensure the effectiveness of data collection, the answers in the interview were repeatedly verified. Before the interview, to express respect for the experienced designers and to avoid duplication of information, all the questions were based on previous media interviews or other secondary materials. Repeatedly referred questions were not asked again. Instead, questions that were rarely talked about in the media but associated with this study were asked in interviews. Moreover, to test the rationality of consequences and the logic of questions, the interview outline had been tested and rehearsed with two experienced designers from Hong Kong and Mainland China before the first formal interview. After the interviews, interview transcriptions were verified against the secondary material to check if the answers were consistent with previous knowledge. If the newly collected answers were consistent with previous statements, the data could be seen as more objective and effective. However, if the statements were different from previous statements, I studied which view made more sense and asked these questions again in repeat interviews.

Third, memorandums were an indispensable tool for generating and keeping observations and hypotheses in good order. Each interview was supplemented with rich secondary material and the in-depth interviews lasted at least 1.5 h.

With the increasing number of completed interviews and elapsed time, the details of each interview could be forgotten. Therefore, the memorandums (including personal notes), observations, and theory notes helped to recover the memory for data analysis.

#### 3.4.2. Constant comparison of Grounded theory

The discovery of theory from data, providing people with relevant predictions, explanations, interpretations, and applications, is called grounded theory, which was proposed by Glaser and Strauss (2009). In their definition, the theory should provide clear enough categories and hypotheses to ensure the crucial ones can be verified in present and future research. When comparing logically deduced theories based on ungrounded assumptions, grounded theory can help to forestall the opportunistic use of theories that have a dubious fit and working capacity. Moreover, another opportunistic use of theory that cannot occur with grounded theory is termed 'exemplifying'. Furthermore, a priori assumptions were also listed as merits.

The major strategy for applying grounded theory is comparative analysis, which is a strategic method for generating theory. This assigns the method its fullest generality for use on social units of any size (large or small) ranging from people or their roles to nations or world regions (Glaser & Strauss, 2009, pp. 21-22). However, as the aim was to develop a framework to help us understand how Chinese culture can be turned into a potential innovative strategy, all the data were collected from the experienced designers' interviews and secondary materials. The specifics of these designers are unique, diverse, and irregular.

Hence, when comparing inoperable experimental and statistical methods, comparative analysis to discovery grounded theory is more performable and suitable for this research.

Glaser and Strauss (2009) listed and compared the general four approaches for analysing qualitative data: coding all the data, inspection data and redesigning a developing theory, constant comparison, and analytic induction. The first approach provisionally tests and analyses the hypothesis, while the second approach focuses on generating theoretical ideas, that analyst constantly redesigned and reintegrated designers' theoretical notions as their reviews. The third approach combines the first two approaches through an analytic procedure of constant comparison using the style of theory development of the second approach. The fourth approach combines the first and second approaches differently from the constant comparative method. It is about generating and proving an integrated, limited, precise, universally applicable theory of causes accounting for a specific behaviour.

When comparing the four approaches, constant comparison is more systematic in generating theory by using explicit coding and analytic procedures compared to the first two approaches involving provisional testing and discovering theory. Further, it is concerned with many hypotheses synthesised at different levels of generality rather than a few hypotheses at the same level in the first approach. Additionally, the constant analytical method (unlike analytic induction) is more likely to be applied in the same study to any kind of qualitative information

(including observations, interviews, documents, articles, and books), such as data collected from the interviews and secondary materials. Therefore, constant comparisons were conducted in this research to analyse each experienced designer in the two groups studied (Hong Kong and Mainland) and analytic induction was applied in the whole research design, as introduced in [Chapter 3.1](#). In Glaser and Strauss (2009)'s book, they divide the constant comparative method into four stages as follows:

- 1) Comparing incidents applicable to each category.
- 2) Integrating categories and their properties.
- 3) Delimiting the theory.
- 4) Writing the theory.

In the first stage, the basic defining rule of constant comparative methods had been added, 'while coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category'. For example, the researcher coded an incident in which the external causes explained the designer's innovative approach to cultural interpretation. The researcher then compared this incident before further coding with others previously coded in the same category, as shown in Chapter 6.1. Moreover, as the categories and properties emerged, two types were discovered: those constructed by the researcher and those abstracted from the language of the research situation. Relating to this research, discoveries from secondary material belongs to the former, while those from dialogue and observations during the interviews belong to the latter. Therefore, the initial analysis of each designer in this research was divided into four sections: experience and background,



acknowledgement to culture, observations, and theory notes, as shown in Chapter 4. The third stage (delimiting the theory) occurs at two levels (Glaser & Strauss, 2009, pp. 103-115).

‘First, the theory solidifies, in the sense that major modifications become fewer and fewer as the researcher compares the next incidents of a category to its properties. Later modifications are mainly on the order of clarifying the logic, taking out non-relevant properties.’

#### 4. Six designers from Hong Kong and Mainland China

Using the methods described in the previous chapter, the researcher created a list of designers esteemed highly by their peers. The obvious starting points in Hong Kong were Henry Steiner and KAN Tai Keung, but the list quickly moved to the next generation. For example, the researcher decided to study Stanley WONG who is famous for capturing the spirit of labour in Hong Kong with his 'Red, white and blue' design, was recommended by KAN Tai Keung as a supervisor of Stanley. In addition, several subtle hints about their importance were found in the initial stages of the study, such as JIANG Hua's woodblock cutting work is a birthday gift to KAN Tai Keung which was published in KAN Tai Keung's book.

In terms of experienced designers in Mainland China, WANG Min was obvious as the art director in 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, which exhibited Chinese culture to the world in many ways by graphic design. He also used to be the dean of School of Design, Central Academy of Fine Art (CAFA), one of the top design institutes in China, lecturer at Yale University, and art director of Adobe, a leading design software company. At the end of the interview of WANG Min, he recommended JIANG Hua to the researcher. JIANG Hua is a teacher in CAFA and he had been supervised by WANG Min. In addition to WANG Min, KAN Tai Keung praised JIANG Hua's talent of seal cutting during the interview. After these referrals, JIANG Hua was interviewed in this research. His colleague, another interesting teacher in CAFA was HAN Jia Ying, who has worked in Shenzhen and Beijing. One of the most prominent members of the first generation of commercial graphic design in China, he had absorbed an advanced concept from Hong Kong and applied it in China during its rapid economic development. During this study, the researcher attended all the

interviewee's independent lecture and group seminar (Figure 3.4-1, Figure 3.4-2), as well as presented the data results in some academic conferences and seminars.



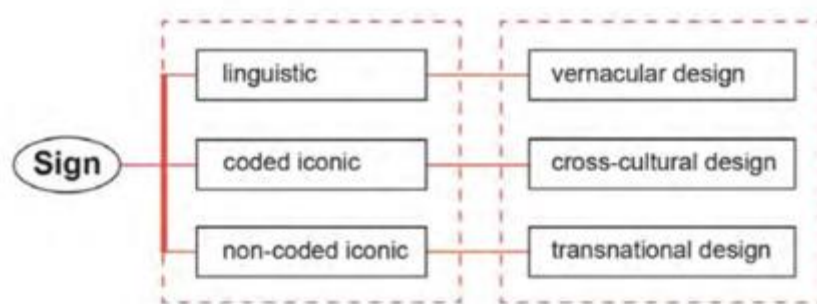
*Figure 3.4-1 The Researcher help to host Henry Steiner's presentation in AGI China Seminar*



*Figure 3.4-2 AGI China seminar, April, 2018*

The 'natural mapping' proposed by (Norman, 2013) can be used to support the factors analysis in design research. He pointed out that taking advantage of physical analogies and cultural standards lead to immediate understanding. Moreover, Hong Kong design history researcher, W. S. Wong (2013) proposed three orders of cultural elements embedded design that are vernacular design, cross cultural design and transnational design. Wong's creative strategy was borrowed from Barthes (1972) three order of visual signification in semiotic studies, which is linguistic, coded iconic and non-coded iconic in

every visual image. Therefore, the external and internal factors of designers would have been an initial part in culture and design thinking study. The visual orders combined with cultural design orders showed in Figure 3.4-3 was employed to analysis designers' acknowledgement of culture and artworks in the following chapters. Based on memorandums showed in Figure 3.3-3, which includes the secondary materials and the visual and audio data collected from interview, the initial analysis of each experienced designers was divided by four parts, experience and background, acknowledgement of culture, observation and theory note. And the three Hong Kong designers as study one is analysed in this chapter and study two of three experienced designers from mainland China is in next chapter.



*Figure 3.4-3 The three orders of signification & the three orders of cultural signification (Wong, 2013)*

## 4.1. Henry Steiner

### 4.1.1. Experience & background

Henry Steiner's work can be seen everywhere in Hong Kong. It hits you from billboards, banks, and other buildings – it is even lurking in your pocket. He is called the King of Graphic Design in Hong Kong. The banknotes he designed for Standard Chartered Bank is one of the classics. He was born in a middle-class Jewish family in Austria in 1934 and escaped his hometown to New York when he was

only 4 years old (Figure 4.1-1). He developed a passion for science fiction in high school and then he majored in it during college. But later he changed his major to graphic design and got a master's degree in Yale. Paul Rand, the father of graphic design, was his teacher, and some thoughts of Paul Rand still inspired Henry Steiner today.



*Figure 4.1-1 Henry Steiner in 1939, aged about five(Lazarus, 2014)*

Soon he travelled to a lot of places in the world, worked at Madison Avenue, and studied in France for two years with a Fulbright Fellowship. When he came back to New York from France, he signed a contract to spend nine months in Hong Kong monitoring a magazine's marketing design and launch in 1961. Hong Kong became his permanent station since then. Subsequently he set up a company and got married there (Lazarus, 2014).

His long and stable career in Hong Kong has allowed him to establish his own design philosophy. As a leading member of the first generation of university-

trained graphic designers, his philosophy has inspired Hong Kong's graphic design in numerous ways. Based on what he learned from Paul Rand and his long professional experience, Henry Steiner represents the view of cross-cultural design. In the book, *Cross-cultural design: communicating in the global marketplace* (Haas & Steiner, 1995), the topic gets a detailed elaboration. He noted that most people do not know their culture because it is like oxygen, evolution, or gravity – issues that become relevant only when they threaten their very survival. 'Culture is our environment; it is the 'natural' way of thinking and acting, as a fish in the water', said Steiner. According to his book, combining the designer's perceptions with the target audience's understanding of the fundamental issues of life (time, religion, family relationships, gender and gender, technology, politics, economics) may have an exciting combination of effects and may differ greatly.

During the interview, Steiner spoke highly of Paul Rand, as a terrific and pioneering designer of his time. Henry Steiner had read Paul Rand's book *Thoughts on Design* before he started his study in Yale. When he mentioned that moment when at the end of his first year study in Yale, he knew that Paul Rand would teach him, his excited expression was like a child's cry: 'Wow, that's wonderful!'. Haas and Steiner (1995) state that two dicta from Paul Rand followed the career of Henry Steiner throughout his career:

- 1) The primacy of concept, if you cannot use a small index card to write down the idea behind your vision, then you do not design.

- 2) The other principle is that contrast is what gives life to a design. It can be visually (large / small, rough / smooth, bright / dark) or psychological (old / new, familiar / unusual), but the design without contrast will become unstable.

Until now, Henry tells he has a notebook in his pocket all the time. When he comes up with a new idea, he wants to draw a draft immediately. If he does not have a notebook, he draws on whatever piece of paper he finds. As the sketches for the visual identity of *Human Rights Press Awards*, he showed in his public lecture 'How to make money in China?', he had drawn everywhere (Figure 4.1-2).







*Figure 4.1-2 Sketches and visual identity of Human Rights Press Awards 2015 (Steiner, 2016a)*

#### 4.1.2. Acknowledgement to culture

In Henry Steiner's mind, Hong Kong is a very civil place, people like each other, and slowly get around everywhere. Festivals, charming events like Qingming, all the talks about food are a celebration of life that derive inspirations for cross culture design(Lazarus, 2014).

When he was asked the reason why he had decided to live in Hong Kong for decades during the interview, he answered in a masterly way. 'I never decide to live in HK, I just didn't decide to leave.' This way of talking reflects his design philosophy for graphic design in which he places contrast at the important position for judging designs. He got married, had two sons, and set up his company in Hong Kong many years ago. When we treated him as a foreigner with little knowledge of local characters, he already thought himself as a local, even more familiar with Hong Kong than people from other provinces of China. Having spent most of his life in Hong Kong, he witnessed how the market had developed in Hong Kong and the mainland. And he understands what the demands for graphic design in Hong Kong and the region are. Henry Steiner is fully deservedly



the King of graphic design in Hong Kong. There was no reason to leave the place, which has supported his entire career and business growing from almost nothing to a stable company.

Through the interview with him, it was easy not only to understand his views on Hong Kong, but also his views on the previous places he stayed before coming to Hong Kong, especially on customs and design. During the time he studied in Paris, he had developed a much more European sensibility, which has inspired the body of his work. At the time, London, New York, or San Francisco were certainly well developed in terms of design business, but these places were not considered special by him as the places to settle and develop a design career. Again, it seemed that he was looking for a career and life with contrast.

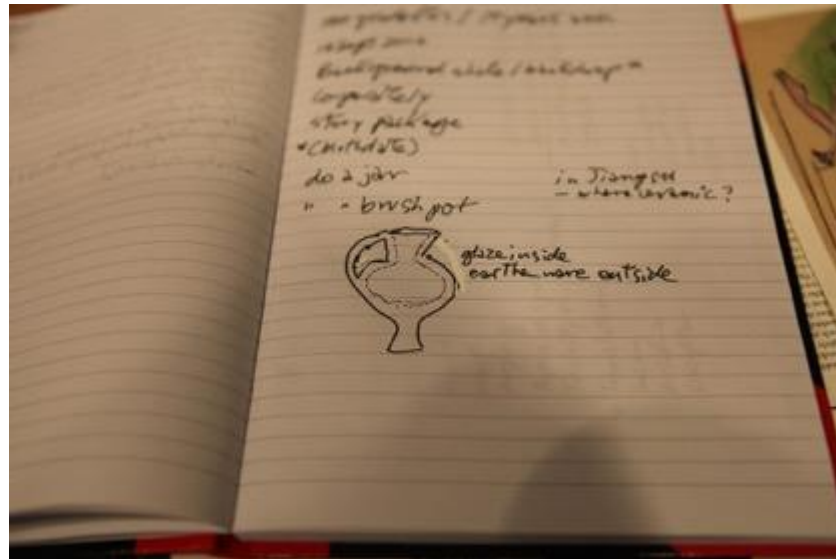
When he talked about Japanese design, which have more similar parts learnt from Chinese culture, he insisted that the Japanese were very much inspired by the Tang dynasty. They preserved what they learned, while China is found to forget about the things they invented very quickly. This is so much the case so that today if people want to see a Tang dynasty temple, they wouldn't need to build a real one. They would simply go to Japan to see the examples which are not in China anymore. In the meantime, the Japanese were also fast to adopt western ways of doing, such as the businesses including advertising, and packaging.

#### 4.1.3. Observation

Comparing to the second interviewee, KAN Tai Keung, who is an advocate of Confucianism, I saw a difference in temperament. KAN can be described as modest, graceful, and polite. Henry Steiner 's gentle, humorous and earnest demeanor was more like a western gentleman. He also has a serious side. 'He is really serious and doesn't like smiling', according to a previous researcher. With my experience of interviewing him, it was not so difficult to find that his attitude transferred gradually from serious and distant to amiable and humorous the more it dawned to him that the researcher had prepared well for the interview. While the interview only lasted for 1.5 hour, two details emerged which were enough to prove his personality as a gentleman and an experienced design who can make an unforgettable impression on people.

For example, when the researcher asked to shoot video, with a digital SLR camera, the shooting would have to be paused and reset every 20 minutes. These sudden pauses could easily make the interviewer nervous. Steiner was kind, however. He helped to reduce the concerns of the interviewer, he stopped talking voluntarily, smiled to remind, and waited for the resetting patiently. For another thing, when they parted after the interview, he helped the researcher to put on the coat and walked to downstairs. Even though he settled in Hong Kong for nearly 60 years and devoted years of his life to Chinese culture exploration, western customs still inspired his whole life. Although fully versed in Chinese culture, and although he interprets Chinese culture constantly in his artworks, western cultural habits are still there in his behavior. One has to acknowledge

from his interview is that the influence of growth environment and education background should be considered in cultural interpretation for a designer.



*Figure 4.1-3 Henry Steiner's sketch*

#### 4.1.4. Theory notes

Contrast as a design strategy of Henry Steiner can be easily seen from his posters, branding and bank notes. Contrast is one of the things he learned from Paul Rand. It was especially clear in the early days of his designs. He used contrast liberally in the Asia magazine in which he would have something western and something eastern contrasting each other. On the surface, it seemed that Henry Steiner just put western and eastern elements together, but its use went deeper. In this study, we have to put it up for a close examination from a philosophical point of view as well as from a technological point of view. It is not a question of right or wrong, better, or worse. Rather, the goal is to achieve a harmonious concatenation, more interaction than synthesis. Each individual element should be preserved, as this can keep the identification while enriched by another, such as balancing yin and yang. The core idea resembled Taoism, but it is different from KAN Tai Keung and other designers in this study. Steiner does not think it is

a mixture or a blending that is to be represented. Better, he wanted to preserve the integrity and independence of each cultural element. Besides, contrast is not only reflected in cultural differences, but also manifested in the form of expression, concepts and so on. Taking a photography of cigar and then turning it into a person with a bit of drawing can be used as an example. When people look at this kind of design idea, it creates a memorable expression, but it is also in itself just a cigar. That is a kind of basic view that Steiner is searching for, and that is what he means by contrast. Designers can become artists by saying and showing people something that they know and something that they don't know.

When he was asked about the role of culture in his design, he insisted that customer and marketing needs should be the first to consider. To Steiner, graphic design is not a decorative or an aesthetical discipline. It is, above all, a form of communication and persuasion. The right logo can visually define a coherent logo to benefit the company. People can append the brand value to a marque. It is like a sign that everyone can salute you. A good example is an ongoing project in his company, a wine package design, he could have the choice to make the label to look like what he expected a wine label should be, as the customer give him enough free space to design. But they need to have the strategy or perspective for innovation. Moreover, a brand may still have its limitations. A company needs decent products and a good business plan, and these are not there, then no design on the planet could come to rescue. Based on previous analysis of Henry Steiner's thoughts and design thinking, his innovative utilization of Chinese culture in graphic design can be summarized in Table 6-1.



*Figure 4.1-4 Banknote design of Henry Steiner (Steiner, 2016a)*

From a case study of banknotes designed by Henry Steiner, it was obvious that brand identity and cultural elements were not as important as the other things there, such as ensuring the safety and making it complicated is necessarily a priority (Figure 4.1-4). A focus on safety in fact gave him freedom, as the bank did not tell him what he should do. Firstly, he had to design something difficult to print to make sure that the notes cannot easily be counterfeited, which meant he needed to consider the latest technologies. On the other hand, to keep the cultural essence of the region, he resorted to familiar Chinese elements. These elements made the notes recognizable in Hong Kong and gave them longevity. Examples of these elements are a fish with a dragon head, which is a traditional mythological symbol in China. And, in the back of the banknotes, there is always a combination of traditional culture and modern culture – for example, a picture of a physical abacus and behind it, binary code. This is a Chinese element that would be hard to understand outside China.

Europeans for example understand what it is for, but they could not understand the story behind it which has the same status in China as stories of Greek mythology have for the European mind (Onians, 2011, p. 1). For the inspiration in design process, Steiner travelled in a lot places in China and over a long period took thousands of photographs to understand the Chinese character.

## 4.2. KAN Tai Keung

### 4.2.1. Experience & background

KAN Tai Keung is a world-renowned designer and artist, who is also active in design education and well known for his skill in ink painting. With his iconic round glasses, Chinese style suits, kind smile and peaceful tone, he was called KAN Tai Keung by coteries. His works could be seen everywhere in China, the VI system of the biggest national bank, Bank of China; the package design of best seller water brand Watsons; the graphic design of Hong Kong zodiac commemorative stamps year by year; even the city brand design of Chongqing, a municipality in southwestern part of China, and so on. KAN Tai Keung was the first designer elected as one of Hong Kong Ten Outstanding Young Persons in 1979.

He began his professional career in 1967 and is one of the pioneer designers in Hong Kong creative industry. His highly acclaimed works and awards brought him early prominence (Figure 4.2-1). Besides design work, KAN also motivated in design education, writing numerous design books, and set design awards to promote the design and art profession. He was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Design in Hong Kong Polytechnic University, he was the dean of art and design

school in Shantou University, and he has been guest professor in many top design schools in China.



*Figure 4.2-1 Parts of Awards in KAN's partnership company*

KAN Tai Keung was born in 1942, an artistic family, most of his family members were merited in different fields of art as showed in Figure 4.2-4. His grandfather was a famous grey sculptor who treated painting, calligraphy and engraving as a hobby, and participated as a foreman in the construction of the grey plastic sculpture of Guangzhou Chen Clan Ancestral Hall as showed in Figure 4.2-2 (Chen, 2014). And his grandfather was highly praised by seniors as the grey sculptor master with elegant skill in build Ruban temple (Figure 4.2-3)(G. L. XIAO, 2018).





*Figure 4.2-2 Chen Clan Ancestral Hall by Kan's grandfather*  
 (Retrieved from [https://cn.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g298555-d311546-i14111813-Chen\\_Clan\\_Ancestral\\_Hall\\_Folk\\_Craft\\_Museum-Guangzhou\\_Guangdong.html](https://cn.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g298555-d311546-i14111813-Chen_Clan_Ancestral_Hall_Folk_Craft_Museum-Guangzhou_Guangdong.html))



*Figure 4.2-3 Ruban temple in Guang Dong Province by KAN's grandfather(G. L. XIAO, 2018)*

His father was a trailer and his uncle fond of painting. KAN followed one of his uncles who was a famous ink painter, and who with KAN's aunt was known as 'ink painting queen and king' to learn ink painting and sketch (Y. R. Li, 2012; M. Xiao, 2011). KAN's grandmother, aunt and mother were versed in embroidering and sewing (Kan, 2016b). As showed in Figure 4.2-4, KAN's have a big family and most of his family members found a position in art field. Therefore, KAN was inspired by seeing and listening his family members. This learning helped him to cultivate the foundation of his Chinese culture, and he was already attached to craftsmanship and tools in his childhood. KAN read the books of Songs, Confucian Analects, Tang Poem and Song Poems during the time he studied in mainland



when he was under 15, which also introduced him to sophisticated forms of the Chinese language.

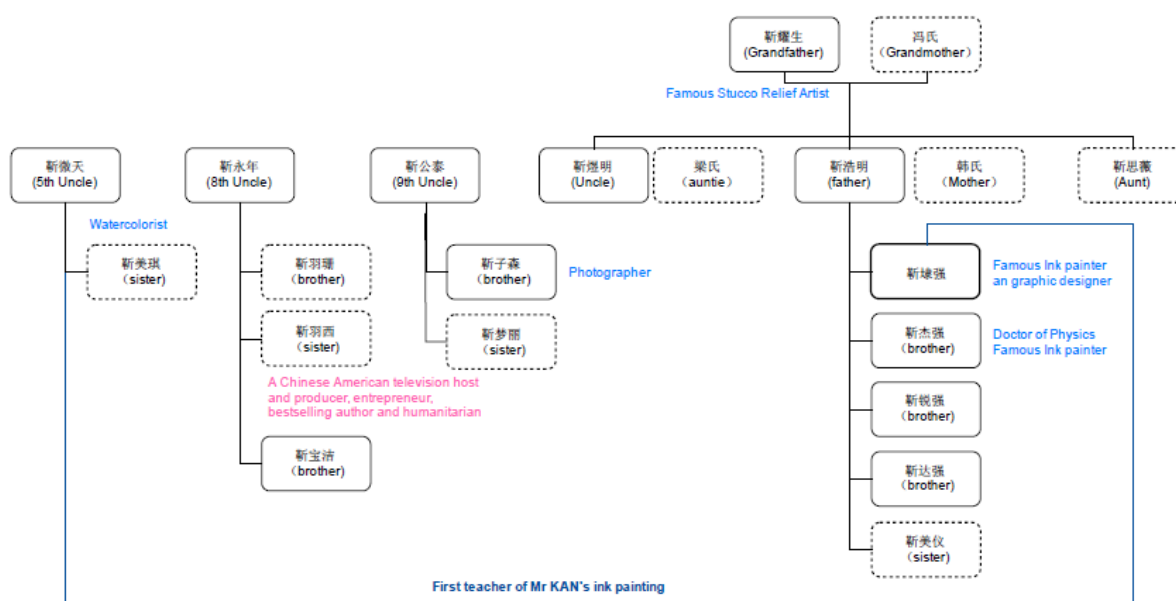


Figure 4.2-4 KAN Tai Keung's family relationship (Kan, 2012)

In 1957, KAN Tai Keung moved to Hong Kong. He was 15 years old. Among the experienced designers, he was a person who had unique learning experience in Hong Kong. He never been to some universities to get the formal training, but he had three famous teachers taught him design and art knowledge. One of them is Lui Shou-kwan, a key figure in Hong Kong's new ink art movement in the 1960s and 1970s. He inspired many students and followers who continued to promote the ink art tradition. KAN started to learn ink painting from him in 1960s, when Lui Shou-kwan reached the peak of his career with a series of Zen paintings(Chang, 2013). His works includes extensive and free calligraphic brushstrokes, ink washes and the red dot (Figure 4.2-5). It contributed to KAN's way to innovate in design and ink painting (Figure 4.2-6), such as the obvious red dots application in KAN's poster design. These elements helps him to creates an atmosphere of Taoist philosophical contemplation, and throughout the entire

series of themes (askART, 1999). Besides learning painting skills from Lui Shou-kwan, KAN Tai Keung learnt from LU's maxim of 'learning from the ancients, the nature and yourself.'



Figure 4.2-5 Lui Shou-kwan's ink painting

(Retrieved from <https://aaa.org.hk/en/collection/search/library/lui-shou-kwan-1919-1975-and-his-school>  
<https://aaa.org.hk/en/collection/search/library/lui-shou-kwan-new-ink-painting>  
<https://baike.baidu.com/pic/吕寿琨/4837589/1727168/#aid>)

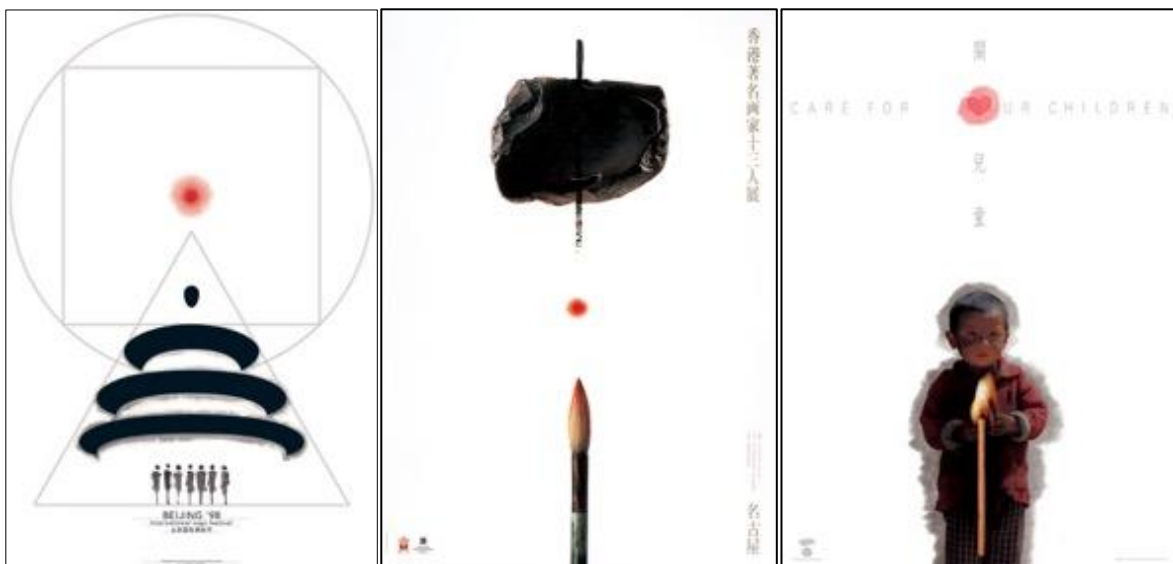


Figure 4.2-6 Posters designed by KAN Tai Keung

(Retrieved from <https://huaban.com/search/?q=靳埭强+海报&type=pins>)

The second is Wucius WONG, who is currently a visiting professor at the University of Hong Kong, China, and an advisor to several public museums in

Hong Kong. He graduated in US and was proficient of Bauhaus design theory. In 1971, he studied in the United States for a year, funded by John D. Rockefeller's Third Fund, and was awarded the Bauhinia Star Medal by the Hong Kong SAR Government in 2007. As a Hong Kong artists, Wucius focus on exploring the integration of traditional Chinese painting and contemporary Western design through ink art (Society, 2015).

The last teacher is ZHONG Pei Zheng, who studied in Germany. Zhong was inspired by Bauhaus design style. KAN Tai Keung used to work ZHONG Pei Zheng's company for 8 years. Before that, he did the design work for a shopping mall for 1 year in 1967. When his teacher intended to leave Hong Kong and transfer the management work to his father and brother, KAN decided to leave because his approach to design was different from their (Kan, 2016a, no.604-610). KAN set up his own company in 1976. By 1997, his design company had grown considerably (Kan, 2016a, no.663), to more than 30 people in HK, while there was only 2 or 3 people in HK and more than 40 people in Shenzhen now as the Chinese market development need.

During the time KAN went to night design school at the Chinese University in Hong Kong, the famous in painter and designer Wucius WONG and ZHONG Pei Zheng became his teachers after the latter had returned from abroad. The design theory lessons taught by ZHONG Pei Zheng were inspired by Bauhaus which was the reason why the early design work of KAN Tai Keung was in western style. He also came up with the idea of new ink painting work and over that time, his new Chinese design style started to combine geometry and ink painting. Besides, as

he mentioned in the interview, KAN's creation in ink painting and graphic design was a complementary relationship. He started ink painting creation from 1969, transferred from western pop style, landscape painting and brilliant colours to pure ink painting in 1990s, which had become the major inspiration in his design work by that time. In the mid of 1990s, ink painting became his vital design language (Kan, 2016a, no.249-258). Therefore, posters of KAN's new design style was combination of the Bauhaus and Chinese art and philosophy: a combination of simple style and ink painting (Figure 4.2-7).



*Figure 4.2-7 Series of Chinese Typography poster*  
(Retrieved from <https://huaban.com/search/?q=靳埭强+海报&type=pins>)

Besides, KAN Tai Keung had good relationships with many world-famous graphic designers. He also wrote several books to introduce their artworks to China (Kan, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). Among these designers, Paul Rand was particularly important. They kept in touch through mails. KAN got three letters from Paul, who was curious about KAN's work, and encouraged him to cherish Chinese cultural motifs in his work. He appreciated KAN's interpretation to Chinese

culture, which motivated and excited KAN during that time (Kan, 2016a, no.1081-1096).

#### 4.2.2. Observation

KAN Tai Keung loves life, he likes gossip columns and news, collects different kinds of old stationeries, like brush shelf, rulers, and other indulgencies in every detail of life (Figure 4.2-8). As Figure 4.2-9 shows, his home is filled with his collections. which includes old goods or antiques and modern pieces or furniture. He used to enjoy *the Beatles* when he was young. With his artistic family background, KAN was inspired by what he constantly saw and heard.

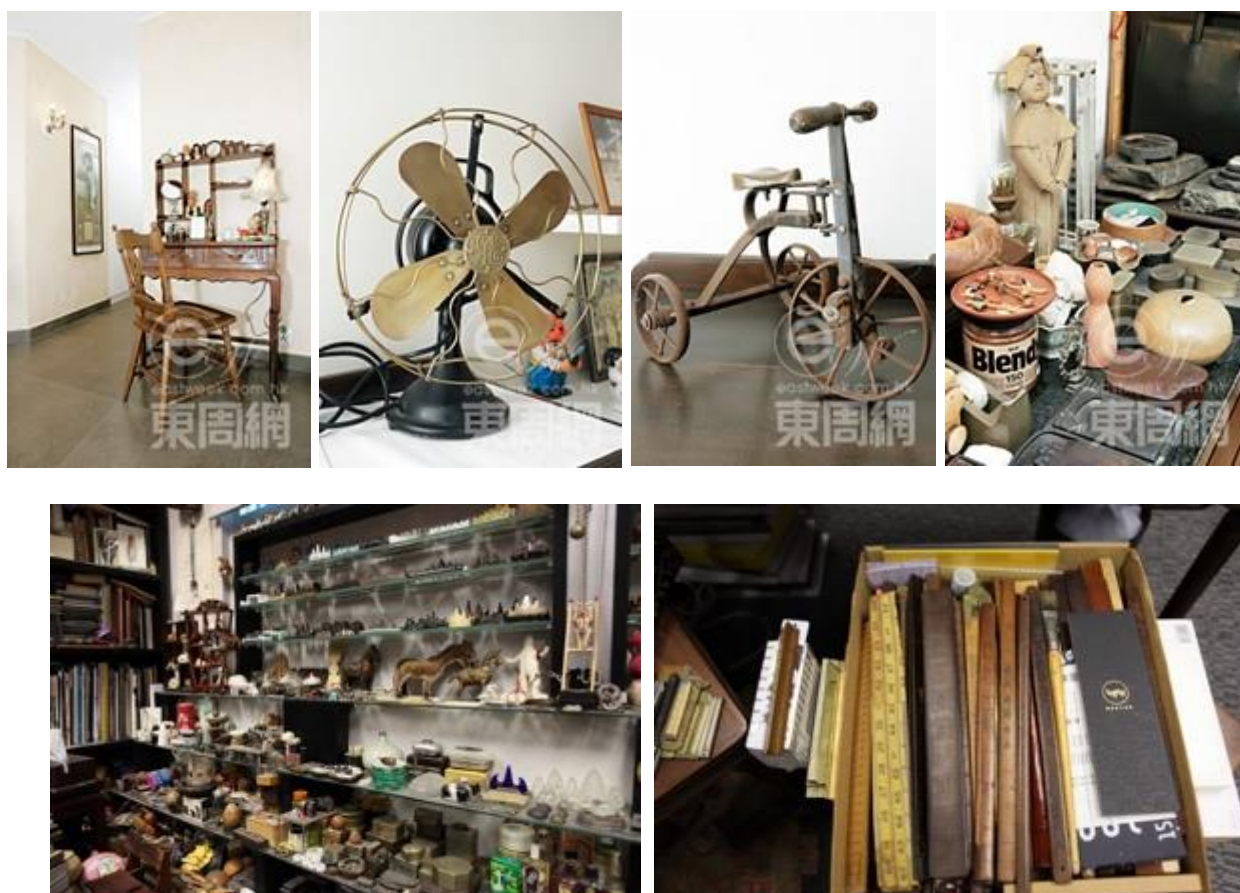


Figure 4.2-8 KAN Tai Keung's collections



*Figure 4.2-9 Photos of KAN Tai Keung's home*  
 (Retrieved from <https://eastweek.my-magazine.me/main/1903>)

Important to KAN's work is the balance of rigid and soft, yin and yang: for him, life needs balance, and ideas are also. This is a feeling that comes from Tai Chi's Taoist look at the universe. There are contrasts everywhere, but there is also mutual coordination everywhere. For KAN, harmony is not a unitary harmony, but an inclusive harmony (K. B. Xin, 2013). One case that shows KAN's thinking is the transboundary paper design. 'Free' pattern paper is a kind of Chinese paper he created for Nippon Paper House. The Buddha's philosophy of 'great freedom' is the origin of this work. In this paper, a hand-made paper edge and the bamboo texture of Chinese art paper comes to constitute the landscape of natural artistic conception. It performs a Chinese light-hearted and calm attitude (Kan, 2013).

In terms of KAN's personality, kind, peaceful, polite, and gracious are words that could also be used to describe him. The researcher met him for four times. The first time was in 2009, during the Beijing ICOGRADA, KAN led the students to see an exhibition. He was rounded by many students who disturbed him frequently,

but he was not impatient (Figure 4.2-10). The second time was in 2014, when the researcher was a master student at the School of Design of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She went to interview Freeman Lau in his company and also met KAN Tai Keung. As the superior idol of most students, the researcher asked for a short talk with KAN Tai Keung if he were available. He was really nice to invite the researcher and his classmates to his office to hear about our lives and thoughts about design. We were introduced to his collections by an amiable elder statesman of graphic design, which made a lasting impression on the researcher. Moreover, KAN's personality not only charmed the students and peers, but also the staff around him.

The last two times were all during the research interview, which was occurred in a traditional tea restaurant near KAN's company as his tight schedule. In the lunch time, people had to line up and wait for the seat, but as a regular, KAN got the seat immediately. He was serviced the tea he always chose without ordering. KAN had been a patron of this restaurant for nearly 20 years and knew all the waiters there. It is a kind of tacit understanding and respect from each side. During the lunch, he was concerned of the researcher's dietary habits, and he patiently talked with an old woman who learned ink painting from him and interrupted him to show her artwork. All through, KAN's conduct was like the way he interprets and transmits creativity: amiable and quietly transferring his inner peace to his surroundings. As the Japanese design master, Yusaku Kamekura, once commented, KAN's is specialized in distinguishing Japanese and Chinese design patterns. He said that KAN's work can only be done by a



Chinaman. Japan is also an oriental country which uses ink and other techniques to design, but Japan's national character is much more aggressive, and their design is swanky. This is contrast to KAN Tai Keung's work, which is full of Chinese restraint and humility. He believes that Chinese traditional culture is introverted. The advantage of this introverted culture lies in the ability to gain strength through softness and affinity rather than breaking it. It is an inner and living force ((jyueyau, 2009).



*Figure 4.2-10 Photos of KAN Tai Keung in 2009 Beijing ICOGRADA*

#### 4.2.3. Acknowledgement to culture



*Figure 4.2-11 Silverware design of Hong Kong Return by KAN Tai Keung  
(Retrieved from [http://www.klandk.com/news\\_show.aspx?id=167&page2=2](http://www.klandk.com/news_show.aspx?id=167&page2=2))*



KAN Tai Keung's acknowledgement to culture came from his artwork, his yearning for innocence. His respect for morality and ethic and nostalgia for home and country had been show all the time. He is an artist deeply inspired by traditional culture, as displayed in the silverware design of 'Hong Kong Return' (Figure 4.2-11). Lotus flowers, ink painting and Chinese fonts that symbolize Chinese culture are frequently used in his work (Ren, 2011). However, KAN does not like design that sells Chinese elements reluctantly. It is not enough to say China, but design must show its spirit inside (K. B. Xin, 2013). The Confucian concept of 'harmony', the ambition of the Taoist 'natural law', and the detachment of the 'self-defeating' of the Taoist family are all traceable in the humble works of art. Integrating the essence of Chinese traditional culture into the concept of Western modern design is a consistent concept, and an important method of expression. For instance, the logo of the Bank of China is simple and smooth, and it is very contemporary. The logo also contains Chinese ancient money, which is in line with the meaning of the heavens and the earth (Figure 4.2-12). In the middle, a clever '中' word highlights the signboard of the Bank of China . This logo is a classic that barely blends the ideas of the East and the West (Ren, 2011).



Figure 4.2-12 Logo design by KAN Tai Keung Bank of China ( Hong Kong )(Kan, 2000)

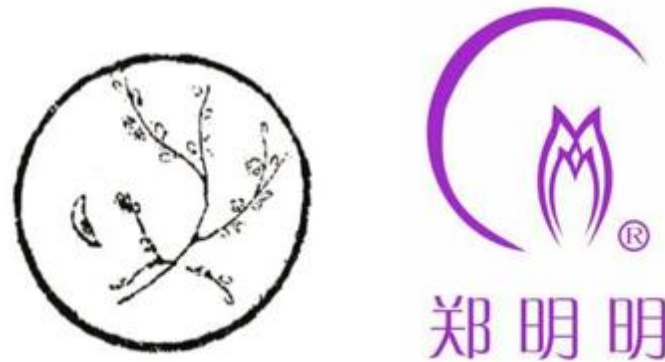


Figure 4.2-13 Logo design of brand, ZHENG Mingming, by KAN Tai Keung(Kan, 2014)

One case, KAN designed the cosmetics logo for Zheng Mingming, which reflect the beauty of woman (Figure 4.2-13). In Chinese traditional description, 'a woman beautiful enough can make the moon hide and flowers feel shy' (Chinese idiom '闭月羞花'). KAN combined western colours and Chinese metaphor, something inside rather than outside, to bring a Chinese touch to this logo (Kan, 2014).

Besides his acknowledgement to Chinese culture, KAN appreciated the Japanese way of interpreting cultural for creating graphic designs. Japanese design has also been inspired by western design style, and especially by the Bauhaus, but leading

Japanese designers have found numerous ways to fuse their culture with these Western influences. According to KAN, Chinese designers should learn the way to combine western and local culture and design concept in a way similar to Japanese designers, for example by learning patterns of the Tang Dynasty that could then be transferred to their own culture (Kan, 2016a, no.1125-1141).

#### 4.2.4. Theory notes

Life and culture are major sources of creativity for KAN. One essence of culture for him is philosophy, while the core of philosophy is ethics (Y. X. Fan, 2016). Indeed, before learning KAN's design philosophy, his concern to design ethics must not be ignored. Design ethics could be discussed in many ways: from human relations and social responsibilities as professional code of ethics, to the relation of people and people, people and things, people and nature (Kan & Liu, 2009). Ethics starts before the designer begins his work. KAN underscored the importance of target customers, who need to do a market survey for communication. One case is the city branding design of Chongqing in Figure 4.2-14, Without a survey of citizens' thought, the market could not have shown that the previous logo design could not be used (Kan, 2016a, no.179-217). Another case is the package and logo design for a personal care brand Lafang. KAN insisted that without a systematic study of its target customers, design cannot fit the market well (Figure 4.2-15). In this case, KAN provide a free pre-survey for the company. It was a questionnaire done by young female students in a school in which KAN used to be the dean (Kan, 2016a, no.235-243).



Figure 4.2-14 Chongqing City Branding by KAN Tai Keung  
(Retrieved from [http://www.klandk.com/news\\_show.aspx?id=206](http://www.klandk.com/news_show.aspx?id=206) )



Figure 4.2-15 Lafang Logo designed by KAN Tai Keung  
(Retrieved from <http://www.sjsheji.com/logobook/logonews/7894.html> )

In terms of the relationship between people and objects, KAN's philosophy starts from function. When he designs an object, the design is firstly to serve people. It has to get rid of pain and raise efficiency. Secondly, it is the aesthetic design, so that it is valued – or it does not achieve its social responsibility (Kan & Liu, 2009). One case is the Hong Kong zodiac stamp design of 2017, which was the year of the Rooster. KAN collected different kinds of Rooster toys and showed these in his office during to the researcher (Figure 4.2-16). Different from KAN's previous design work, which is elegant, solemn or magnificent, the stamp design for 2017 look tacky and coarse. The Rooster seems rough to a professional designer. Yet, for the target customers, who were the citizens of Hong Kong, they were conversant and in line with the general taste. For them, the message was obvious:

although the Roosters that appeared on the stamps were collected from the local markets, for Hong Kongers, they represented safety, longevity, and wealth (Figure 4.2-17). Therefore, although KAN is a respected predecessor of graphic design with a clear and cultured design philosophy, his sophisticated philosophy did not always drive his decisions about what the market needed. A part of the skill for designers is an ability to cast aside their preferences to explore the needs and wants of the masses (Hu, 2017).



*Figure 4.2-16 Rooster toys collected by KAN Tai Keung as inspirations*



*Figure 4.2-17 KAN's inspiration and stamps designed by him(Hu, 2017)*

Another example of KAN's stamp designs was the stamp in 1972, when KAN was closely affiliated with modern design and followed western design trends more closely than today. That year he designed the stamp with contemporary visual language rather than traditional realistic design method. The riots of 1967 were still in fresh memory, however. KAN's design was published by Hong Kong newspaper with black and white colour instead of golden and red colour (Figure 4.2-18). The dark colour and modern pattern made Hong Kongers unsatisfied and they even attributed a flood that took place that year to the unlucky design. Also, the government intervened not only on the colour of stamp design, but also on the appearance of pig in it. In 1971, Hong Kong was still under the colonial rule of England, and 'white pig' was a slang expression used to describe the policemen (Figure 4.2-19). The stamp was redesigned with the black and white pig, and the cheerful orange background colour was changed to purple and green instead. Therefore, although KAN was responsible for designing stamps in Hong Kong for decades, these two designs made him feel unwilling to talk about the designs. They also taught him he could not ignore political interference when he was using local elements as inspirations(ON.CC, 2013).



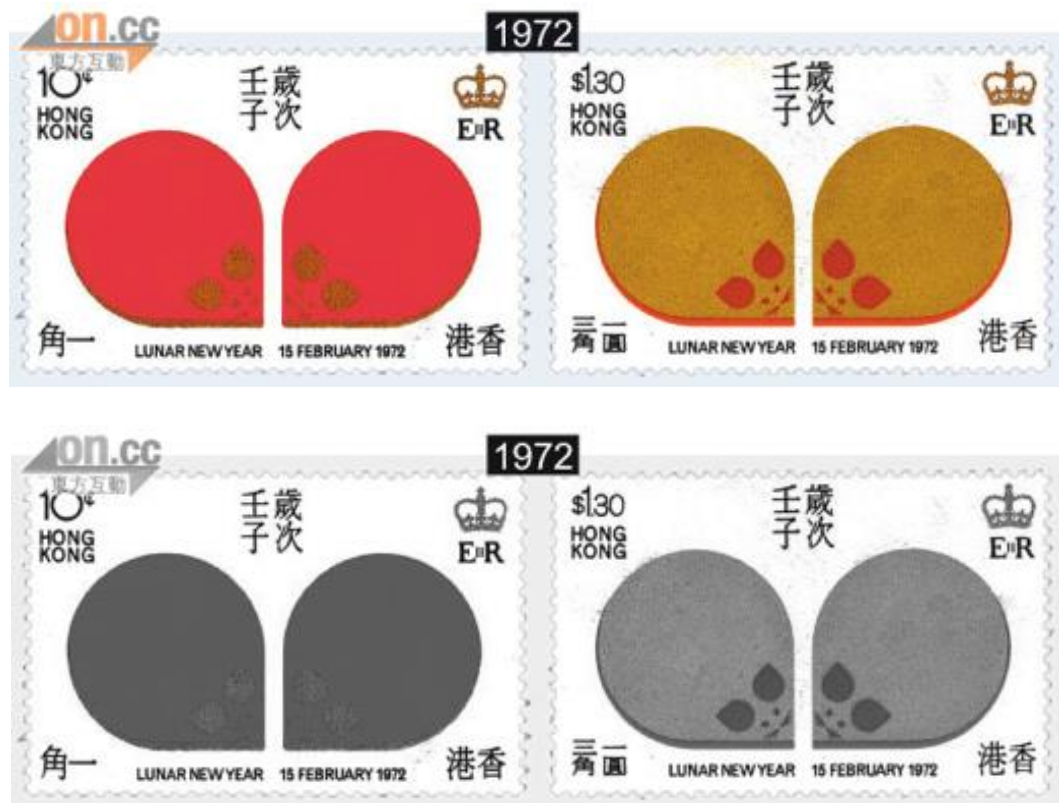


Figure 4.2-18 The stamp design of the year of mouse in 1972 by KAN (ON.CC, 2013)



Figure 4.2-19 The stamp design of the year of pig in 1971 by KAN(ON.CC, 2013)

Moreover, considering people's feelings, KAN Tai Keung insist that the design ethic should also extend to choosing clients. Designers should confirm that the clients' values is in the same camp so that they would not request designers to do things they should avoid (Kan, 2016a, no.409-411). One case for KAN Tai Keung is the logo design invitation of a famous Chinese philanthropist, Chen Yi Dan. At that point, KAN Tai Keung was already retired and seldom did design

projects. When he got Yi Dan's design request, the philanthropist's willingness commitment to social responsibility instead of fame moved KAN a lot. Through communication with the philanthropist, all the request was simple and low-key: for example, there was no need to show family name and portrait in designs (Kan, 2016a, no.383-392). After these conversations, KAN gladly accepted his design invitation and designed the logo (Figure 4.2-20).



*Figure 4.2-20 Logo design of Yidan Prize by KAN Tai Keung  
(Retrieved from <http://huaban.com/pins/1639098321/>)*

Based on parts of his knowledge of art, KAN believes Chinese design is too Western dominated. It is shaped by a highly competitive consumer society and it too often inner peace. Oriental philosophy, he believes, could introduce a dose of peaceful and quiet mind into it to make up for this deficiency. KAN wanted to do the design to give the public this feeling of stability. With more and more design experience, KAN has been getting rid of relying on symbols and his learning of learn Confucianism, Buddhism and especially Taoism has taken a larger role as a source of design. These three philosophies are in common in many ways, yet each has a unique system of thought. Yet, these ideas should have far-reaching implications for every Chinese person, he thinks (KAN, 2004).



He learned that by researching ancient vessels, tools, wood sculptor and paper cutting aroused his curiosity to the images of the eight diagrams of *The Books of Changes*, a major theoretical root of natural philosophy and humanistic practice in Chinese traditional ideology and culture and its artistic characteristics. In a poster exhibition designed by KAN and other eight Hong Kong designers from different eras, the designers used the *Books* image of the eight diagrams, called Qian Image which is the term 'Yuan Heng Li Zhen' (元亨利贞). It is a view of four virtues including benevolence, rites, righteousness, and integrity, and another view is conducive to persistence. As showed in Figure 4.2-21, KAN's poster combine the theory of 'a square earth and spherical heavens' and 'life and growth in nature' in *the Book of Changes* to show the characteristics of Chinese culture and contemporary art (Zhao, 2015).

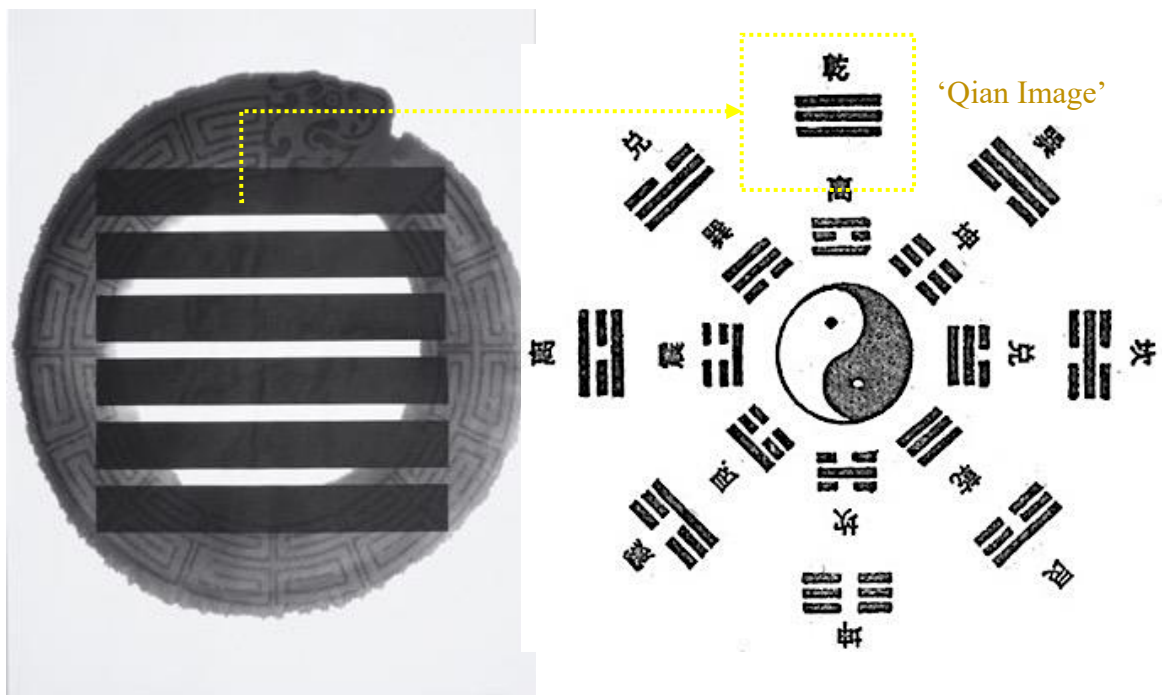


Figure 4.2-21 Poster exhibition on the Book of changes: Qian (left) and The eight diagrams of The Book of Changes(right)

(Retrieved from <http://www.orangenews.hk/culture/system/2015/10/30/010023446.shtml>

<http://www.guoyi360.com/bg/wwwbg/223.html> )

### 4.3. Stanley WONG

#### 4.3.1. Experience and background

Stanley WONG was also known with the name 'another mountain', as an advertising maven, Stanley has worked as creative director for several international advertising companies. He started his own design venture, 84000 Communications, in 2007 and branched into contemporary art, from film making to photography, with his work being shown at important international events such as the Venice Biennale(CERINI, 2017). He was born in 1960 in Hong Kong as the fourth of five children and lived his early years in a shack on a Mong Kok rooftop. Stanley graduated from Hong Kong Technical College in 1980 and later taught there. Besides that, he used to study in the evening course of the School of Design, PolyU and was a classmate of Tommy LI. He was expelled, however, when he was discovered as a student and the course was for working graphic designers (Whitehead, 2017).



*Figure 4.3-1 Stanley WONG aged 10(Whitehead, 2017).*

Stanley saw himself as a quiet and shy person, and it is only his job that made him look talkative. He was fond of taking photography, and keeps walking and

observing the city freely to learn and experience both its ideals and its undesirable parts (S. WONG, 2010). His quiet character leaves him more time to think, to be tactful and steadfast. Even though the salary of a teacher is much higher than a designer, he firmly devotes himself to design career after kicking off by PolyU.

After 15 years working experience in series famous creative agency, including Modern, Grey Hong Kong, JWT and Bartle Bogle Hegarty, Stanley became tired of working in an agency that only tried to improve someone's business image. In 1999, he returned to Hong Kong to head an international advertising agency TBWA as its CEO. He stayed in this job until he set up his own company 84000 in 2007. Meanwhile, he started some pro bono artistic projects, such as 'Lanwei Building' or 'Red, white and blue' to realize his social responsibility and respect to local culture under his brand Lion Rock spirit<sup>2</sup>. From 2007, Stanley has allocated his time into three parts: one third is for commercial work, one for artistic work and photography, and one for unpaid teaching and voluntary work, like designing promotion campaigns for a Buddhist group (Whitehead, 2017).

As his steadfast heart to know what he should do step by step in work life, he was clearly know his personal life. Stanley met his wife at the age of 21 and got married later, and remarriage after divorcing and communicating as friend for 10 years (Whitehead, 2017).

---

<sup>2</sup> It is a kind of local culture represented the struggling spirit.



*Figure 4.3-2 Stanley and his wife, Jessie in 1981 and 2015 (Whitehead, 2017)*

#### 4.3.2. Observation

Although Stanley did not get a higher diploma and has never formally taught in a university, he has always been called a scholar by others. Even if he sees himself quiet and shy, and speak slowly and gently, his elegance is easily seen in his speech and demeanor. The researcher met him three times. The first time was his talk in which he introduced 12 designers who inspired him a lot. It was a deep analysis from different levels and different aspects, and its discussion of the meaning of heritage impressed the researcher deeply. The second time was in the sharing session after his film, *Dance Goes On*, was broadcasted (Figure 4.3-3). The film described Stanley's three artistic friends' attitudes and values. Stanley described in this film how a knowing a musician helped him to present his thought actively. The researcher had been deeply moved after the showing of the film, as it shook her common sense about beliefs about the differences of culture in Hong Kong and Mainland. From the dancers' inward world and their improvisation, with alluring scene and strong or weak rhythm, the film helps us to know more about the artists and Hong Kong. The film greatly promoted mutual understanding and communication between Hong Kong and mainland.

He passed on his own strength and transferred his thought with lucid language implicitly.



*Figure 4.3-3 'Dance Goes On' showing and sharing*

The last meeting was a formal interview done for this research. The interview was different from other experienced designers, who had tried to answer the questions gently and comprehensively. In contrast, Stanley posted many questions to help the researcher test the feasibility of this research and tried his best to explain his understanding of cultural interpretation through his artworks (Figure 4.3-4).



*Figure 4.3-4 Stanley wrote his key points during the interview seriously*

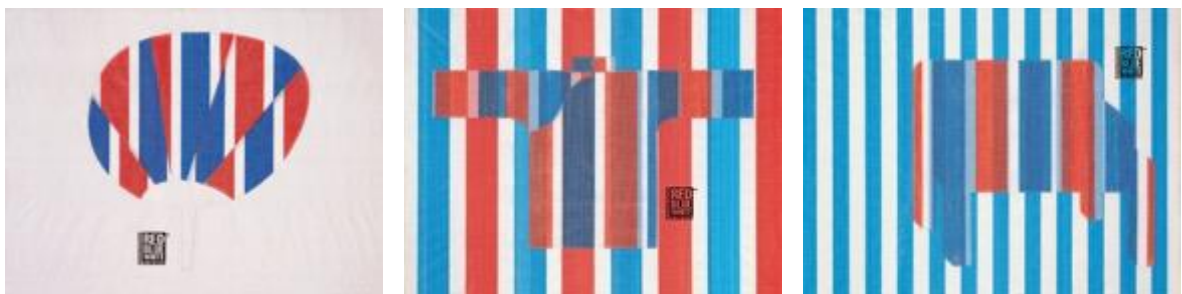
#### 4.3.3. Acknowledgement to culture

Stanley's appreciation of culture also built on his thoughts about Hong Kong. He had come to realize the long journey he had gone through as a designer, and he believes it is his responsibility to look ahead rather than just focus on imitating the west (CERINI, 2017). Hong Kong has a background in Eastern and Western cultures because it used to be a British colony and then returned to China. Hong Kongers are almost exclusively Chinese, but in the past 100 years, they have been educated in an environment defined by Western ideas. Stanley believes this is not a problem, but that designers like him should be mindful of Hong Kong's unique position in time and space, which gives them an ability work from different perspectives and see opportunities others might miss. Stanley insisted that designers must take responsibility for inspiring, extending and maintaining their own design style in this environment (S. WONG, 2015).

His well-known work 'Red, white and blue' was meant help to represent his viewpoint to culture. He got the idea for this series in 1988, when he saw a canvas bag sold as a fashion item in London. A similar bag had been very cheap and



common in the 1960s and 1970s in Hong Kong. In 2001, Wong began a series of artworks named Building Hong Kong. The most famous component of this series was the Red White Blue series (Figure 4.3-5). His intention was to use 'Red, white and blue' to represent the hardworking spirit of Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s, and push the positive aspects of its society above negative emotions about the handover to China (S. WONG, 2018, no.102-112). In the following years, Stanley tried to extend this project to a diversity of forms, like installation 'Tea and chat' in Italy in 2005, 'Back to the future' objects in 2006, an artistic brand 'Red white blue 330' in 2011, and the brand promotion of New Life for a psychiatric rehabilitation association in 2013. The 'Red, white and blue' project has continued around 20 years, and he had no plans to stop it until Hong Kong lives in harmony (S. WONG, 2018, no.392-402).



*Figure 4.3-5 Culture poster: the living heritage, 2001*

(Retrieved from <http://www.anothermountainman.com/personal-work/redwhiteblue-infinity/#/2>)



*Figure 4.3-6 Tea and chat, in Venice, Italy, 2005*

(Retrieved from [http://www.anothermountainman.com/2005/?q\\_cat=5&q\\_year=2005](http://www.anothermountainman.com/2005/?q_cat=5&q_year=2005))



Figure 4.3-7 Back to the future project, 2006

(Retrieved from <http://www.anothermountainman.com/personal-work/back-to-the-future-redwhiteblue/#/2>)

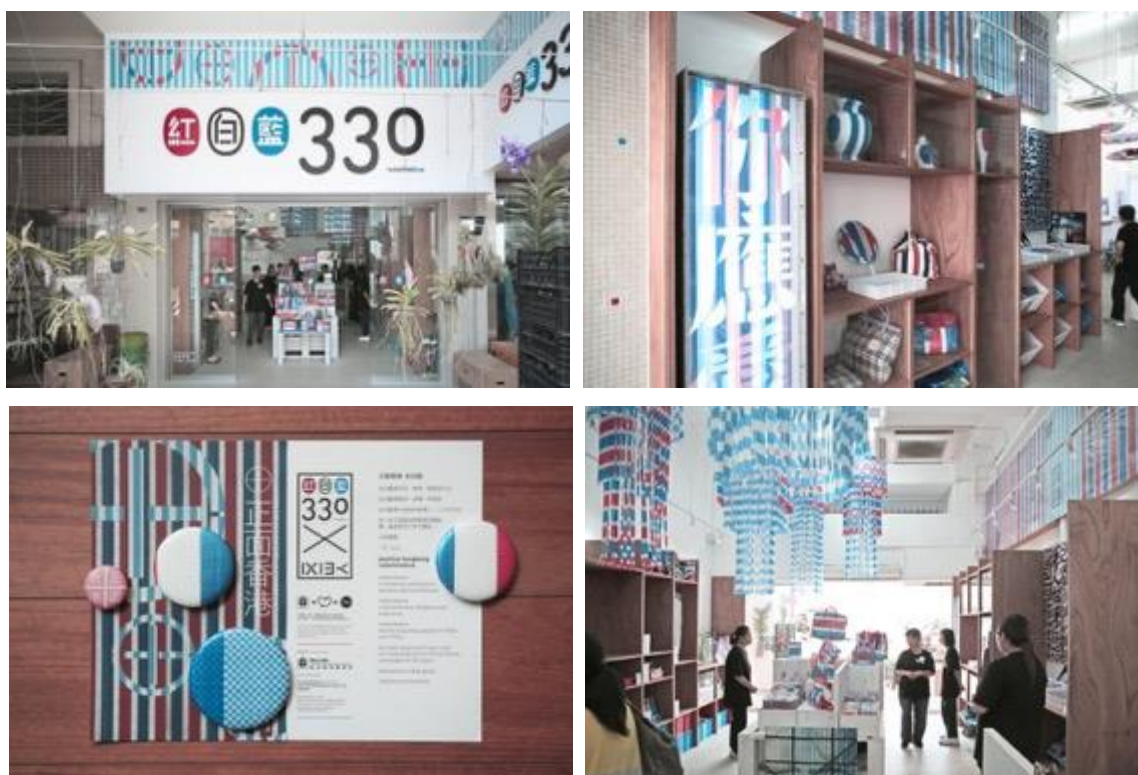


Figure 4.3-8 Artistic brand 'red white blue 330', 2011

(Retrieved from <http://www.anothermountainman.com/personal-work/redwhiteblue-330-p/#/2>)



Figure 4.3-9 New life psychiatric rehabilitation association, 2012

(Retrieved from [http://www.anothermountainman.com/2016/?q\\_cat=5&q\\_year=2016](http://www.anothermountainman.com/2016/?q_cat=5&q_year=2016))



#### 4.3.4. Theory notes

Stanley believed and studied Buddhism since 2003. For him, Buddhism has provided a way to build his design philosophy. It is much like the process of sit in meditation of Buddhism, which contains static thinking process in each stage. Some unconscious behaviors can be seen as a clue to how his ideas of design overlap with Buddhist beliefs. For example, the connections between Stanley's various artistic expressions, his years of Buddhist studies, and his strong sense of social participation cannot be ignored. A story is from his trip to Kyoto ten years ago to see the MIHO Museum designed by I. M. Pei, a famous American Chinese architect. Before entering the museum, he had to walk from a small open space on the mountainside to a small reception, pass through a cave like a tunnel, and finally pass a short bridge and found that the real exhibition hall had nothing to do with the reception in the meantime (Figure 4.3-10). People came here after washing all the dust of the soul through the tunnel, and really experienced the concept of architecture, 'After endless mountains and rivers that leave doubt whether there is a path out, suddenly one encounters the shade of a willow, bright flowers and a lovely village' says a poem from the Southern Song Dynasty. It is precisely the demand, respect and fulfilment of this kind of culture that is truly impeccable (Sina, 2010).



*Figure 4.3-10 MIHO museum in Japan*

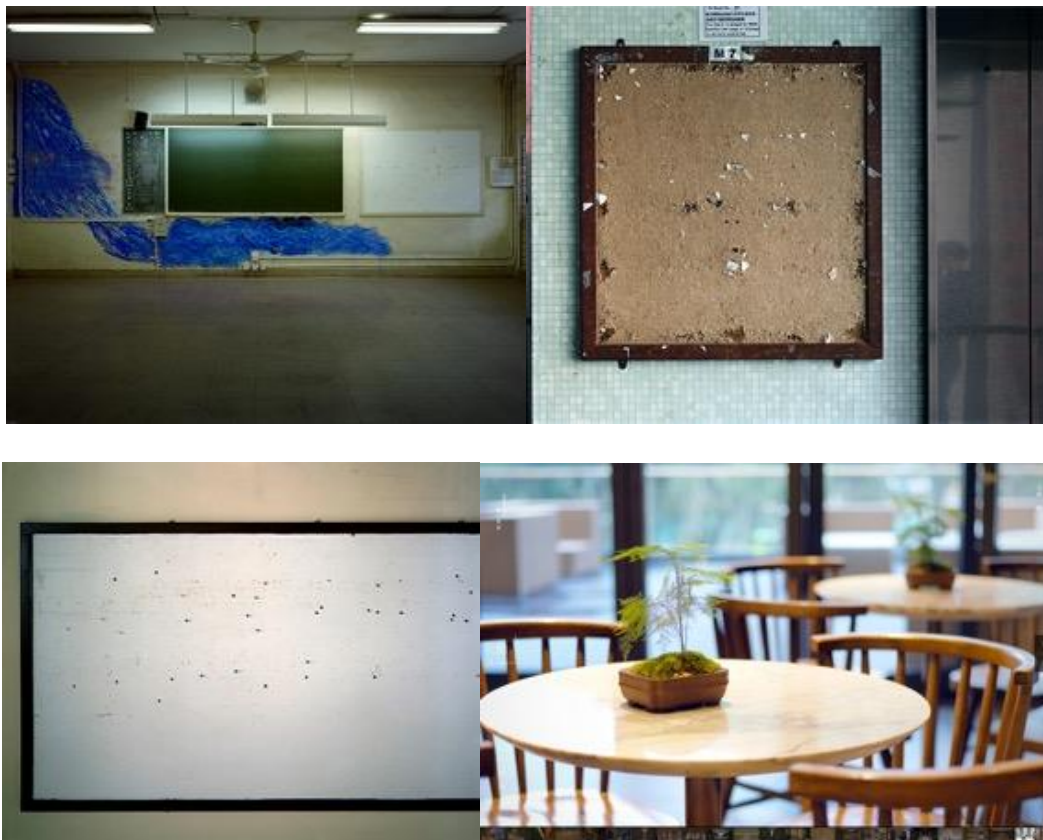
(Retrieved from <https://www.dezeen.com/2017/04/26/architect-im-pei-100-birthday-10-most-significant-buildings/>)  
[https://www.zenbunka.or.jp/zenken/archives/2008/09/mihomuseum\\_1.html](https://www.zenbunka.or.jp/zenken/archives/2008/09/mihomuseum_1.html))

In Stanley's work, 'impermanence' is important. It can be in the design of sofa, while the structure could also be used as a coffin. It is the expression of his Buddhist thoughts. He uses 'impermanence' to experience life, the changeable life, which is a state of mind cultivation (Figure 4.3-11). A series photographs taken by him is a testimony to his systematic Buddhist studies since 2003 (Figure 4.3-12). For these photographs, he borrowed a classic Buddhist story 'To begin with, there is no matter' to proposed that no matter what, it is sometimes matter that works against our will, while at other times, it is mind that works over matters (S. WONG, 2018, no.254-269).



*Figure 4.3-11 'impermanence' furniture design by Stanley WONG in 2012*

*(Retrieved from [http://www.anothermountainman.com/personal-work/impermanence/?filter=installation#\(0\)](http://www.anothermountainman.com/personal-work/impermanence/?filter=installation#(0)))*



*Figure 4.3-12 'To begin with, there's no matter' photography by Stanley in 2010*

*(Retrieved from [http://www.anothermountainman.com/personal-work/to-begin-with-theres-no-matter/?filter=photography-personal-work#\(2\)](http://www.anothermountainman.com/personal-work/to-begin-with-theres-no-matter/?filter=photography-personal-work#(2)))*

As an artist, Stanley is sometimes positioning himself as a social worker, whose mission is to bring the philosophy of Buddhism into an urban way of life (S.

WONG, 2010). As a designer who is active in the Hong Kong art circle, he has given himself two identities during his creation, besides 'Stanley', 'Another mountain' was his pseudonym when he did artworks, which was inspired by his admired Han Chinese ink painter, Bada Shan Ren. He had no objection of expressing art from a personal perspective, but this performance is relatively simple. He is a moderate idealist, has a language that belongs to himself to communicate with the soul and the world, and always takes the vision of the artistic 'ideal country' which includes expects to return to the original source of creation, to understand the power of nature, and to pursue the vitality and value of creation. His design thought was also applied in teaching, to show all the possibilities of design thinking which included commercial, ideal, individual, and social rather than guiding the students with his individual pretending (S. WONG, 2018, no.198 -215).

When the time Stanley started to create individual artworks around 2000, he had replaced the commercial concept of design with a cultural concept party (S. WONG, 2018, no.52-74). He had started to design and art projects in a holistic manner, and he had started to target his expression conceptually and emotionally rather than just commercially. As in his discussion of Buddhism with Leung Man-tao, a Hong Kong writer, critic and host, in 2009, Stanley insisted that everyone must be loyal to themselves as everyone have their own direction, value, aesthetics and preferences (Y. Li, 2009). The series Lanwei ('Unfinished') is a good example that captures scenes of hundreds of construction projects aborted due to the bursting of economic bubble from 2006 to 2012 (Figure

4.3-13). This project was self-initiated. In it, Stanley became an idealist who develop a unique language and told it to himself and to the world. His use of unfinished building to present his appreciation of life. Lanwei was his metaphor to that life (Yan, 2014).



*Figure 4.3-13 Lanwei photographs: Illegal residence in Bangkok (left two) and beasts in Shanghai(right)*  
(Retrieved from <http://www.anothermountainman.com/personal-work/lan-wei/?filter=photography-personal-work#/20>)

Two cases commissioned by clients also show how shift happened. The first one is the brand campaign 'Life is beautiful', which is entrusted by IFC, an upscale Hong Kong shopping mall in 2016 (Figure 4.3-14). During the period after the sensitive 'Yellow Umbrella' protests, which led to a small-scale depression of retail industry, Stanley subverted the previous form of promotional campaigning that tried to stimulate consumption. He tried to use the beautiful scenario in our life to lead a kind of active and health lifestyle, and use the method of empathy to stimulate consumption (S. WONG, 2018, no.670-682).



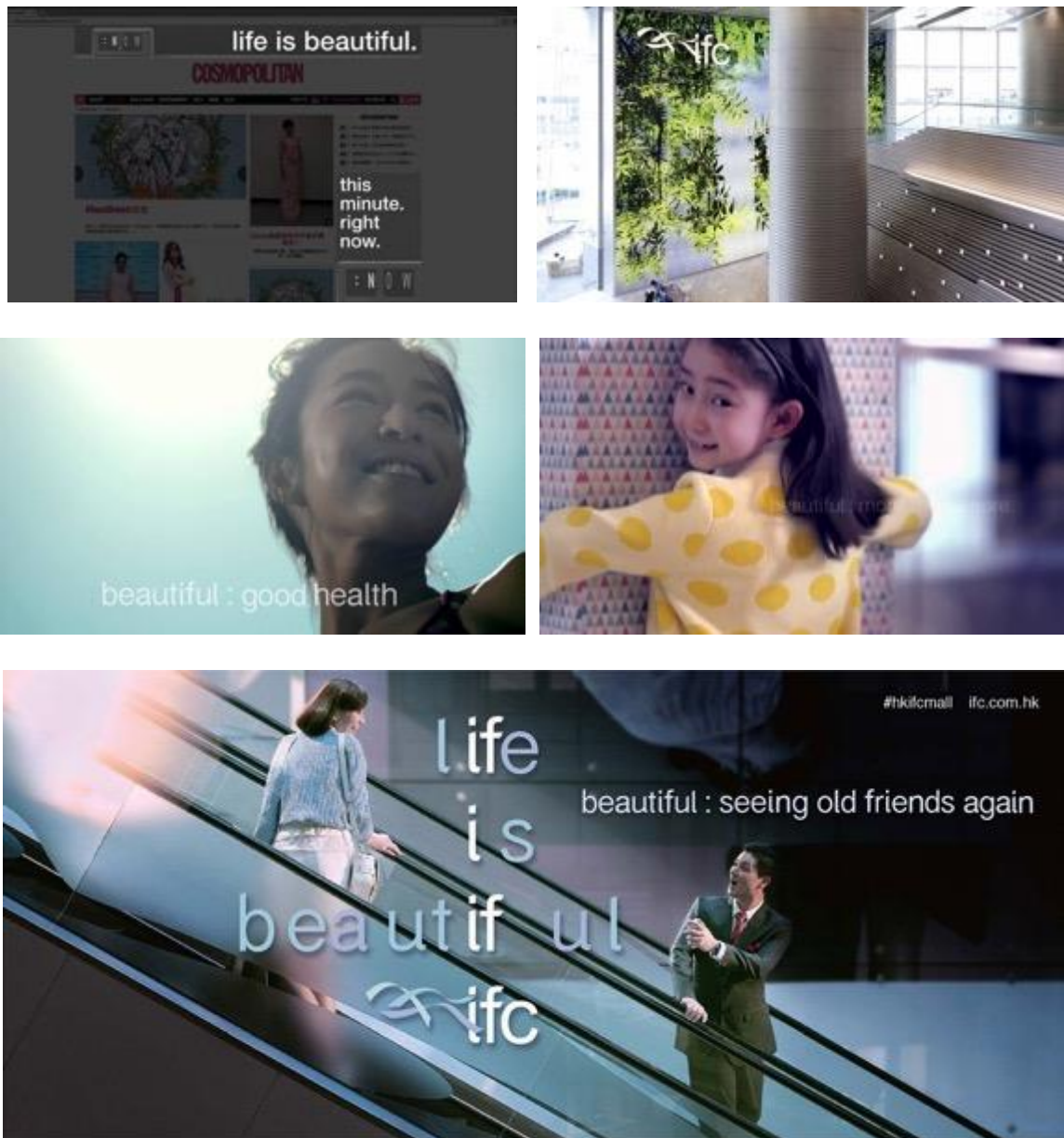
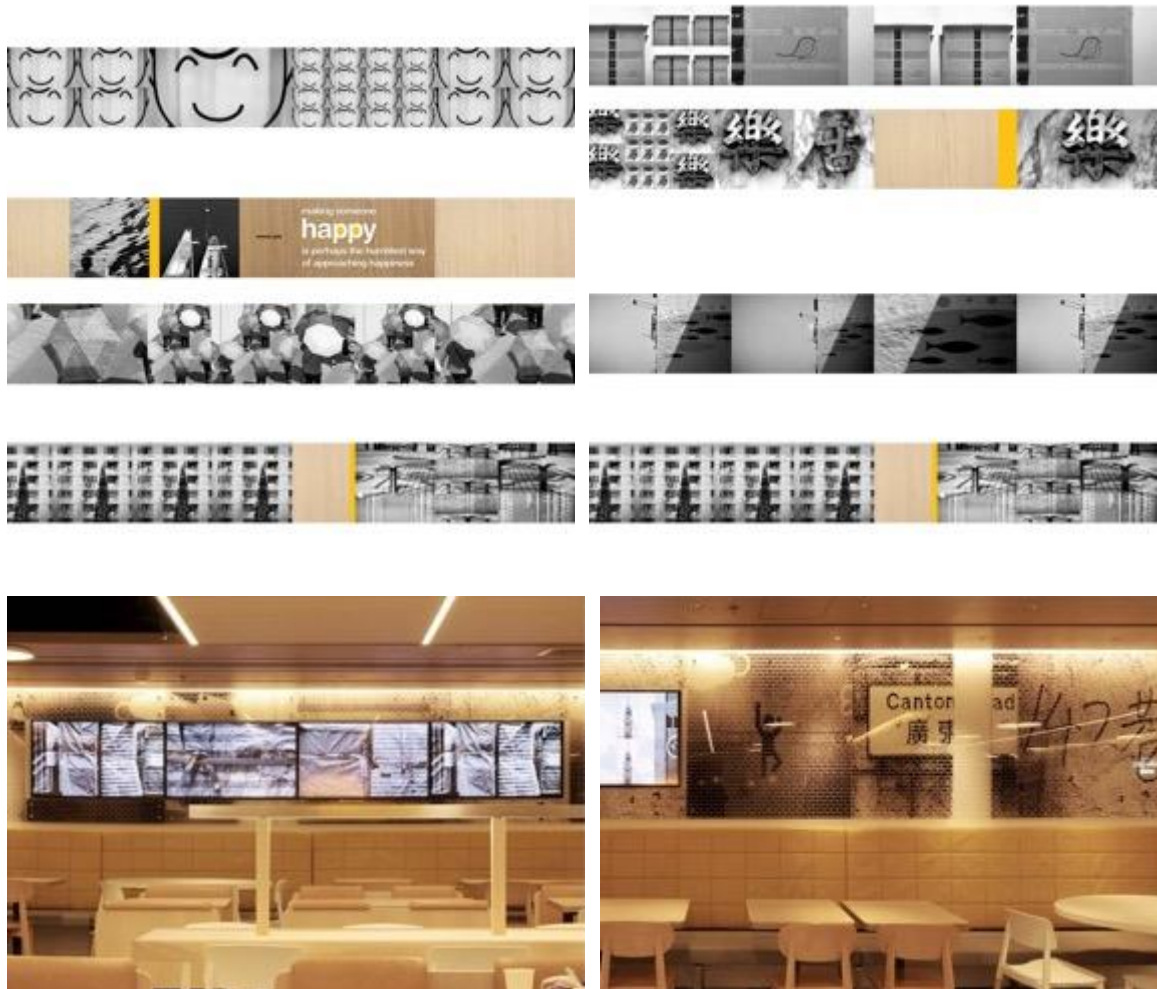


Figure 4.3-14 Ifc brand campaign video: *Life is beautiful*  
 (Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1e3gpNUTPU>)

The second one is the rebranding of Hong Kong fast food chain, Café de Coral, Stanley used the modern visual language to show the local life and transferred nostalgic feelings (S. WONG, 2018, no.720-723). Different from the previous form of fast-food advertisement that usually showed the seductive food directly, this campaign shifted attention to the serene new environment (Figure 4.3-15).



*Figure 4.3-15 Rebranding of Café de Coral by Stanley WONG  
(Retrieved from <https://beinghongkong.com/Life-is-beautiful-2016-17>)*

## 4.4. WANG Min

### 4.4.1. Experience & background

WANG Min grew up in oriental culture, while he has also been trained in the western educational systems for decades. Maybe for this reason, he can analyze the cultural differences well, and break them into new and old, traditional, and modern. The world best knows WANG Min through his designs for the 2008 Olympic games and for his chairmanship of the 2009 world design conference hold in Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing. His creativity in design

education is well respected in several fields of design. He has helped to enhance CAFA's reputation in the world through this seminar and his personality (Shuai & Min, 2010).

WANG Min was born in Yantai, Shandong Province, the northern part of China, which is also the hometown of the Chinese famous philosopher, Confucius. WANG Min graduated from Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts and taught there until 1983. After the domestic learning and teaching experience, WANG Min start his new life overseas as a visiting scholar, educator, and designer for the next 20 years. He came to Yale University in 1986 after studying with the graphic designer Armin Hoffman and industrial designer Richard Sapper at the Brissago Yale Summer Course in Switzerland in 1985. He followed several main paths during his learning. One came from the Swiss man Alvin Hoffman, a key person of the International Typographic style. Another one was Paul Rand, the previous department head of Yale University, where he also worked with like Alvin Eisman (M. Wang, 2017, no.402-406). With the recommendation of the department head, Alvin Eisman, WANG Min started to work in Adobe as a student in late 1986, when was the time that the digital revolution brought about by the introduction of the first generation of Macintosh computer (Bao, 2011). At Adobe, he participated in developing an approach for Chinese digital typography. After serving 8 years as Design Manager, Senior Art Director, Graphic Designer at Adobe systems, WANG Min joined Square Two in 1998.

With about 20 years overseas experience, WANG Min was invited to prepare multimedia materials for the application of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. He



came back to China from 2003 after being nominated as the design director of the Olympic Games. He also became the dean and doctoral supervisor of the most prestigious and influential art school in China, CAFA, and was appointed as the Ministry of Education as Chang Jiang Scholars Professor in 2007. In addition, he is a member of AGI (Alliance Graphique Internationale), President of AGI China Chapter, and was elected as the Vice President (07-09) of ICOGRADA (the International Council of Graphic Design Associations, the world body for professional communication design). For the great design festival, the ICOGRADA World Design Congress 2009 in Beijing, WANG Min was the key figure for organizing. This wide experience enriched WANG Min's design thinking, vision, and depth from visual effects to social meaning, from method to research thinking, from cultural communication to political standpoint, from design concept to commercial operation.

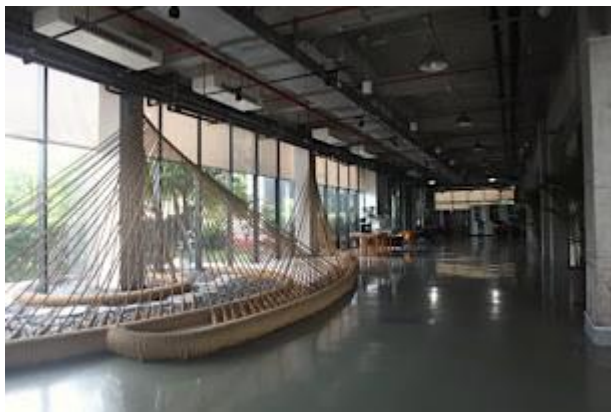
Although he has solid training in Western design principles and has extensive experience in both Adobe and Square Two Design, his Chinese cultural philosophy and sensibility have always been consistent with him and will definitely affect his design today (Richard B. Doubleday, 2008c). As he mentioned during the interview, the working experience in Adobe provided him experience, support and connections (M. Wang, 2017, no.183-185). In leading a design discipline of Central Academy of Fine Arts in China, WANG Min was also dextrous in the handling of data and materials (M. Wang, 2017, no.103-116). He insisted that design should be based on a strong sense of social responsibility, forward-looking ideas for professional research and exploration, and thinking about cultivating talents for the future of humanity. For him, it should focus on social

development and ecological civilization as design education (M. Wang, 2017, no.86-95). Important responsibility in guiding students to actively use design thinking to face the complex problems of human future (Qin, 2015).

#### 4.4.2. Observations

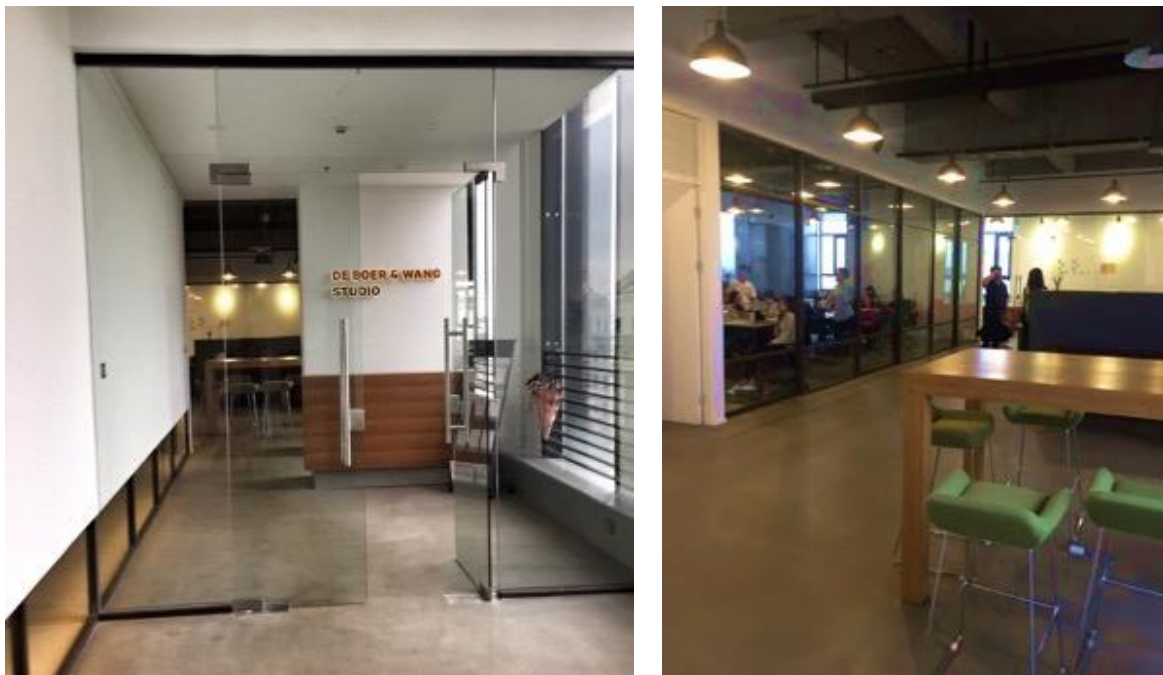
The interview took place in WANG Min's studio in a visual and art school in Shanghai. He mainly focused on working there after he retired from the deanship of CAFA. Different from other experienced designers' studios that reflect their personal identity, WANG Min's studio was in a modern building called DETAO (Figure 4.4-1), which is full of studio from different fields of design practice.

Like WANG Min's personality, moderate, gentle, and mild, his office is simple and bright without a lot of decoration (Figure 4.4-2). The studio is a cooperation with another designer as well as design educator, De Boer, and combines education and commercial design functions.





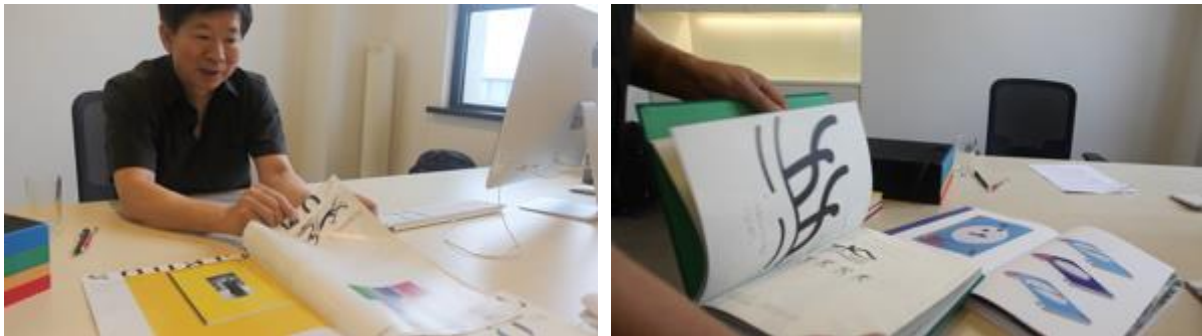
*Figure 4.4-1 DETAO Building where WANG Min worked in*



*Figure 4.4-2 WANG Min and Boer Studio*

Even though he used to be the president in AGI China and the dean of the CAFA, which means he had the high status in China graphic design and educational field, his approachable attitude filled the researcher with deep respect. In the beginning of the interview, he was panting because he had run into the studio at our appointed time. Yet, his pace was light to avoid disturbing the class in meeting room. After short and polite greetings to his assistants and students, the interview starts quickly, and he frequently found his books or reports for the

researcher as reference during the interview (Figure 4.4-3). Besides, among all the interviews during this research, his use of e-mail was exceptional. Few designers from mainland China were accustomed in using emails to communicate, or they asked their secretaries to reply. WANG Min was the only one to reply the researcher promptly by himself.



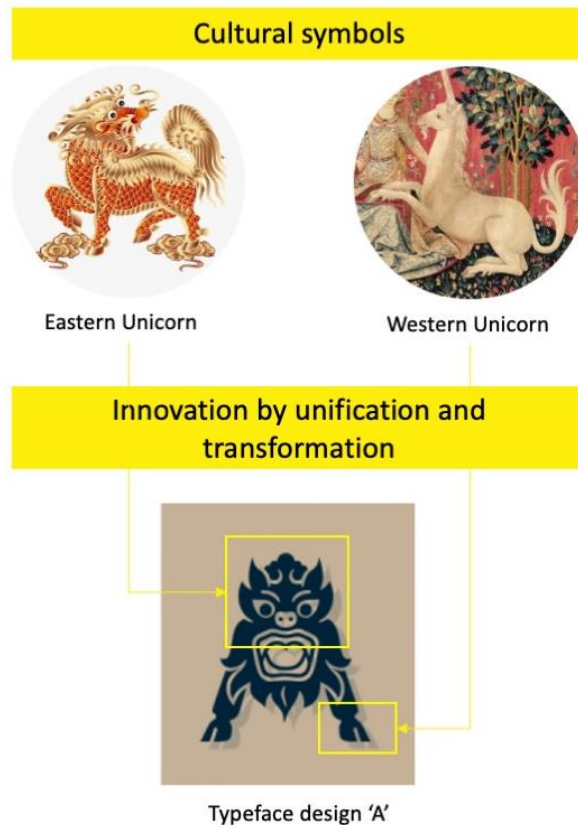
*Figure 4.4-3 WANG Min tried to find many references during the interview*

#### 4.4.3. Acknowledgement to culture

WANG Min insist that a good designer needs to have an ability to integrate things. The ability to integrate must cover all kinds of social factors which includes the diversity of world, acknowledgement of history, as well as the impact of those factors to design. The ability reflects the width of the designer's comprehension of the world, local culture, and social factors. If a designer lacks the acknowledgement of local culture, the lack will make him lose the focus during the way to develop (M. Wang, 2006). This was quite similar to what WANG Min learned at Yale: 'Over the past ten years, student typography workshops at Yale have endeavored to reinterpret the West's modern approach to culture from a transversal and transnational cultural viewpoint.' (Redacción, 2010).

If we treat the graphic design of the 2008 Olympic games as an example, as an art director WANG Min insisted that the games should combine Chinese culture and Olympic spirit, and bestow the traditional Chinese art with modern spirit (M. Wang, 2017, no.212-214). For him, each designer should find his own design language, which includes design symbols and reflections. Any Chinaman or China woman already knows a lot of Chinese things, but these things based on our personal experience. If they can find themselves to discover collective Chinese elements, Chinese spirit, and Chinese style. This would be better than deliberately borrowing a lot from the ancestors (M. Wang, 2017, no.224-230).

In terms of western and eastern cultural integration, WANG Min has concentrated on combining original cultural elements with a contemporary and global touch rather than keeping cultural elements separate. Take the typeface 'A' for instance (Figure 4.4-4), which he designed at Adobe. It is based on Mythos, a legendary mythological beast familiar in both Eastern and Western cultures. The design includes both the unicorn with eastern face and western foots (Richard B. Doubleday, 2008a). The beasts in Mythos were based on classic European characters, but he added an Asian touch to it (Richard B. Doubleday, 2008c). That is, the elements or impressions from both eastern and western unicorns are unified in the new design. They are not simply put together. Instead, they are transformed and rotated to face the audiences. The result of this innovation is that it enhanced the power of the original symbols though a much simpler iconic approach.



*Figure 4.4-4 Cultural symbols and innovation in typeface design 'A'*

Another case designed by WANG Min is the visual identity for the Forbidden City in Beijing. It was based on the rubbings of the early Han style dragon tiles (Figure 4.4-5). In the Age of Empires, the dragon was the symbol of the emperor. Even today, the dragon is regarded as a symbol of the Chinese nation, and a source of spiritual comfort for people. Therefore, as a Chinese, it is natural for WANG Min to choose the image of the dragon.



*Figure 4.4-5 Han-style dragon in tile stone*



For the pattern of dragon, he chose Han-style. Although a variety of dragons can be found in the Forbidden City, the exaggerated delicate dragons in Ming and Qing dynasty style implies a vulgarity (Figure 4.4-6).



*Figure 4.4-6 Dragons in different dynasties in China*

The identity for the Forbidden City at the end clearly reflects WANG Min's conscious effort to bring the elegant Han dragon alive in the modern world (Figure 4.4-7). Considering the beasts applied in font design for Adobe type library, it is quite possible to think that he may unconsciously added that European style to the Chinese dragon (Richard B. Doubleday, 2008c).



*Figure 4.4-7 The visual identity of The Forbidden City by WANG Min (Richard B. Doubleday, 2008c)*

#### 4.4.4. Theory notes

For WANG Min, it is important to recognize the standard of good design. He thinks that good design must be easy to use and should be used to enhance the aesthetics of the whole society as well as bring beauty to our society. Besides, good design should also focus on environmental protection and all aspects that are important to our lives, rather than be only good-looking or just bizarre (Q. Lu, Liu, Kang, & Wu, 2015). This is very similar to what Steiner proposed at the AGI conference in China April 2018. In the conference, Steiner insisted that all good design is above all functional. Additional factors must be considered after making sure the design is practical.

During his decades in design, which has led to unique and socially valued works, WANG Min has also developed a powerful theoretical vision. WANG Min's recognition of his own design philosophy is clear, well-documented and in line with his experience. Through his design philosophy and persistence, he has come to see design problems from a comprehensive view. As the name of his company 'Square Two' (两方), its meaning could be seemed as his design philosophy. In oriental culture, 'Two' (两) represent a world full of contradictions. A Chinese Neo-Confucian moral philosopher and cosmologist in Northern Song Dynasty published in Enlightenment Through Confucian Teachings, '两不立，则一不可见。' which roughly means that 'Unity cannot be seen without the contradiction between two opposite sides.'<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> See [http://www.chinesethought.cn/EN/shuyu\\_show.aspx?shuyu\\_id=2225](http://www.chinesethought.cn/EN/shuyu_show.aspx?shuyu_id=2225).



As another Chinese philosopher and writer, Laozi, said in Tao Te Ching ‘万物负阴而抱阳’ could be explained this way: ‘The contradictory forces of yin and yang are inherent in the things themselves.’ The similar reference could also be found in the oldest Chinese classics, I Ching, had a proverb, ‘一阴一阳之谓道’. The literal interpretation is that the ever-changing nature of everything in the world and the ever-changing nature of everything are the result of the interaction between yin and yang. The implication is that everything is made up by two opposite sides, this is the law of development of all things, and the essence of Chinese Philosophy (‘道’ means ‘philosophy’) (M. Wang & Shen, 2005, p. 8). One case in which this Chinese philosophy can be seen is the logo design for Adobe, which looked like Taegeukgi, a description of Yin and Yang, black and white, already mentioned in [Chapter One](#), Figure 1.1-4.

Another good illustration is the medal design for Beijing Olympic Games (Figure 4.4-8), which is designed by the CAFA Olympic design groups which is guided by WANG Min. The inspiration of the design comes from China's ancient jade, known as 'jade wore by baron (佩玉)'. It not only embodies the praise of the winner, but also the image of Chinese nation's values that people using jade to symbolise virtue, nobility and honour (Figure 4.4-9). The medal hook is inspired by a ceremonial jade with a double dragon pattern, Jade 'huang (璜)' which usually used as a hook to tie strings on (Richard B. Doubleday, 2008b). The ‘gold and jade’ design implies a proverb ‘A happy marriage of Golden and Jade (金玉良缘)’ in traditional Chinese culture, which means a harmonious union and it

reflects the Chinese people's praise of the Olympic spirit and the supreme respect for athletes.



Figure 4.4-8 Jade medal design for Beijing Olympic Games by WANG Min  
(Retrieved from <https://www.bbitt.com/archives/632>)



Figure 4.4-9 Jade 'Huang 璜' with a double dragon pattern (left) and jade wore by baron 佩玉 (right)  
(Retrieved from <https://baike.so.com/doc/6413576-6627245.html>)

The second chapter of Laozi's *Tao Te Ching* could be the extended exploration of the philosophy before,

‘天下皆知美之为美，斯恶矣；皆知善之为善，斯不善矣；

故有无相生，难易相成，长短相形，高下相倾，音声相和，前后相随。’

‘It is because everyone under Heaven recognizes beauty as beauty, that the idea of ugliness exists. And equally if everyone recognized virtue, this would merely

create fresh conceptions of wickedness. For truly 'Being and Not-being grow out of one another; Difficult and easy complete one another. Long and short test one another; High and low determine one another. Pitch and mode give harmony to one another. Front and back give sequence to one another.' (Laozi, 1992)

In Western culture, we often think '两' of 'Dichotomy', a word developed from the Greek dichotomies. There are two possibilities for further explanation: one refers to two pairs of opposites, and one refers to both sides of complementarity, which has the similar meanings with the ancient Eastern philosophy (M. Wang & Shen, 2005, p. 19).

These thoughts illustrate WANG Min's design philosophy, his philosophy of design culture, and his thinking. He believes that design is a process of synthesis as well as an innovative process. Integration is a blending, concentration, and unity; innovation comes from separation: separation from the old things, separation from the habitual way of thinking, separation for pursuing prominence and novelty. Innovation and separation are always opposed and complementary (M. Wang, 2006; M. Wang & Shen, 2005). In addition, for design concept and implementation, feminine and rigid, temporary, and permanent, content and form, art and technology always coexist at the same time. This converse design philosophy was supported by Paul Rand when he discussed the relationship between art and design. He said that:

'Without art, designing may mechanically repeat previous clichés, or cluttering together for hunting. Without art, the computer is just an accelerator without thoughts, but the effect is lacking in essence, there is form without proper

content, or there is content and lack of meaningful form(M. Wang & Shen, 2005, p. 12).

#### 4.5. HAN Jiaying

##### 4.5.1. Experience and background

HAN Jia Ying was the first generation of Chinese graphic designers who developed new business models to respond to the needs of the rapidly changing China. HE moved to Shenzhen, where eastern culture meets western cultures and where design is closely inspired by designers working in Hong Kong's hyper commercial environment. His work can be seen in every corner of China from daily consumables; the package design of Cestbon Purewater and Snow Beer; to places of residence like Beijing Oriental Ginza and Vanke Real Estate; to major national cultural projects like the curation of ancient artworks exhibition in Summer Palace; political poster designs celebrating the return of Hong Kong to China; and his work for *Communication* and 13 years' for *Tianya Magazine*. This body of work has made him known in the world of Chinese graphic design.

HAN Jia Ying was born in 1961 in Tianjin, and followed his parents from Tianjin to Xingping, a small town in the Guanzhong Plain of Shaanxi Province, when he was five years old. As a young boy, he went back to Tianjin during every summer holidays, and his interest was observing the imported buses in Tianjin. Those were the only routes with double decker buses. He wrote in his book, *Reflection*,

'I had all of the bus stops memorized, and still remember them today. You could say that these buses were also an industrial design. When something is a part of your life from such a young age, it influences you in unnoticeable ways gradually.

When you go somewhere else, you don't see them so much, maybe only a little bit. That period was from 1960s to 1970s (Han, 2012b).

HAN Jia Ying was fond of drawing and dreamed about learning painting in a university. His dream came true after three attempts at college entrance examinations. He learned graphic design at Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts from 1982 to 1986, an old-style art school in China, and he taught in Xi'an Textile School after his graduation until 1990. During that time, he learned that graphic design had to bring new blood to Chinese market after a long period of depression. 'Training how to evenly colour and copying Chinese classical patterns every day, it is just training artisans instead of considering the market.' This situation changed until 1984, when a professor from Kyoto City University of Arts had taught students for a month. It was the first time he got to know Bauhaus and the operation mechanism of an advertisement company. It was a shock: it was the first time he learned to know about contemporary design.

In 1990, HAN Jia Ying left his job in Xi'an to start to work as a graphic designer in Vanke, a large residential real estate developer in China. During that time, his previous teacher, Chen Shao Hua worked as the company's design director. At Shenzhen, HAN Jia Ying completely immerse himself with the state of freedom and exotic touches of a rapidly changing town. He could watch terrific films, find import goods from duty free shops, as well as enjoy the nice package design in supermarkets. Another advantage was the proximity to Hong Kong. During that time, HAN Jia Ying went to Hong Kong to learn from the leading figures, KAN Tai

Keung , Freeman Lau and Henry Steiner whenever he had time (Post, 2014).

Adapting to new life in Shenzhen, HAN Jia Ying set up his company in 1993.

Regardless of whether he is a design educator or whether he does commercial design, HAN Jia Ying insists that he wants to contribute to history as a designer. He sets a high bar to his 'aesthetic taste' and detailing in how he is interpreting the culture of the times with symbolic graphic composition and colours. His attempt is to form a design language that combines Chinese traditional culture and fashion aesthetic. In a market-oriented economy, he can use market contracts to settle the relationship between purchaser and his artwork to protect his artistic taste and instinct. When HAN Jia Ying faces dignitaries and plutocrats, he can uphold a kind of attitude that is not humble and earns real respect (Shan, 2002).

#### 4.5.2. Observation

Before the interview, the researcher met HAN Jia Ying's previous master student as well as the art director, Zhou Ting, in his Beijing company. She was warm hearted and introduced HAN Jia Ying's busy calendar as a manager of two companies and a teacher in CAFA. During the time, their company had just finished a project, *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains* (Figure 4.5-1), an exhibition design in the Forbidden City of a precious painting which has only been exhibited twice in the past 100 years. The exhibition was difficult to organize because of the very large number of visitors. Yet, despite the crowds, visitors were able to follow the clear visual sign system smoothly: the design achieved its main purpose. Besides the original painting, people also had an enjoyable visual

feast with its exact colour matching, exquisite font design and charming layout design. Also, Zhou Ting said, HAN Jia Ying's company in Beijing is mainly focused on the cultural projects, while the company in Shenzhen is focused on commercial projects.



Figure 4.5-1 Exhibition design, *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains*, by HAN Jiaying design company

As HAN Jia Ying's book *Reflection* notes, he is a sensitive person fond of life in all its forms, and a careful observer of life. He believes that capturing inspiration in

life is a marvellous thing and a main design driver. If a designer can capture the spark of life, the result is touching and exciting, at least in comparison to the typical forms of art and design that follows prescribed order (Han, 2012b). When HAN Jia Ying does design with his unique oriental aesthetic, he cannot describe what kind of design philosophy he has in mind. Yet, when he is working on color, fonts, layouts, or other visualizations, he chooses and judges the design by his own perception. Perhaps for this reason, there is some controversy about his work. One famous Chinese art critic Shan (2002) has said that HAN Jia Ying's knowledge is somehow lacking. Another art critic and historian in China, Hang (2007) also claims that the cultural connotation of HAN Jia Ying's design remains focused on the surface. Yet, another Chinese design professor and columnist, HE Jian Ping, argued that HAN Jia Ying's design was full of unique cultural interpretations in a modern style and it captures regional cultural characteristics as well. His design is not imprisoned by some kind theory, but it is moving and in constant development, says this professor (J. P. He, 2013) .

HAN Jia Ying is a above all a cultural interpreter, who can transfer the cultural meanings into his artworks and enhance cultural cognition of the public through it. Maybe that explains his popularity among his clients and the public, but also the big scale of his design company. He is also respected among other designers. He was the first professional graphic designer to hold an individual exhibition in CAFA gallery in 2013, an exhibition that reflected the 30 years' development of Chinese graphic design since the reformation of the economy begun (Figure 4.5-2).





*Figure 4.5-2 HAN Jia Ying's individual exhibition 'Reflection' in 2013 (Yi, 2013)*

From books and reports, the researcher could not find any straightforward examples of his design thinking. In the interview, his unique method of interpreting culture quickly became apparent. His thinking and acknowledgement was visible in his visual language, and especially in his book called *5000 years, 50 things and 500 colours* (Han, 2012a). In this book, he tried to trace and collect the symbols, graphics and colours related to the daily life of ordinary people in China during the last 5000 years. His aim was to trace the source of Chinese graphic design, which includes commodity rationing coupons,

calendars, work notes, advertisement posters. He wanted to show the specific aesthetics from different times of China in the book. Abstracting the essential elements of China's 5000-year history, the book also extracts 500 Chinese colours from the diverse ancient Chinese artifacts. Fifty contemporary designs were inspired by the research and presented in the book (Figure 4.5-3).



*Figure 4.5-3 HAN Jia Ying's book, 5000×50×500*

*(Retrieved from <https://cargocollective.com/zhiwentang/5000-50-500-1>)*

HAN Jia Ying started his design career by learning and copying from contemporary and mostly Western global design movements, which he first learned from his Japanese professor, from media in Shenzhen, and from famous predecessors in Hong Kong. After several cycles of transformations in his research and style, HAN Jia Ying's artwork today undoubtedly builds on several modern graphic design styles. By combining European and American modernist design into his own, however, he has created his unique style, which is based on the grid system and an underlying homogeneity. On this basis of modernist styles

of Europe and the United States, HAN Jia Ying has created a style that also differs from them (J. P. He, 2013).

Just as HAN Jia Ying's way of interpreting culture in design is unique, his way of finding inspiration is perception-based. He believes that the way in which people experience life changes with age. People will perceive the same things differently when their experience and emotions gets richer over time (Han, 2012b). That could be seen from his rich collections in every corner of his office. When the researcher stepped into his office, the artworks and related inspirations could be found all over the space (Figure 4.5-4). Perhaps this is the source of his ingenuity and flexibility as a designer: these materials help him to design and create naturally.







*Figure 4.5-4 HAN Jia Ying's office in his Shenzhen company*

A good case to show how these collections inspire him is the application of Taihu stone, which is a kind of limestone produced at the foot of Dongting Mountain in Suzhou, China. The mountain is close to Lake Tai and its limestone is frequently used in building Chinese gardens. Taihu stone carries the profound emotions of the ancient Chinese scholars, and it is like Karesansui, Japanese rock garden (Figure 4.5-5). It represents a state of mind in which ‘the highest form of retreat is finding serenity amidst chaos’. HAN Jia Ying’s a series of artworks shows a deep respect to Chinese traditions about the stone. These traditions are deeply ingrained in his work, and he applies these naturally.



*Figure 4.5-5 Taihu stone in Chinese garden and Japanese rock garden (right)*  
 (Retrieved from <http://roll.sohu.com/20131202/n391114696.shtml>  
<https://www.sinyijapan.com/tw/news/meetjapan/news001144>)



*Figure 4.5-6 Tianya Magazine design by HAN Jia Ying  
(Retrieved from <http://mall.cnki.net/magazine/magalist/taya.htm>)*

HAN Jia Ying's first application of Taihu stone was in Tianya Magazine in 2008 and 2009 (Figure 4.5-6). Another case was his poster in Celebrate Our Planet, a poster exhibition in Paris in 2015 (Figure 4.5-7). HAN Jiaying chose the Chinese pictograms as a framework, added various phenomena in nature, and transformed Taihu Stone into a poster with a Chinese brush. The poster symbolizes the harmonious coexistence of nature, humanity, and society, by modern design techniques to convey a rich layer of beauty.



*Figure 4.5-7 'Celebrate Our Planet' theme poster designed by HAN Jia Ying(ICAA, 2017)*

#### 4.5.3. Acknowledgement of Culture

Designers born between 1950s to 1960s in Mainland china have been inspired by Japanese design a lot. By the 1960s, Japanese design had fully embraced and mastered modern design concepts, reached its peak in the 1980s, and even played an important role in Japan's national revitalization. In HAN Jia Ying's mind, Japanese design is the most comprehensive, mature, and touching design combining Eastern and Western influences. Perhaps therefore he is excited to see Japanese design. Unlike in Europe and America, there are still gaps in design in China. The Japanese design vocabulary is connected to China, and provides a role model that shows how it is possible to build on Western influences without losing an Asian touch (Tezign, 2017).

#### 4.5.4. Theory notes

Henry Steiner also mentioned the problem of lacking taste, especially for Hong Kong(Steiner, 2016b, no.223-227). For HAN Jia Ying, the transformation of aesthetic trend was unignored for him (Han, 2017, no.224-229).

In HAN Jia Ying's mind, Chinese philosophy can be the golden mean of aesthetics (Han, 2017, no.311-322). He believes that the Chinese are cautious and neutral rather than express own views and voice their own unique taste. HAN Jia Ying tries his best to use a straightaway visual language with cultural references in his attempt to inspire the aesthetic consciousness of the Chinese, and to arouse their imagination and appreciation of the rich culture of China (Han, 2017, no.329-333). One case of his theme posters and books design is

*Forms of Words on Heaven and Earth in*

Figure 4.5-8. The

handwritten poem of Laozi's *Tao Te Ching* has a unique attitude which is different from the attitudes of other ethnic groups. The artwork shows the way in which the Chinese people relate to universe, nature and the world (Han, 2017, no.248-262).







*Figure 4.5-8 Forms of Words on Heaven and Earth poster designed by HAN Jia Ying (ICAA, 2017)*

Kazmierczak (2000) argues that filters, such as media, shape expectations and indirectly perception, cognition, or culture, and may lead to different understandings of the same objects and events. HAN Jia Ying's beliefs are similar to Kazmierczak's. HAN Jia Ying believes that visual elements expressed in design must carry specific cultural connotations. The so-called expression of culture is something that springs from the designer's place in history and tradition. The material world and the external environment around the designer change and accumulate and make it possible for him to express them by releasing their inner eternal spiritual energy. By combining the expressions and rules of modern design with these cultural beliefs can lead to touching design pieces that touch the soul of the viewers (Tezign, 2017). No matter how aesthetic trends change in the outside world, HAN Jia Ying's design expression is consistently constructive (Han, 2017, no.478-485) and practical (Han, 2017, no.528-535).



The use of Chinese elements in his series of works designed for the Vanke Pavilion at the Milan Expo is illustrative. This series consists of Wushan fried buns, Hangzhou-style fried fishes, soy milk, deep fried dough sticks, Dongpo pork, and meat cabbage. All these Chinese delicacies and recipes are drawn by HAN Jia Ying with ink brush strokes, folk patterns, and ink marks in strong oriental colours (Figure 4.5-9). HAN Jia Ying chose the symbolism of Chinese foods to connect to the topic, 'Chinese Canteen', of Vanke Pavilion. Although the interpretation remains at the surface level, his accurate elemental separation in this design got good feedback. A canteen like this was typical in schools and workplaces in HAN Jia Ying's generation, and a part of common sense in China. The expressive method is quite similar to his first poster design 'The Gain of Society', which was designed as the cover of Tianya Magazine (Figure 4.5-10).



*Figure 4.5-9 Series design for Vanke Pavilion in Milan by HAN Jia Ying (Tezign, 2017)*



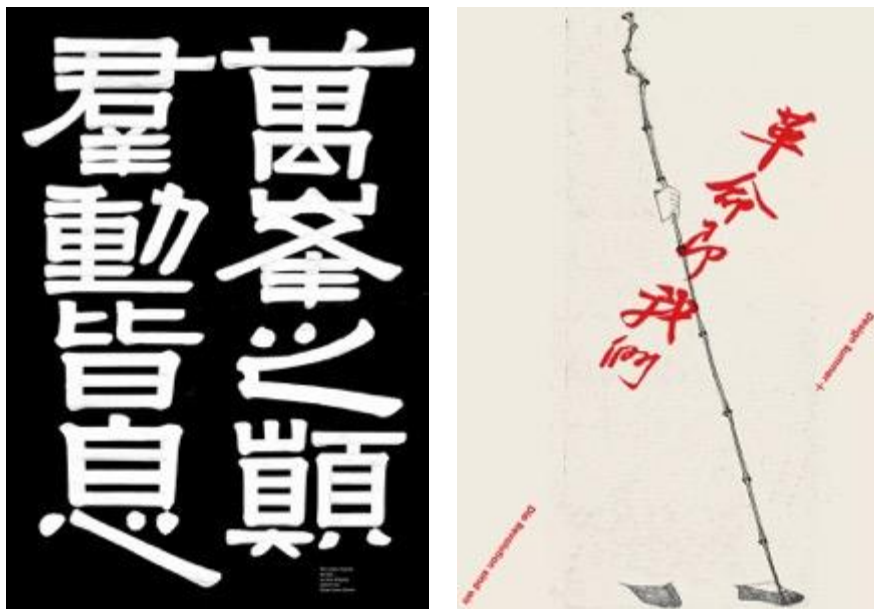
*Figure 4.5-10 The Gain of Society for Tianya Magazine by HAN Jia Ying (Tezign, 2017).*

## 4.6. JIANG Hua

### 4.6.1. Experience and background

JIANG Hua was born in 1973, Wuxi, a city of China's poetic south river land which has gathered literati and poets of all ages. Hua graduated from Jiangnan University and taught in Ningbo University after his graduation from 1996 to 2006. During the ten years teaching, he set up his design studio at the same time. In the following three years, he received a PhD degree in CAFA, where he was supervised by WANG Min and Xu Ping. From 2006 until now, he became the teacher in school of design, CAFA, the member of AGI, the reviewer of nearly all the important graphic design competitions, and the founder of Ningbo Poster biennial exhibition.

In a way not dissimilar to KAN Tai Keung, whose design process builds in part on ink painting, JIANG Hua's design centers around Chinese typography. It has helped him to understand the path of Chinese culture and build his design philosophy on this path (Figure 4.6-1 and Figure 4.6-2). In fact, most of his artworks have typographical elements. In his own words, he has been close to culture from childhood. JIANG Hua's grandfather was a professional calligrapher, famous in his hometown. He was sent to learn calligraphy from childhood, and he had to do a formal apprenticeship for years. As JIANG Hua's hometown in the Zhejiang province was in rich culture, the custom and heritage of culture made him learn classical poems, seal cutting, Tao Te Ching, and ink painting (Jiang, 2017, no.53-73).



*Figure 4.6-1 'Die Revolution sind wir' Poster design (left)*

*'Coexistence' Poster design of AGI (right)*

*(Retrieved from [https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/nI3\\_eX\\_3uqcd0VFluOuF9w](https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/nI3_eX_3uqcd0VFluOuF9w))*



*Figure 4.6-2 Poster design by JIANG Hua  
(Retrieved from <http://www.ad518.com/tag/tag-蒋华/>)*

JIANG Hua's design works and the acknowledgement of Chinese typography as a part of it in part built on the engraving skills he learned in his childhood. His talent was widely recognized by other Chinese experienced designers. For instance, as showed in Figure 4.6-3, a series gift of seal cuttings for KAN Tai Keung's 70th birthday was included in KAN Tai Keung's Festschrift. At least two other designers, WANG Xu, who is from the first generation of graphic designers working in Guangdong, and Ahn Sang Soo, the typography design master and professor in CAFA from Korea confirm this. Both tell that when they saw JIANG Hua's work for the first time, they saw that JIANG Hua's Chinese typography design has a conscious feeling in it, and his fonts have an identity reminiscent of the imperfect idea of the printed body (Jiang, 2017, no.79-89).



*Figure 4.6-3' Landscape on the paper' (紙上江山) A series gifts, seal cutting designed and engraved by JIANG Hua for KAN Tai Keung in his 70 years birthday party (Kan, 2016b)*

#### 4.6.2. Acknowledgement to culture

As JIANG Hua says, Chinese art has never been content in reproducing the world purely and objectively. The source of its creativity comes mostly from the human heart rather than from the outside world. Everyone has another self in their hearts, looking for and questioning, hurting the happy, and staying there for a long time. By thoroughly understanding the words, by becoming a kind of self-engraving effort to explore the self, this silent echo deeply inhabits the souls of people living in the East. 'A spiritual practice at home without going out' becomes a norm of work and life for oriental artists. Focusing on the heart, on living in the present, on experiencing and watching ordinary things, and on participating in and intervening in daily life, this kind of rationalization and the end of life turns 'Zen' into a methodology of many Oriental art creations (Jiang, 2010).

For Hua, Chinese background and philosophy is important. For example, calligraphy (‘美术字’) could be understood clearly as an eastern path in the Chinese context, even though its meaning may not be fully expressed when translated (Jiang, 2017, no.246-256). For instance, JIANG Hua’s first award-winning work is a poster in a Chinese student competition. The work is a reformulation of Hong Kong handover poster design. Its elements are the SAR city flower, modern architecture, fireworks, and a five-star red flag (Figure 4.6-4). He creatively made the Latin letters ‘Hong Kong’ using the Chinese ‘Double Happiness’ papercut as a technique. The poster perfectly reflects Hong Kong’s characteristic integration of Chinese and English elements (J. Li, 2010).



*Figure 4.6-4 Hong Kong Return poster design by JIANG Hua  
(Retrieved from <https://www.mask9.com/node/163497>)*

JIANG Hua’s view to western and eastern culture, as well as modernity and tradition is also reflected in an exhibition which was curated by him and two friends, called ‘Radical patterns – the birth of Chinese Modern Typography’ in 2015 (Figure 4.6-5). Besides exploring the design practice in China as something different from Western



alphabetical logic, the exhibition explored the sources of uniquely Eastern design paradigms and methods. He argued against the concept that tradition and conservative are from East, and modernity and advanced are from the West. In contrast, for him, tradition also existed in the West and the Eastern had also its modernity. To explore the origin to the modernity and tradition is a core task, rather than just a division in time and space (Jiang, 2017, no.428-455).



(Retrieved from <http://www.138042.xyz/article/id-5907>)



Figure 4.6-5 Radical patterns: The birth of Chinese Modern Typography  
(Retrieved from [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_4bc6d5240102yjtz.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4bc6d5240102yjtz.html))

#### 4.6.3. Observations

The interview with JIANG Hua is different from other interviews, which could be quite formal. When he accepts the researcher's interview request, he just simply replied 'Have lunch together' through email. Although the restaurant was picked by the researcher, Mr. JIANG was waiting there early. His gentle and casual temperament impressed the researcher. During the lunch, even before the interview had started, the researcher learned a lot from JIANG by listening to his stories about the origin of conceptual terms in graphic design, visual communication, and decoration design. The interview officially started after lunch in the office shared by JIANG Hua and HE Hao of the central design building of CAFA (Figure 4.6-6). Because the interview was interrupted a few times, it continued in a bookstore he frequents. One interesting point that made JIANG Hua more like a Chinese ancient scholar is that he invited the researcher and another friend to eat hot pot after the interview. After three rounds of wine his true temperament which is great-hearted came to the fore, and he maintained the gentle manner of a teacher and scholar.







*Figure 4.6-6 JIANG Hua's office in CAFA*

JIANG Hua combines his creative imagination with true scholarliness. He is filled with knowledge, and thoroughly proficient in the Chinese seal-making and in the art of calligraphy. Around three hours' interview, he talked about past and present with fervor and assurance, from the art history of the Western Renaissance to the designers of American and Switzerland, to 'Erya' (roughly 'Approaching the Correct' is a dictionary-like glossary from the Han period), 'Chinese Exegetics', 'The Book of Songs' and 'The Book of Changes'.

JIANG Hua not only has the keen and rich sense in design, but he is also proficient at teaching students. We can take his typography curriculum as an example. The goal of his classes is to teach the students to learn the essence of design. A good example is how he teaches the difference between design Chinese and Latin fonts. His teaching builds on an observation in his PhD thesis, in which he claimed that Chinese fonts are made up by radicals and pronunciation, while Latin words are only made up by pronunciation. Students can learn more about the profoundness of Chinese culture through exploring the origin of its typography. By doing that they can broaden their view to combine modern design (Jiang, 2018, no.5-107)(Figure 4.6-9). He focused on

cultivating students' mind by giving them more freedom to show their real thoughts, rather than by asking them to practice design skills (Jiang, 2017, no.19-23)(Figure 4.6-8). Some of the works from students from his typography class are showed in Figure 4.6-7.



Figure 4.6-7 Student's artwork  
(Retrieved from [https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/YJWW-2pc\\_SR\\_i3J8nZoaDw](https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/YJWW-2pc_SR_i3J8nZoaDw))

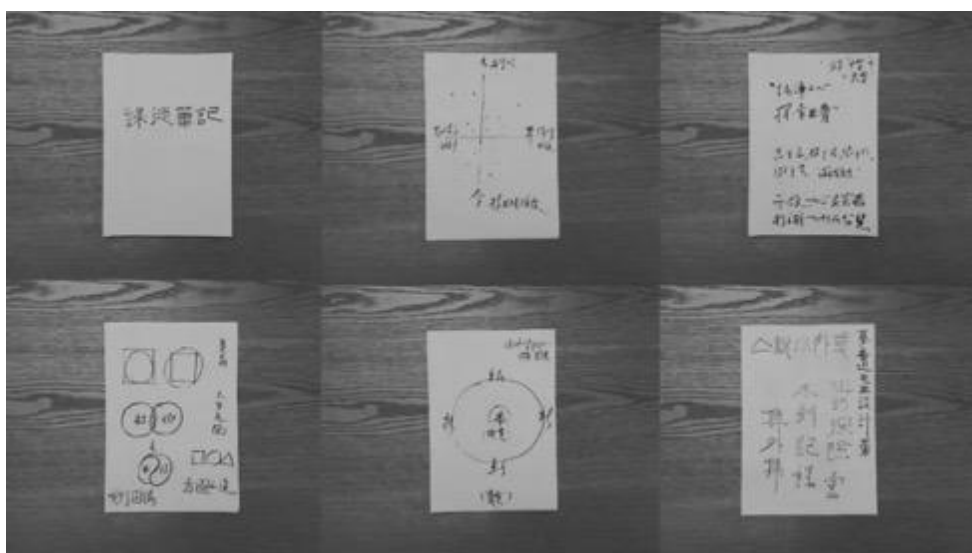


Figure 4.6-8 A letter for students' in the last period of the course  
(Retrieved from [https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/YJWW-2pc\\_SR\\_i3J8nZoaDw](https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/YJWW-2pc_SR_i3J8nZoaDw))



Figure 4.6-9 Student works and exhibition of JIANG Hua's course in CAFA  
(Retrieved from [https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/YJWW-2pc\\_SR\\_i3J8nZoaDw](https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/YJWW-2pc_SR_i3J8nZoaDw))

Moreover, JIANG Hua believes that teaching is learning. He says that what he taught were two aspects of experience. One aspect is the practical point of view. It consists of Western typography and shows how to introduce it into the Chinese context, how to teach it, and how to teach it to let others learn the proposition of typography design. The other aspect is the experience of a practitioner, who knows Chinese culture and art related to Chinese characters since childhood. This is the foundation of practice in Chinese typography (Jiang, 2017, no.19-23).

#### 4.6.4. Theory notes

As all this shows, JIANG Hua is a researcher, an educator, and an experienced graphic designer. His triple identity helps him to think about design from multiple angles. This is a fact that can be seen from his design work. Even when he is designing posters, they are not a simply for information dissemination. instead, they become a kind of emotional dialogue. As the designer of the book *Dream Lotus Poetry*, JIANG Hua was the planner rather than just a book designer. He enjoyed the content and artistic conception, recommend the book content to publisher, and attended the whole process of this book which includes typographics, sales, and marketing (Figure 4.6-10). In projects like this, JIANG Hua show his empathic ability to find the deep meaning and thought in poetry, and try his best to promote it by design (Jiang, 2017, no.696-715).



Figure 4.6-10 *Dream Lotus Poetry* designed by JIANG Hua (AD518, 2017)

Hua believes that Chinese art should begin with technology, from primarily technical training, then transition to methods and abstraction, and finally get to theory, which has same meaning as in Chinese, ‘理(theory)’, finally. In the meanwhile, ‘law’ will be learned from repetitive training and practice, ‘道’ is the ‘law’ in Chinese, which is the essence of a thing. Therefore, JIANG proposed ‘法道理技’ based on his decades of experience (Jiang, 2014a). For him, ‘法道理技’ could be used in design, but not only applied in design and content. It could also use as the show of self-accomplishment and capability. Design practice today requires designers to have a more solid subject awareness, as well as an comprehensive understanding of graphic design. The role of designers has shifted from visual translation to content contribution and media creation. This trend is also found in art production. It is a paradigm shift from symbol to method (Jiang, 2014b).

For JIANG Hua, ‘independent’ is the core of his design, which means an independent attitude. Designers need to know what distinguished them from others and lead the way, rather than just follow trends or repeat what other designers have done (Hao, 2012). Related to this is JIANG Hua’s view of typography and design education, which reflects his view of his weakness and strength. His proficiency in calligraphy and seal cutting makes him different from but a few Chinese graphic designers. In contrast to Henry Steiner, JIANG Hua insisted that the would-be designer should work closely with artist in his early years. The reason is that if designers become content contributors and media

creators, their work begins to resemble artistic production. This developing trend represent the form transition from semiotics to methodology (Jiang, 2014b).

Finally, there is a relevant section of Oriental philosophy in Chapter Eleven of Tao Te Ching, ‘有之以利，无知以为用’, which concludes JIANG Hua’s work philosophy well. ‘有’ means ‘being’. The sentence could be explained as favorable condition, while ‘无’ which is the antonym of ‘有’ in Chinese, meaning ‘not-being’. The sentence could be interpreted as a call for creating favorable conditions for work. Being and nothingness grow out of one another, and favorable and enabling are indivisible. This is the law of the world as Laozi says (Laozi, 1992). In common with the architect Frank Lloyd Wright and musician John Cage, the Swiss internationalist design leader Emil Ruder was also obsessed with Laozi’s wisdom. JIANG Hua wrote this sentence at the preface of Typography. In JIANG Hua’s unique experience, this sentence means a process of repeated circulation. Thus, before the university, he learned the skill of calligraphy and engraving, which gave him a direct access to a very Chinese form of culture. After he started to teaching in CAFA, he focused on typography design: it was the time to give out and distribute the culture (Jiang, 2017, no.43-52).

#### 4.7. Critical evaluation of designers’ cultural application

##### 4.7.1. Whether culture could be a significant inspiration

A good deal of previous research has proposed that graphic designers are professionals who solve the client’s needs (Frascara, 1988). The previous chapter looked at their work from another angle and tried to see them as interpreters of Chinese culture. If anything, that chapter showed that culture can be a significant

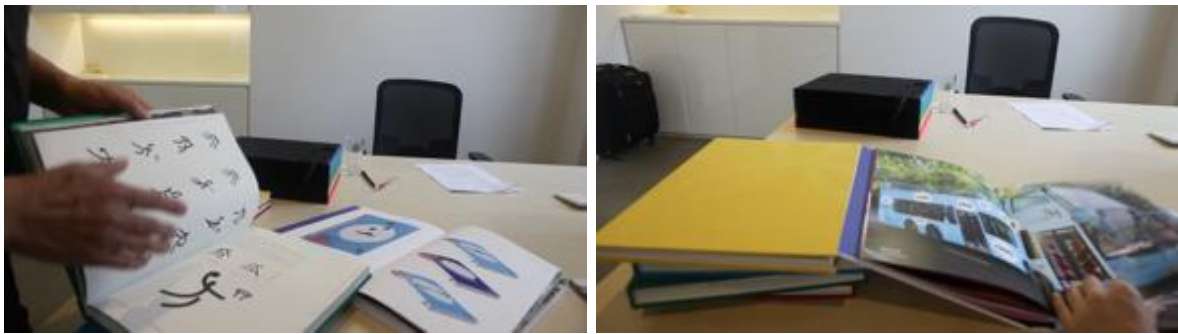
design inspiration, and designers can advance it. This topic is certainly worth exploring. Based on a close inspection of six designers and the coding analysis presented in Table 4-1, even though these six designers are tremendously skilled in bringing a sophisticated understanding of Chinese culture into their work, it is largely implicit. They have seldom considered culture as a separate source of inspiration. When they start a design project, their first thoughts are concerned with the market, clients, function or even politics. Practically all designers see function as the top driver. The best examples are Henry Steiner's banknote design considering security or KAN Tai Keung's zodiac stamp design considering politics.

*Table 4-1 Underlying consideration in design*

Code. Name (Reference : average coverage)	Example sentences (interview: stimulus)
<i>Underlying consideration in design</i>	
<b>Culture</b>	We should combine Chinese culture and Olympic spirit in design (M. Wang, 2017, no.210-217). As Shanghai is a city of culture integration (M. Wang, 2017, no.295-296).
<b>Market</b>	Not just culture, but market (Steiner, 2016b, no.449-453). From business, from today's modern society (S. WONG, 2018, no.487-491).
<b>Function</b>	If you don't add the function, you will get a problem(Steiner, 2016b, no.286-287).
<b>Politics</b>	Very difficult, many political struggles(Kan, 2016a, no.177). From the beginning, as politic problems(Kan, 2016a, no.463-464). The special composition of the Chinese government need a special way to treat him(M. Wang, 2017, no.446).
<b>Clients</b>	You have to take into account what they expecting. (Steiner, 2016b, no.449-453). A designer tries to solve his clients' problems. (Steiner, 2016b, no.249). The customer is of course important. He is the client.(Kan, 2016a, no.181). I also appreciate him deeply, his content is very important (Jiang, 2017, no.739-740). Fast food restaurants rarely return to an authentic life, they are willing to (S. WONG, 2018, no.725).
<b>Interest</b>	Before entering university, I was a person closed to culture (Jiang, 2017, no.52). The work we have to do is actually more dominant, and we will not convince others (Jiang, 2017, no.737). A cultural poster represent yourself (S. WONG, 2018, no.53).



However, as Table 4-1 shows, WANG Min produced two projects that considered culture as an inspiration from the beginning (Figure 4.7-1). The first project was the Olympic Games in Beijing. Despite the Olympics being a massive international phenomenon, WANG Min introduced Chinese elements into the presentation. The second project was his brand design for the city of Shanghai. In this design, he wanted to express his interpretation of Shanghai as a melting pot that integrates many of China's subcultures.



*Figure 4.7-1 Beijing Olympic Games and Shanghai city branding design*

This observation may question whether the researcher is biased in her attempt to know the significance of culture to the six designers, even though it is a secondary concern for them after market demands, client needs, functionality and politics. However, this is not the case. These two demands are not incompatible. Commercial work can provide a fertile ground for sophisticated cultural work, as Steiner's bank notes for Standard Chartered have shown. Throsby (2006), a well-known Australian cultural economist, distinguished two categories of artistic output in terms of production function. The first is an original creative output by an artist—novels, poetry, paintings, sculptures, live performances, dances and musical productions. The second category might be called commercial art output, where the producers also use artistic skills but at a more conventional and business-oriented level. In this research, commercial



output can be largely taken for granted, but what about the creative artist output?

Do experienced designers consider culture an important inspiration and make it a priority?

Again, the answer is clear: in many projects, Chinese culture is not the top priority but more like an underlying current that shapes creative work. For example, the starting point of Stanley WONG's *Red White Blue* project was intrinsic: he wanted to be loyal to himself and show his essential originality. Yet, in choosing his topic, his goal was to give an expression to social responsibility by focusing on promoting cultural confidence and social harmony. At the other end are designers like KAN Tai Keung and JIANG Hua, their thinking is clearly cultured: the driving principles in their work have their origins in Chinese and Asian philosophy, while in Steiner's work, Chinese culture finds expression through pragmatism, a philosophical movement that has its origins in the United States and Germany.

#### 4.7.2. Could cultural interpretation be an innovative approach?

Graphic design as communication is a language rather than a text (Barnard, 2013; Philip B Meggs, 1992). Graphic design communicates with people through three different types of symbols: index, icon and symbol (Barnard, 2013). Then, the communication has two levels of meaning (denotation and connotation), which are the result of differences and connections between symbols, codes and cultures. Denotation is to know 'What is that?' and connotation is to know 'What do you feel about that?'. As discussed in the previous section, the outward level

of designers' cultural interpretation stems from tradition and has existed for a long period, while through the designers' unique interpretations, the artwork's connotative level gives a new meaning to clients. According to Rogers (2010) definition of innovation, if the cultural interpretation by designers gives the original icons, symbols or index new meaning, it could be evaluated as innovative work.

Not all the works of the designers interviewed in this study are examples of cultural innovation. As analysed in the previous chapter, the designers did not regard cultural elements as the primary inspiration for creativity. However, in these designers' representative cultural-related works, their design techniques do provide new meanings in accordance with the theme of the original symbol content. For instance, the font designed by WANG Min uses the feet of gods and beasts. The combination of the oriental unicorn and the Western unicorn provides a fusion of East and West for the font design of the letter 'A' and even the Adobe Company, as well as a new layer of meaning for its internationalisation and cultural combability. Stanley WONG's *Red White Blue* project, in addition to his original meaning of representing the spirit of Hong Kong's struggle, also took its name from the colour scheme he used in his fashion designs. Due to the enormous amount of these experienced designers' artwork, it is difficult to prove that all their works are innovative; however, their representative work of cultural approaches could all add new meanings to existing ideas. Therefore, the cultural approaches in this group of experienced designers' representative works could be seen as innovative.

## 5. Explanations for innovative approaches to cultural interpretation

While the previous chapter took a descriptive approach to the six experienced designers, this and the following chapter will examine some of the possible reasons that could explain their ability to act as interpreters of Chinese culture. The description pointed toward two broad classes of explanations for their mastery. This chapter focuses on possible external causes or influences (such as family background, teacher-student relationships) and some of the features of the commercial context in which the designers have been working. The subsequent chapter focuses on design philosophy and how it shapes the ways in which the designers see China and use its culture as a design resource. With these two chapters, the unit of analysis also changes. While the previous chapter focused on individuals, the focus now shifts to social and cultural environments (in the language of symbolic interactionism)—from self to significant others and to generalised others. Thus, while the previous chapter suggested that the approach of experienced designers is unique, the aim of the next chapter is to probe commonalities that might explain their work.

### 5.1. External causes

#### 5.1.1. Family background

Literature on creativity indicates that parental education is one factor that could predict a child's future (Haveman & Wolfe, 1995; Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Family, 1994; Smith, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997). Alexander, Entwisle, and Bedinger (1994) found that families with medium to high incomes and educational backgrounds have higher expectations of their children compared to low-income families. Several reasons may explain this effect. For

example, if parents succeed in providing a stable and stimulating environment, the negative effects of financial constraints can be minimised (Davis-Kean, 2005). In terms of children's creativity, it is known from psychological research that creative individuals tend to emerge from families that support creative talent (Albert, 1994; Runco, 1999; Throsby, 2006). Moreover, Davis-Kean (2005) pointed out that racial differences have little impact on household indicators for analysing children's achievements. Hence, even though Henry Steiner was the only studied designer born in a Western country, the analysis of family background was unaffected.

- 1) Based on previous literature, there are at least three hypotheses that could explain the relationship between family background and a designer's creativity.
- 2) High income families provide more opportunities to arouse children's creativity in art, design, and culture.
- 3) An artistic family background can support a designer's creative talents. Moreover, family support and understanding beyond art supports the growth of talent.

While there is partial support for all of these hypotheses, there is also evidence that indicates these explanations are not the whole story. There are some counterexamples, such as Stanley WONG, who used to live on a rooftop where the walls were made of corrugated with six family members and all the living costs were earned by his father as a tailor. These poor economic conditions did

not limit his creativity, cultivated his sense of social responsibility, and inspired more creativity. This explanation does not fit in the broader set of data.

The claim that an artistic family background supports the development of a designer's creative talents can be studied in a similar manner. For example, Jiang Hua's grandfather was a professional calligrapher who was famous in his hometown. Hua was sent to learn from childhood and had a formal apprenticeship for many years. There is no doubt about the importance of family background in the development of his craft. After consistently hearing and seeing calligraphy and seal cutting during early childhood, his creative thinking and understanding of these essential elements of Chinese culture are still traceable in his approach to typography. This explanation may also work for KAN Tai Keung. His grandfather, father, and uncle provided him with a rich artistic atmosphere that taught him how to apply ink painting, calligraphy, and related cultural elements almost as a second nature. However, the hypothesis is less effective with some other designers. WANG Min is a leading scholar of graphic design in China. He was born in Shandong to an ordinary family that was not related to art and design. The same is also true of HAN Jia Ying. When the interviewer asked whether their parents' careers were related to art and design, the answer was a firm 'no'.

Family support and understanding is also helpful in non-artistic ways. However, it is difficult to make any definitive judgement on this without knowing the financial situation of the family. In the absence of accurate information, indirect evidence suggests the hypothesis may be partially true in the case of

those experienced designers from wealthy families. For example, the family members of JIANG Hua were devoted to art and supported him in his youth. However, the hypothesis faces difficulties with some other designers from well-off families. For example, KAN Tai Keung changed his career from trailer to designer at the age of 25, and HAN Jia Ying resigned from Xi'an and travelled to Shenzhen to start his designer career in the 1990s. In the early phases of adulthood, their families did not support them. On their way to becoming designers, some of them were effectively opposed by their parents. For example, HAN Jia Ying's family thought it was a risky venture to give up a stable job (teaching in a university) to enter an uncertain occupation. Further, it is obvious that many others (such as Stanley WONG) did not receive support from their families. Hence, this hypothesis seems to be wrong if it is presented as a general rule.

This section studied the hypothesis that family background explains creativity of designers in three ways: high income families provide more opportunities to arouse a designer's creativity; an artistic family background supports creative talents in design; and helpful families can show support and understanding. After examining the interviews and detailed explanations in previous paragraphs, it can be confirmed that some cases support the family background hypothesis. However, there are many counterexamples to every form of this hypothesis. In conclusion, the hypothesis that family background can explain a designer's creativity can be rejected, even though it contains a grain of truth.

### 5.1.2. Educational background and relationships to mentors

Apart from the influence of family background, educational background may provide significant clues about the designers' fluency with Chinese culture. When examining the research literature, there was some disagreement about the relevance of education in design. Some research in different fields argues that a person's educational background contributes to their design output (Heller, 2015; Lyon, 2016; Silva, Leite, Vilas-Boas, & Simões, 2018). The hypothesis is that teacher beliefs may influence student perceptions, the evaluation of outcomes, and their choice of teaching methods and tasks (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997; Pajares, 1992). Moreover, the advice and beliefs of a teacher may represent the integration of knowledge gained in the training environment with long-term personal perspectives (Kember & instruction, 1997). Creativity has been conceptualised as either an ability or characteristic of the person (Barron, 1988; Taylor, 1988) or a cognitive process (Weisberg, 1986; Johnson-Laird, 1987; Boden, 1992; (Diakidoy & Kanari, 1999).

It should be noted that there are also sceptical voices. Lawson (2006) proposed that today's designer can no longer build on a series of mechanism training as the world keeps changing too fast. Further, there is a consensus that schools are weak at identifying and cultivating creative potential among students (Barron, 1988; Diakidoy & Kanari, 1999; Hennessey & Amabile, 1987; R. J. J. E. L. Sternberg, 1996; R. J. J. E. P. Sternberg, 1986; Taylor, 1988). Despite these critical voices, it is important to take the education hypothesis seriously simply

because it is disputed. There are also indications that the influence consists of two different mechanisms. First, many of the experienced designers studied in three universities (Yale, CAFA, and Hong Kong Polytechnic), and many of the younger generation had been working in the design firms of the more senior experienced designers. These can be called the institutional and the master-apprentice hypotheses.

One way to study these hypotheses is by using a simple mapping that places the relationships between the experienced designers into a historical context. During the first generation of graphic design in China, learning from teachers was an important path before the arrival of the information era. Figure 5.1-1 presents the relationships between the six experienced designers:

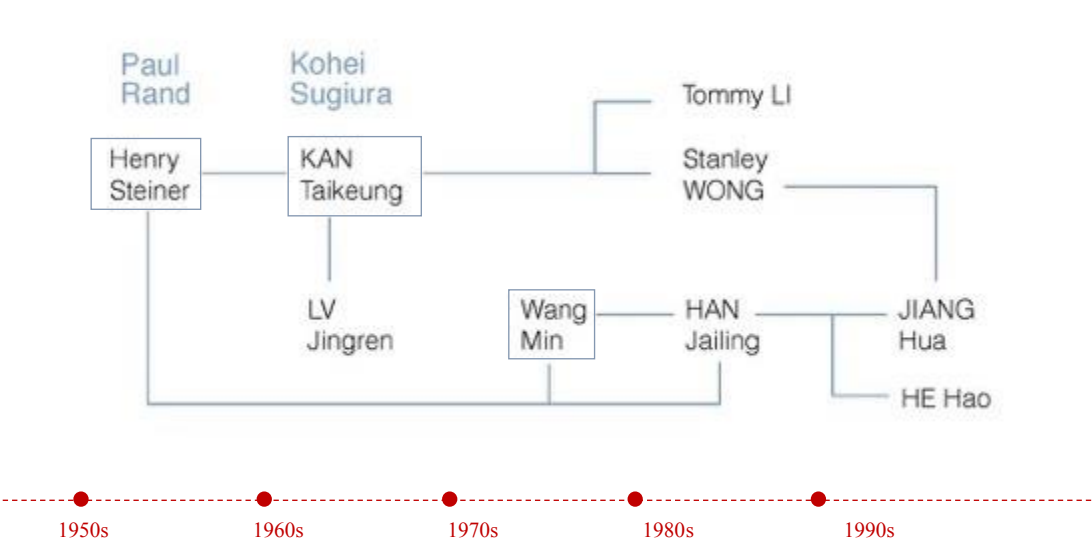


Figure 5.1-1 Teaching relationship of designers in this research

Some important mentors and key design institutes need to be mentioned in this research, which are listed in Figure 5.1-1 accompanied with their birth year. Their education background was divided into two lines, one is mainly from Paul Rand at Yale University, which pretend to training Western design concept.



The map in Figure 5.1-1 reveals some interesting features about the experienced designers. First, their educational background runs in three lines. Second, the institutional and the master–apprentice hypotheses are almost impossible to separate from each other.

If we look at educational background first, we can note a particularly interesting educational line that has its origins with Paul Rand at Yale University, which builds on a Western design concept. As proposed by Wendy W. S. Wong (2018), the Western design style has enriched the vocabulary of composition and form in Chinese modern design in many ways. Further, these Western resources are subtly combined with elements from Chinese art in the leading work in China.

Henry Steiner and WANG Min received their master’s degrees at Yale University in the 1950s and 1990s, respectively. Within graphic design at Yale University in the 1950s and 1960s, few single schools or courses had such a direct and profound influence on any profession. Their students believe that graphic design is focused on problem solving and communication and is completely different from advertising (Roy, 2001). Steiner was supervised by Paul Rand and Herbert Beyer (who graduated and taught in Bauhaus), while WANG Min studied and worked with Paul Rand. Henry had been determined to study science fiction since high school and majored in this subject at Hunter University in the United States. WANG Min received his bachelor’s degree in China and taught for years before studying in the United States. Their

analogous educational backgrounds from the School of Design (Yale University) with the same supervisor (Paul Rand), the minimalism of the Bauhaus, and the practicality of Modernism all contributed to their design philosophy. This coincided with WANG Min's particular time junction (the transition period between modernisms and post modernism) when the core concept was practicum. The artwork of Henry Steiner and WANG Min was also under the shadow of pragmatism. This especially contrasted with their way to innovate, which is similar to the concept of the School of Design at Yale University and their mentors (Paul Rand and Herbert Beyer).

Another educational line is rooted in German and Swiss design, then filtered (in part) through Japan. In this line, Western concepts are mixed with Eastern influences. The main route was the Japanese graphic designer Kohei Sugiura, whose work has been studied closely by KAN Tai Keung. Without his guiding for cherish Chinese culture and to be confident for our nationality.

The third educational line has its roots in Hong Kong. Stanley WONG shared similar experiences to JIANG Hua. He was supervised by KAN Tai Keung (during the 10 years KAN Tai Keung was working as a designer) and was moving from Western approaches to a more Chinese approach at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Based on KAN Tai Keung's design philosophy (see Chapter 4.2), it is plausible to think that Stanley's pursuit of culture and Buddhism might have been inspired by KAN's new approach.

Finally, the transition towards a uniquely Chinese approach to design has found an institutional basis in Beijing over the last two decades. The leading institution for transforming graphic design in China has become CAFA in Beijing, where several Western and Eastern influences have come together. For example, JIANG Hua received his PhD degree at CAFA and was supervised by WANG Min. Interestingly, the teaching philosophy of the CAFA school of design has a subtle (and little studied) relationship with Yale. However, the complexities of this relationship would warrant another study. WANG Min has been the dean of the School of Design at CAFA since 2003. With his American studies and rich work experience, it only took him seven years to build the school into a position among the world's top 30 design colleges (if we believe international rankings). JIANG Hua taught and studied at CAFA during his deanship and was inspired by a WANG Min's design approach, which combines Eastern and Western approaches.

This section has explored the hypothesis that education shapes the way in which sensitivity to Chinese culture is somehow related to education. While it is shown that the hypothesis is broadly correct, more research into the details is required. We have seen a story that has its roots in Europe, Yale University, and Japan that has combined Western and Eastern thinking. Moreover, priority has increasingly been given to a uniquely Eastern design approach, which has recently found a powerful institutional basis in CAFA. As Runco (1999) stated, creativity can be considered both cognitive and extra-cognitive. Further, creativity is not only the preserve of intellectuals, but also not just

strategic, and it is not guaranteed by the specific personality traits of teachers and the environment they create.

It is important to note that experienced designers achieve that status because they have found a unique method of expression. For example, although Henry Steiner, WANG Min, and Stanley WONG built their approach to Chinese culture based on their mentors, their approach to design is creative and by no means attributable to these mentors. Similarly, although JIANG Hua absorbed WANG Min's and CAFA's design philosophy, there is no similarity between their methods of expression. Therefore, the conclusion of this section must be that education certainly shapes the way in which the experienced designers approach Chinese culture. However, substantially more research would be required before drawing any definitive conclusions. The three most urgent areas of further research are the pragmatism of Paul Rand and its role in shaping design in China, the role of Japanese design as a mediator between European and Eastern thinking, and the main institutional roles of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and CAFA.

#### 5.1.3. Group relationship and professional associations

Design education at university level is a fairly recent phenomenon in China. Not surprisingly, some designers have not had the opportunity of studying design education formally. However, there was also another way to learn design, which builds on group relationships. Graphic designers always need to engage in active dialogue with their customers and with other professionals (editors, managers, marketing experts, or educators) to truly make the most of their practices

(Frascara, 1988). This section studies whether group relationships contribute to a designer's creativity and achievements.

Several types of group relationships appear to have played a role in the pathway to becoming an experienced designer. First, some designers have learned directly from their seniors. For example, a Japanese designer aroused HAN Jia Ying's interest in exploring the design world beyond China. During the time he was in Shenzhen, HAN Jia Ying was eager to consult a group of designers (including Henry Steiner and KAN Tai Keung).

Second, professional associations and competitions all over the world provide a good platform for graphic designers to communicate and learn from each other. These platforms include AGI, the Shenzhen Graphic Design Association (SGDA), Venice Biennale, the International Council of Graphic Design Associations (Icograda), the Art Directors Club (ADC), the Type Directors Club in New York (TDC), and the Hong Kong Designers Association (HKDA). The latest artworks shared during these gatherings broadened the designer's way of vernacular cultural interpretation and helped them to build a transitional design language from the West to the East. A good example is the relationship between KAN Tai Keung and Paul Rand (Figure 5.2-2). When KAN had doubts about his ability to transition to his mature Eastern design approach, Paul Rand provided encouragement and meaningful comments that helped his progression (Kan, 2012).



*Figure 5.1-2 Poster design by KAN Tai Keung to mourn Paul Rand  
(Retrieved from <http://houshidai.com/master/kan-tai-keung.html>)*

The group relationships associated with the experienced designers were not limited to other designers. During the interview, it was found that some designers also kept in touch with other professionals to help them realise their creativity in design. For example, Henry Steiner cooperated with photographers to finish HSBC's 150 anniversary banknote design, a research company helped him conduct market analysis before rebranding, and an artist acted in Stanley WONG's film.

Third, teaching experience has provided reference groups that have helped some designers to theorise about their work. For example, HAN Jia Ying and JIANG Hua taught before going into practice. They mentioned that teaching without much practical experience when they were young helped them to recognise their own deficiencies and promoted their desire for continuous studying and exploration.

Finally, working for large companies or design predecessors has enriched the work of several designers. For example, Henry Steiner worked at Madison Avenue (New York) and on Asian magazines before settling down in Hong Kong, WANG Min used to work at Adobe, HAN Jia Ying worked for VANKE, KAN Tai Keung managed his teaching company for 8 years, and Stanley WONG has extensive experience in three world-renowned advertising companies. According to their interviews, how they learned from practice and commercial design, in addition to similar experiences when they were young, demonstrated that large companies (or experienced seniors) promoted the growth of designers.

In this section, the hypothesis that teaching experience, working for big companies or design predecessors, and participating in professional societies do indeed promote the growth of designers was studied. However, the results can be variable, and it is difficult to find anything more than anecdotal evidence about the role these relationships play in developing an approach to Chinese culture. The hypothesis that group relationships play an important role in shaping a way to interpret Chinese culture receives only weak support in this study, and this support is inconclusive. The main problem is that it is difficult to identify the relationship of group memberships to Chinese culture exactly. While group relationships have played a role in promoting graphic design in China, it is also clear that design associations have had no special interest groups promoting a Chinese approach to graphic design. For this reason, the conclusion is that the hypothesis should be rejected, at least for the present.

#### 5.1.4. Chinese modernity: Hong Kong and the Mainland

Since the 1970s, Hong Kong designers such as KAN Tai Keung have conducted folkloristic modernist design experiments that integrate Chinese classical resources. These are the early imports from Chinese classical arts and crafts to modern design. In the romantic 1980's, it was spread with popular culture and the New Orientalism of ink and shade.

The input of Western art styles has enriched the vocabulary of composition and form in modern Chinese design, and the new resources subtly combine the elements of Chinese art traditions (W. S. Wong, 2018). In the mid-1990s (the early period of the handover), the 'Chinese style' began to develop internationally. If we follow Clark (Clark, 2009), the design of Chinese sexual escapades is mainly used for their decorative features, which is usually a product of self-exoticisation. Graphic design changes with time and finds new symbols every few years. For example, KAN Tai Keung likes brushes, another Hong Kong based designer (Freeman Lau) likes the symbol of the chair, and Stanley WONG started his career in advertising where most of the design-related work was red, white, and blue. The 1990s can be regarded as the era of the Graphic Design Association. During these years, many regions of Greater China were never interconnected or fully integrated with the history of modern Chinese graphic design. This section studies whether China's massive economic and technological modernisation could be regarded as an explanation for the experienced designers' approach to Chinese culture. This analysis could also reveal the ways in which Hong Kong's market economy creates incentives to use Chinese themes.



If China's transition to a freer economy follows in the footsteps of Hong Kong, this could be treated as broad support for the modernisation argument.

The customer type represents the opportunity of the designer. In general, the more capable the designer, the more likely they are to be appointed by a well-known company and brand (Naoum & Mustapha, 1994). However, other factors (such as time periods or socio-economic development) can provide designers with more opportunities to work expansively with rapid development.

If we initially focus on Hong Kong, we can see how design works in a mature market. Henry Steiner arrived in Hong Kong in 1961, decided to settle there, then set up his company in 1964. Hong Kong was a developing economy during this period, and many large-scale enterprises needed to improve their unified visual image to help manage and promote their public identity (Chan Hung Ngai & Ellis, 1998). The concept of visual identity had just been introduced to Hong Kong and few designers could do it successfully. Although Steiner was young, without much experience, and only setting up his first company, he still experienced more opportunities in Hong Kong than he would have had in the mature markets in Europe or America.

His customers included HSBC, which is the largest bank in Hong Kong and operates branches and offices throughout the Asia Pacific region and other countries around the world. He helped to design the logo for HSBC in 1983. The Hong Kong Jockey Club, which is one of the oldest institutions in Hong Kong (founded in 1884), commissioned Steiner to develop its visual identity. The same

happened to KAN Tai Keung, who emigrated to Hong Kong in 1957 and entered a design career in 1967. He has a significant presence in Hong Kong—from the bottled water sold in malls and convenience stores to bank brands.

Hong Kong's ever-changing market also provided opportunities for less established designers. The 1990s witnessed a downturn of the market in Hong Kong, which had just experienced a major financial crisis. Although his customers were not the big brands that KAN and Steiner were working for, the period offered great opportunities to promote small and medium sized industries in clothing, candy stores, and electronic communication. Li also used Japan as an insight to the future of the Chinese market. From the 1990s, during the time of the economic bubble in Japan and growing up in mainland China (T. Li, 2017, no.96-104).

Compared to the rest of China, Hong Kong was a mature capitalist market that provided many types of opportunities to creative designers. The experienced designers studied in this book not only interpreted the culture of Hong Kong, they also shaped it in numerous ways—from KAN's water bottles to Steiner's bank notes. Many of their designs have brought Chinese cultural elements into the public consciousness. However, the relationship with customers seems to be accidental and dependent on the creative process rather than a programmatic attempt to bring culture into design work and thence to the public. For them, Japanese designers provided a model that showed how to build Eastern elements into an ultimately Western base.

Mainland China started to develop rapidly after the first Special Economic Zones were established in 1979. With growth rates approaching 10% for almost two decades, Chinese customers started to request functional design qualities and wanted companies to pay attention to entertainment and experience. This change could be seen in many ways in the work of the experienced designers. If we look at LU as an example, we can see the traditional book design concept (designing the cover) was not enough to fulfil people's emotional needs. Instead, he had to act as a director to make the book more interesting and artistically sophisticated.

One way in which modernisation may work in graphic design is client attitudes. It is possible to argue that large Chinese companies and the government have avoided Chinese design elements because Western concepts represented progress, similar to products such as Coca Cola representing progress and American prosperity in post-War Europe. However, this argument did not appear in the interviews and certainly not consistently from one interview to another. Accordingly, this did not differentiate Hong Kong based designers from their peers in the Mainland.

Through the interviews and 2018 AGI China Forum, it is known that the development of commercial graphic design in mainland China began in the late 1980s and experienced three morphological changes. First, at the beginning of the opening-up policy, China's social and market forms were dominated by subsistence problems and infrastructure construction. Therefore, the demand for design has not yet become a major concern, especially as China had

experienced decades of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the War of liberation, and the Cultural Revolution and was just entering an era of peace. At that time, the beginnings of graphic design were simply pictorial representations or cover designs. Shanghai, as an advanced area in China, was greatly inspired by foreign countries and had a quite mature and modern design form. However, this was a special case that was not common in mainland China at that time

China then entered the second stage, after the opening-up policy. During this time, China's economic situation increased substantially while (in contrast) the development of graphic design was relatively slow. The concept of graphic design is vague, and the main trend of graphic design in China was to follow and imitate the modern designs of foreign countries and Hong Kong regions. During the interviews, the designer said that many unsuccessful cooperations in mainland China at this stage were mainly because customers and companies demanded blind emulation of certain designs or stubbornly believed that foreign modern design was advanced. However, this was not considered from the actual status and ignored Chinese culture.

Finally, China's graphic design gradually matured in the 2000s. Customers and designers realised the importance of China's unique cultural connotation and an increasing number of people emerged in the international design vision. Several examples mentioned in the interview illustrate this change: the number of AGI China members increased during this period compared to the low numbers previously; the Bank of China studied the Hong Kong Branch, unifying the visual identity design and recognising the logo design was inspired by Chinese bronze

coins and abacus beads; HAN Jia Ying designed the VANKE Estate Expo pavilion, which was inspired by Chinese food culture; and WANG Min's 2003 bid for the 2008 Olympic Games and a series of graphic designs were full of traditional Chinese culture.

Having said this, it is also viable to state that although the differences between Hong Kong and Mainland China were marked up to the end of the century, there is currently extensive convergence. Indeed, if we look at the design approach of the experienced designers, we can say that geography no longer correlates with a design approach. For example, contrast characterises the work of Henry Steiner and WANG Min, even though one is based in Hong Kong and the latter in Beijing and Shanghai. Even though WANG Min has combined Chinese philosophy of 'harmony but not the same (合而不同)' into the pragmatic base, the location of these two designers does not distinguish their approach to culture. JIANG Hua and Stanley WONG also exhibit similarities, regardless of their location. Finally, both locations can support designers with very different approaches. For example, Stanley WONG's rebranding of Café De Coral in 2017 demonstrates how two Hong Kong based designers working for similar fast-food chains in Hong Kong can approach their work in dramatically different ways (Figure 4.3-15).

If we conduct a simple comparison of the design approaches of the experienced designers by place, Henry Steiner, KAN Tai keung and Stanley WONG are from Hong Kong and WANG Min, HAN Jiaying and JIANG Hua located in Mainland. This asks the question whether the experienced designers' way of interpreting culture is related to their location. The result is clear—it is not relevant. The most

sophisticated Chinese markets (around the Pearl River Delta, Shanghai, and Beijing) may well have been significantly different only 30 years ago. However, they are now clearly converging, at least if we look at those designers who have shown the way to a more uniquely Chinese expression. However, the comparison shows it is better to treat modernisation as an abstract background to design rather than a direct explanation to the experienced designers' use of Chinese themes. Clearly, their use of Chinese culture in their designs mainly internally and personally driven.

#### 5.1.5. Do external causes explain cultural innovation?

The analysis in this chapter is brief and does not cover every imaginable external explanation for the ways experienced designers use Chinese culture in their designs. The analysis started by examining family backgrounds and education then proceeded towards more abstract possible explanations. This method followed the typical symbolic interactionist path from the self towards 'generalised others' and its main benefit is helping to identify where explanations start to lose their credibility. For the experienced designers studied in this book, the influences of family background and education appear credible (but inconsistent), while group relationships and broad arguments about the evolving modernity in China appear less credible. The safest conclusion of this chapter is that the approach of experienced designers to Chinese culture mainly emanates from themselves—their relationships with family and teachers. However, even these are only partial explanations, because it is easy to find experienced designers who do not fit into these generalisations. Henry Steiner is an

undeniable master whose cultural roots are in America and Europe (i.e., not in China) and Stanley WONG's family background certainly did not expose him to the worlds of art and design during childhood.

The analysis of external factors in this chapter shows that although it is easy to list many factors that might explain design creativity, few survive close comparative analysis. For example, while education seems to play an important role in design creativity and cultural expression, other factors (such as Chinese social development, the designer's family background, and social relationships) appear far less significant. Knowing them may help to understand some of the experienced designers, but not everyone.

The main possible exception may be education, specifically the role of a few teachers and institutions. With regard to educational background, it can be approximately divided into three main lines. Some key figures and teaching institutions were referenced often in this study. The two design ancestors related to this study were Paul Rand (a graphic designer schooled in American pragmatism) and Kohei Sugiura, who has a masterly combination of internationalist design thinking from Switzerland and Germany and Japanese art. Concurrently, three educational institutions repeatedly appeared in the study: Yale University in the United States (Paul Rand taught there and Henry Steiner and WANG Min studied with him); The Polytechnic University of Hong Kong; and especially the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. Since this study did not focus on the history of these influences, it is better to be cautious about making any conclusions and treat these findings as suggestions for further research. In

particular, the historical significance of Yale and Paul Rand shaping Chinese design should be studied in greater detail, as should CAFA's role as the backbone in shaping China's graphic design innovation. Considering this conclusion is only based on the analysis of six cases, more cases need to be explored in future studies.

## 5.2. Internal causes

### 5.2.1. Cultural innovation and design philosophy

In the previous section, a few external explanations for the designers' creative use of Chinese culture were examined. These explanations are necessary because there is a great deal of diversity in the approaches and methods taken by the experienced designers in their process of interpreting culture and using such an interpretation in their design innovations. However, while it is easy to find counterexamples to each of them from the interviews, this does not rule out an explanation that can summarise their commonality. For example, the joint effect of family education, professional career development, and the ability to create and maintain good business contacts in the design community are common factors. It can be said that this group of experienced designers will always be small because they are differentiated from junior designers by their abilities in design innovation, which is driven by their philosophical approach to cultural interpretation and utilisation.

The thesis now focuses on the designers' approaches to design and Chinese culture as a part of their professional achievements. The word I kept encountering in the interviews and secondary literature search as an explanation



to their successes was ‘philosophy.’ It was frequently used by the experienced designers—not as an academic term, but one that denotes an important aspect of their approaches. Each designer interviewed in this study has a distinct style of working and thinking. Although it is possible to trace some of their roots to education, personal history, and client relationships as common features, their styles are individual and unique. It is this design philosophy that explains their approach to design tasks and their use of Chinese elements in their work.

A few elements of the designers’ philosophies were mentioned repeatedly and some of the differences between the designers can also be identified by looking at their responses in the interviews. The most important were a distinction between those trained in Western thinking and those trained in China and how basic underlying philosophy guided the way to culture. In this chapter, the elements of the underlying philosophy are analysed followed by an examination of how the designers use this philosophy in their work. For example, for some it was an intrinsic feeling, while for others it was a way to place more emphasis on external realities.

Table 5-1 Experienced Designers' views of cultural interpretation

Code. Name (Reference : average coverage)	Example sentences (interview: stimulus)
<i>Culture application</i>	
<b>When considering culture?</b>	My audience is in Hong Kong, or maybe to some degree in China. (HS: no.257-258) Inspired by rich collections. (KTK: no.422-423)
<b>What kind of culture?</b>	If I just set an article in Chinese, I will do the typeface not the hand drawing. (HS: no.268-269) Use Chinese Abacus to design a logo, Joint investment. (KTK: no.49) My thought was not only traditional totem, but Chinese thought and philosophy. (KTK: no.64) Ink painting became my vital design language in the mid of 1990s. (KTK: no.257) Typography applied the most. (KTK: no.283) We also formed a Chinese element, the spirit of China and the Chinese style. (WM:no.228-230) The doctrine of mean, harmony, unity of man and nature of Chinese. (WM: no.273) The poem from <i>Tao Te Ching</i> , represent Chinese attitude to nature and the world.(HJY: no.254) I want the values and the conservation of the East, or the aesthetics of the East. (JH: no.483)
<b>Why this culture?</b>	I think that really made a big hit with people in Hong Kong. (HS: no.135) As Chinese life attitude, Chinese Abacus means be shrewd in money matters. (KTK: no.71) Chinese characters are the only unique and unchangeable special symbols in China. (LJR: no.524) These years, I try to a characteristic expression of Chinese typography. (HJY:no.215-216) As a creator of China's traditional culture, there should be such a conscious. (JH: no.148)
<b>How to apply it?</b>	I did a lot of comparisons. Contrasting them. (HS: no.104-107) Put into a different context. (HS: no.134) I have rich long-term experience and the cross-cultural view. (WM: no.178-179) It will become her language, then these things will be very Chinese. (WM: no.251) We finally hope it full of Chinese spirit. (WM: no.294) Today, I can only say traditional things which must be used after conversion. (HH: no.528-529) I use the things in our life and start from there, which are very authentic. (SW: no.380)
<i>Cooperation design</i>	
<b>Professionalism</b>	I had worked obviously with photographers, illustrators, calligraphers. (HS)

In Chapter 4, an initial analysis was conducted on how the designers have worked with culture. Although the analysis was descriptive and focused on individuals, it showed that Chinese culture offers rich sources of inspiration for every designer studied in this thesis, which they translate into their designs in several ways. In broad terms, these two studies showed that the experienced designers have a rich knowledge of Chinese culture and its sophisticated practices (such as

calligraphy and seal making). The studies also indicated that this knowledge has a deeper dimension, which consists of thinking that provides a framework for design practice. As shown in this chapter, this thinking has philosophical dimensions that can be seen in the experienced designers' work. The chapter goes deeper into these philosophies, and initially describes two main traditions of thinking: Western and Eastern. These traditions also divide the experienced designers' approaches to design and its elements, with culture being one of these elements. The outcome of this analysis is a result of a constant comparison that started in Study one from Henry Steiner and KAN, Hong Kong based graphic designers, and finally tested the hypotheses from Study one by comparing it to three designers from Mainland China. Table 6-1 presents some of the citations about philosophy from the interviews.

#### 5.2.2. The importance of contrast

The first interviewee of the study was Henry Steiner. In the interview, Paul Rand was mentioned repeatedly. As mentioned previously, some of the most important things that Steiner learned as a student from Rand at Yale was the primacy of a concept and the importance of contrast in design. Both notions are grounded in Rand's long-term study of the pragmatic philosophy of James Dewey and William James, two of the most seminal American philosophers.

In particular, Steiner has carried the concept of contrast in graphic design into his work consistently for decades, and his interpretation of this concept follows Rand's thinking. Rand splits it into two categories: visual (size, colour, form, or light) and psychological (old/new, familiar/unusual) (Lazarus, 2014). His theory

of contrast deeply inspired Henry Steiner, and it has become a staple of his approach to design, as shown in Figure 5.2-1 to Figure 5.2-3.

As the study progressed, it also became apparent that Steiner is not the only designer in the study who had been inspired by Rand. WANG Min is another prominent designer who studied with Rand, though decades later than Steiner. When WANG Min was studying at Yale, Rand was considerably older, much less active as a practitioner, and under criticism from the emerging generation of postmodern designers. Despite this, his emphasis on contrast is clearly visible in the work of WANG Min, as shown in Figure 5.2-4 to Figure 5.2-6.



*Figure 5.2-1 Poster design Hong Kong at Comis-Eurotricot by Henry Steiner (1972)*

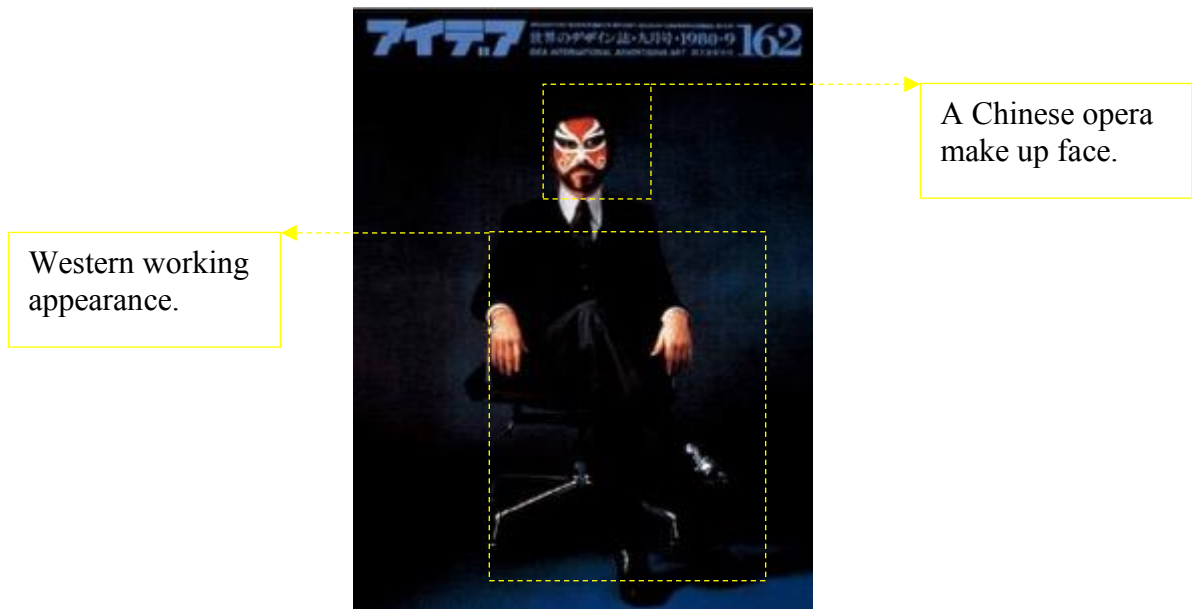


Figure 5.2-2 Cover design for Idea Magazine by Henry Steiner (1980)  
 (Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/Zxa4BXW6TlmqUjbfEebXqw>)

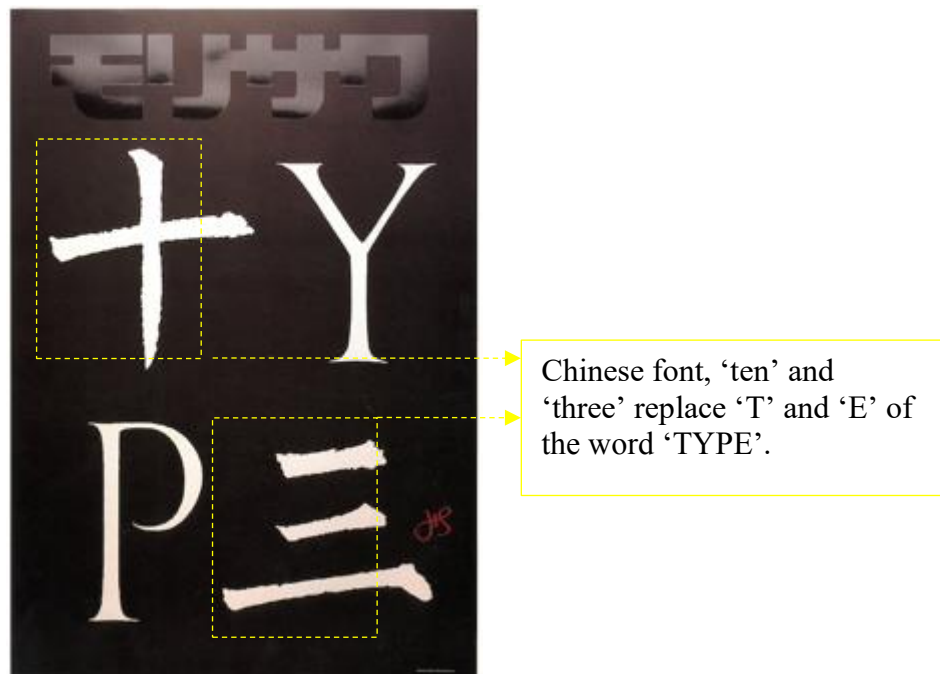


Figure 5.2-3 Poster of Japanese type setting company by Henry Steiner (1991)



Colour contrast with Chinese characters.

*Figure 5.2-4 Souvenir T-shirt of Forbidden City designed by WANG Min (J. Xin, 2017)*

The Canadian design professor Jorge Frascara (1988) has said that a graphic designer is a person who constructs a pattern to organise the communication link between the piece of design and the viewer. For Steiner, this organisation works mainly through a symbolic way of contrast, while WANG Min uses both explicit and implicit cultural elements in most of his work.

For instance, in the poster designs of Henry Steiner in Figure 5.2-1, Figure 5.2-2, and Figure 5.2-3, the meaning of visual language is apparent, strong, and unitary (especially when compared to WANG Min's interpretation). WANG Min once contrasted a knife and chopsticks in a poster to represent the United States and China, and he combined the cutlery into one form to represent the harmonious bond between US and Chinese students.

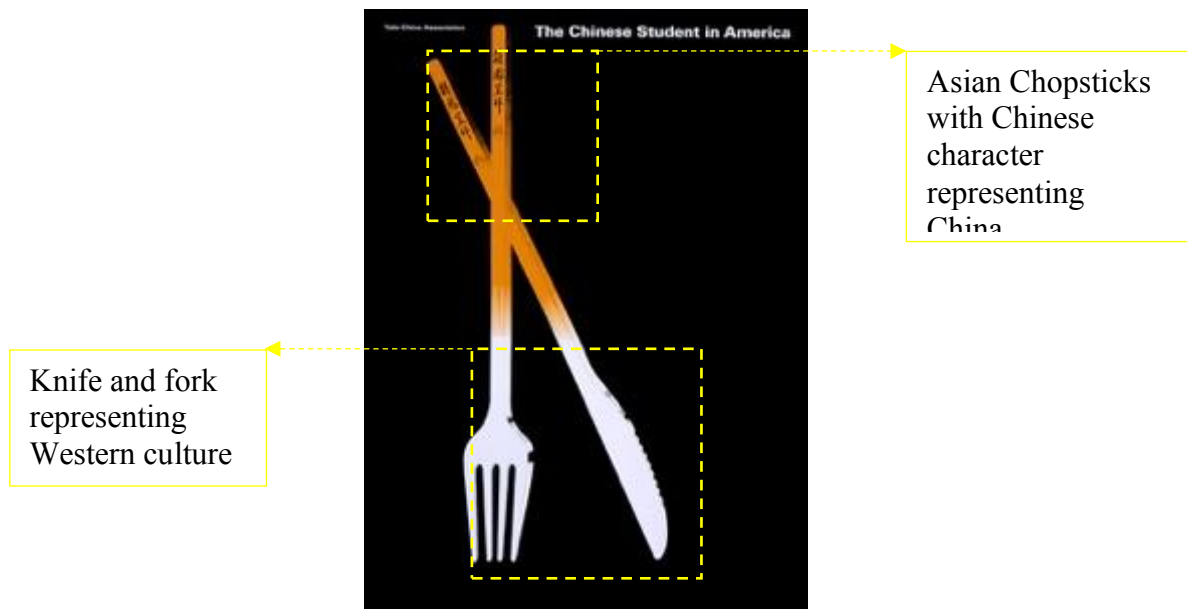


Figure 5.2-5 Chinese student poster designed by WANG Min  
(Retrieved from [http://www.shift.jp.org/en/archives/2008/07/min\\_wang.html](http://www.shift.jp.org/en/archives/2008/07/min_wang.html))

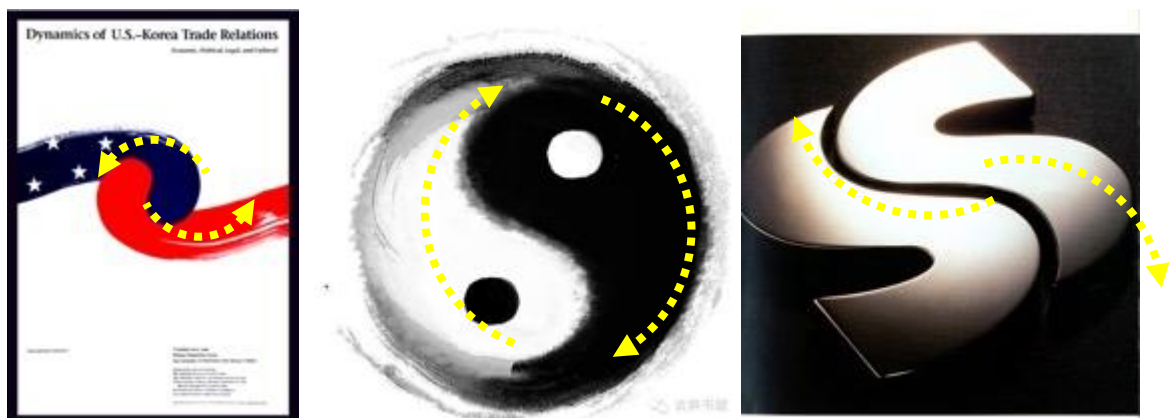


Figure 5.2-6 Us-Korean poster by WANG Min  
(Retrieved from [http://www.shift.jp.org/en/archives/2008/07/min\\_wang.html](http://www.shift.jp.org/en/archives/2008/07/min_wang.html))



*Figure 5.2-7 Corporate identity for a Korean Conglomerate by Henry Steiner (1989) (Haas & Steiner, 1995)*

Although contrast has frequently been applied in the work of Steiner and WANG Min, the former's work is straight and incisive compared to the latter's metaphorical and implicit expressive style. For example, the Chinese Tai Chi symbol appears in Figure 5.2-6 and Figure 5.2-7. However, the similarities end quickly. While Steiner only uses contrast in colour and form (which is inferred from the Tai Chi symbol and shakes the basic form of the symbol), WANG Min's expression (also inspired by Tai Chi) shows the essence of the symbol (its balanced direction), which turns it into a stable and harmonious visual design (Figure 5.2-8).



*Figure 5.2-8 Comparison of implicit meaning of Henry and WANG Min's design work*



### 5.2.3. Peace and harmony: the art of the sublime

It was particularly shown in Study two that many Chinese designers find their philosophical roots in the main forms of Asian philosophy—Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. These philosophical belief systems are clearly different. However, in the context of this study, the significance of these philosophical systems is that they set the designers on a path that is markedly different from pragmatism with its key concept of contrast. Rather than contrast, all Asian concepts lead to design that underlines peace and harmony as the main elements that lead to sublime design work.

As a design method, peace and harmony are quite vague descriptions, similar to the expression of the spirit in oriental culture. However, through the comparative analysis of the six designers, it was found that a philosopher who is proficient in Chinese culture and graphic design (KAN Tai Keung) strives to grasp these qualities in his work. Both works had to create a unique design language that expresses peace and harmony accurately.

KAN Tai Keung's work always reveals the beauty of harmony in balance. He commonly uses ink, rulers, red dots, Chinese characters, ink tools, and other elements in complex superpositions in a poetic, balanced, and harmonious constellation. As he mentioned in the interview, the proper expression of Chinese culture in design expresses oriental charm far beyond a symbolic effect. He believes that philosophical thinking is the soul of a designer and any design outcome, and the spirit of Chinese Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism guide his visual expression. This spirit leads to a balance between reality and emptiness,

yin and yang, and rigidity and flexibility. At the same time, it uses a lot of white space.

KAN Tai Keung concluded there are three forms of balance and harmony. First, as demonstrated in Figure 4.2-6 and Figure 4.2-7, he uses calligraphy and ink painting to contrast rigidity and flexibility. While this is quite similar to Henry Steiner's interpretation of contrast, the visual content is centred and symmetrical and strives to create a harmonious atmosphere. Most of KAN's work appears to contain a hidden middle line. Second, he strives to combine art and mood in his work. In Figure 5.2-10, the pattern is a butterfly, and it could also be seen as a dancer's graphic. This is similar to Zhuang Zhou's dreaming butterfly, which is a philosophical argument to show that the real and illusory can never be exactly distinguished. Third, he strives to combine silence and reality in a state of balance. In this Chinese notion, there is silence in movement and reality in virtual. In Figure 5.2-11, the shape of the compass is defined by the pen and ruler, which symbolises a dynamic that breaks the semicircle.

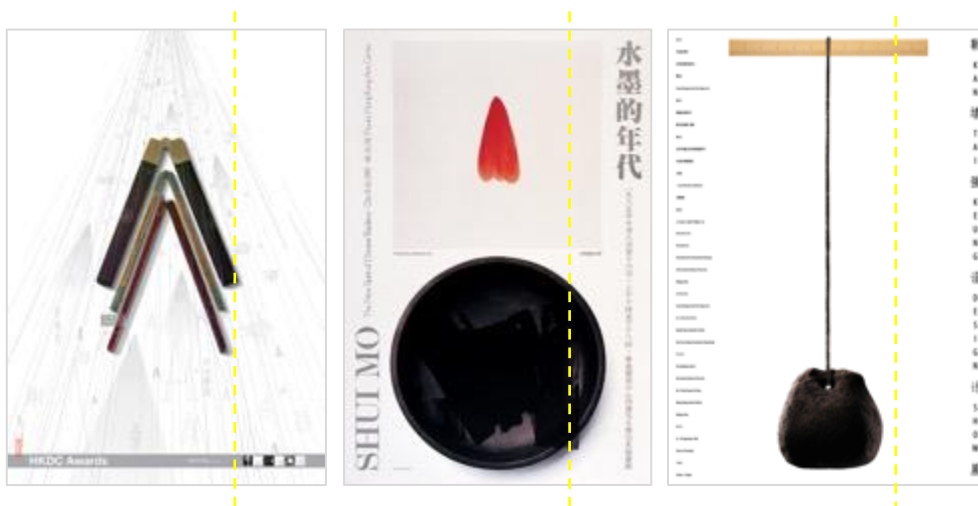


Figure 5.2-9 KAN Tai Keung's poster design  
(Retrieved from [http://www.izhsh.com.cn/doc/9/7\\_519.html](http://www.izhsh.com.cn/doc/9/7_519.html))



Figure 5.2-10 International Dance Poster (1989) designed by KAN Tai Keung  
(Retrieved from <http://sjyz.168sos.net/P/Products/ShowProduct.aspx?id=844>)

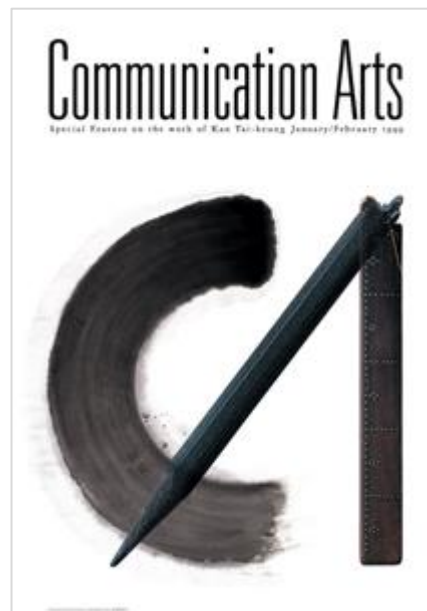


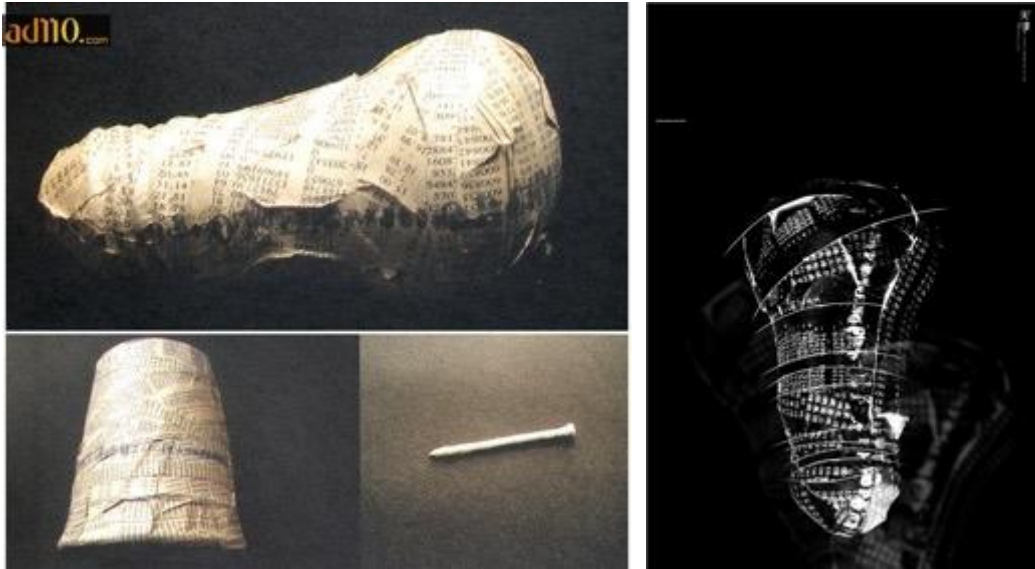
Figure 5.2-11 Courageously break the rules, poster designed by KAN Tai Keung (1992)  
(Retrieved from [http://www.izhsh.com.cn/doc/9/4\\_519.html](http://www.izhsh.com.cn/doc/9/4_519.html))

From the outset, HAN Jia Ying's design method is very different from KAN's design expression. Visually similar to postmodernist design, it is an individualistic

design expression that is different from modernist designs that tried to service the general public (Philip B Meggs & Purvis, 2011, p. 460). However, it follows Western design language. In the Western design context, he retains the awe of oriental culture by commonly using Chinese characters. His landscape elements convey the traditional expression of Chinese spiritual heritage 'Calligraphy and painting has the homologous source' 书画同源 (Figure 5.2-12) (GONG, 2003), in addition to his consciousness of former eras and cultural memories. For example, we can see how he uses old newspapers with stock exchange information to wrap light bulbs then uses these inspirations (Figure 5.2-13). In terms of design philosophy, in this design he has taken into account the introverted mystery of Eastern philosophy and evoked the unconventional and unrestrained thinking in Western philosophy.



Figure 5.2-12 GDC13 visual identity design by HAN Jiaying



*Figure 5.2-13 Series poster design of Tianya Magazine by HAN Jia Ying (1997)*  
 (Retrieved from <http://www.visionunion.com/article.jsp?code=200509280133>)

Victor Papanek once argued that aesthetics is one of the most important tools in a designer's repertoire. It helps designers to shape their forms and colours into entities that touch and please us while being beautiful, exciting, meaningful, and filled with delight (Papanek & Fuller, 1972). With his aesthetic intuition, HAN Jia Ying's visual presentations always maintain a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere. Moreover, his work always stands out from other work of the same period and is accepted by the public. His regional aesthetic style has led him to create his unique design style. During the early 1990s, he learned to design by imitating advanced Western design. Currently, his work is based on his 30 years of design experience in the East. During this time, he has personally tried to improve the aesthetic style of Chinese society and overthrow the inherent thinking that Chinese culture is tacky and outdated.

Compared to KAN Tai Keung and HAN Jia Ying, there are alternative Eastern philosophical approaches to design. JIANG Hua's Eastern path is based on

Chinese typography, while Wong basis his on the notion of social responsibility, which is accordance with the idea of harmony. Their designs always impress the public from a subtle angle, giving them a deeper cultural meaning. Moreover, each designer creates as a storyteller, an approach very different from contrast. Instead of prominent juxtapositions of visually symbolic or psychological elements, its expression is subtle. The way of subtle expression employs all the cultural symbols close to our daily life, the ones that are the most easily overlooked. Examples of this are shown in Figure 4.3-9, Figure 4.3-11, and Figure 4.6-2.

#### 5.2.4. [How experienced designers define their approach to philosophy](#)

Paul Rand (2017) suggested aesthetic design judgments are based on two kinds of values: symbolic or associative (extrinsic) and formal (intrinsic). Judgement of symbolic value is always based on habits, opinions, special meanings, prejudices, misunderstandings, and conditioned learning (which is about social, psychological, political, financial, or even religious considerations). Although intrinsic values involve aesthetics, the design itself is not what it stands for. External judgment involves content and meaning, and inner beauty is more difficult to understand because talent, experience, taste, expertise, sensitivity, and visual acuity must play a role. While the previous chapters described experienced designers' approaches to Chinese culture, this chapter focused on the philosophical approaches that provide context to their work. Next, it is suggested that these philosophical approaches can be understood more fully through the distinction proposed by Rand.

### *Designers follow the intrinsic feeling*

Some experienced designers follow their intrinsic feelings, meaning they are sensible. Stanley WONG certainly belongs in this category. Stanley's method of expressing is quite different, perhaps because he has a dual role as designer and artist. When designing, even commercially, the clients usually allow him quite a lot of freedom to deliver the concept from his heart. Stanley in his part wants to catch up and dig the common sense of customers in deep. That is the intelligence point from him. An example of this is in the documentary 'Dance Hong Kong'(冇照跳), which is a type of literary film with skilful filmic cinematography. After the show, the audience can have a free discussion with the director (Stanley). In the discussion, people tend to concentrate on the storyline and concept, forgetting the sponsor (a camera company) appeared on the trailer. The second designer in the intrinsic group is JIANG Hua, who learned calligraphy during childhood. He found that the rules of traditional engraving and modern typography design are particularly suited to exploring the Eastern path in modern design. Further, he concentrates on capturing his inner feelings in his work.

### *Designers are insightful and sensitive*

The second group of people are insightful and sensitive, inspired by the outside world, such as HAN. He was caught up in the economic development peak in Shenzhen and developed well when he transferred from academia to the commercial world. HAN also has a unique aesthetic conscience, and he always

finds methods of expression that the current public or target customers can accept in both commercial and cultural projects.

#### *Designers could balance the intrinsic and extrinsic factors*

Another subset of experienced designers (Henry Steiner, KAN Tai Keung, and WANG Min) balance intrinsic and extrinsic factors, have a unique artistic temperament, and are perceived as capable of embracing the environment. KAN was born to an artistic family, and in addition to his traditional art concept accompanied by Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism he was skilled in applying these in commercial work. While Steiner's design philosophy builds on his Western background, he chose to settle in Hong Kong and learn its local culture, which resulted in developing his own approach to culture.

Professor WANG Min grew up in China then studied and worked in the United States for nearly 20 years. He was among the first generation of Eastern graphic designers working at Adobe, managing to retain his oriental way of thinking within the Western corporate environment.

#### 5.2.5. Theoretical analysis of their design philosophy

Even though the experienced designers studied in this book are often scholars, they have built their unique philosophies that help them to manage their design processes. Following Paul Rand, they divided into two groups: one distinguished by intrinsic motivation, the other by extrinsic motivation. Those in the first group prioritise their inner feelings. However, this does not equate to being spontaneous, as it means more than simply injecting their inner



emotions into a design expression. Designers in the intrinsic camp take a long time to move and reflect on their designs. Moreover, the process of bringing inner elements into harmony may also take a long time. These designers reflect their past experiences to determine the right emotions and meanings of previous experiences for the current design task. This process has similarities with acting (Dewey, 2005). Other designers balance their inner creative processes with external realities, which is more empirical but can take an equally long time.

This study has shown that experienced designers from different backgrounds have been touched by both Western and Eastern philosophies. In Chinese traditional culture, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism are the three main philosophical systems. Every educated Chinese person has their own philosophy, which is based on these three systems. If the basic idea of in-depth understanding is lacking and people intend to pass through the concept of design (as if fishing in the air), they ultimately make futile efforts. Buddhist thoughts spread from the Western regions of Asia to the East and is the epiphany of life. All the world is illusory, pain and happiness are the mystery of the feeling. If we can learn to see that 'the form itself is emptiness; emptiness itself is form', we can approach truth to seek the 'great freedom' beyond life and death (Rāhula, 1974). Taoism seeks the master of the universe, which is a core thought in many parts of traditional Chinese culture. Life is divided into Yin and Yang, which are derivatives of life and growth in nature.

People and all things are symbiotic—'go with the flow' to obtain harmony between the heaven and people (M. Weber & Gerth, 1953).

Apart from Chinese philosophy, this study has revealed several interesting Western philosophical roots in Chinese graphic design. Every designer in this study has been touched and inspired by Western design and thoughts. While the obvious predecessor is Henry Steiner (who is not ethnically Chinese), there have been Chinese designers studying in the United States and Europe for a long time. Examples are Wucius WONG and ZHONG Pei Zheng, who brought US modernism and the Bauhaus to China. WANG Shou Zhi studied design theory and history in China for more than 25 years. Through a systematic analysis of graphic design history and its key people, he concluded that the core concept of 'practicum and design serving for society' from the Bauhaus and American design have shaped Chinese design significantly. In New York in the 1960s and 1970s, graphic design found new ways of being critical about politics and ideological arguments (S. Z. Wang, 2002). This freedom of design was also reflected in the work of Paul Rand, whose concept stems from his clear and straightforward spiritual brilliance and from those artistic feelings that were inevitably born in an environment that placed a premium on freedom (Philip B. Meggs & Chronicle, 1997).

One way to illustrate this difference is by following Donald Munro, who has observed that Chinese and Western philosophical practices differ in terms of truth-related aspects: 'In China, truth and falsehood in Greek are rarely important considerations for philosophers to accept a certain proposition;

these are Western concerns' (Munro, 1969). The Chinese philosopher Youlan (1995) discussed one significant status of philosophy in China. This blurs the line between religion and the quest for knowledge, which has been a cardinal distinction in Western philosophy (at least since the Enlightenment of the 18th Century). While the difference could also be found in the concept of the relationship between man and nature, there is yet another fundamental difference between the Eastern and Western philosophical systems. In the West, especially since the Renaissance, humans have regarded themselves as masters (and even controllers) of nature. This attitude has resulted in the subsequent rise of the industrial revolution and a variety of outstanding scientific and technological inventions. By contrast, humans are often seen as part of nature in the East and continually seek reconciliation with nature. Therefore, Chinese philosophy tends to place value on intangible aspects of life while Western philosophy tends to value practical outcomes, even when it strives for knowledge. While going deeper into these distinctions is beyond the scope and remit of this book, the difference of Chinese and Western philosophies could be an interesting research topic in the future.

## 6. The cultural interpretation framework

The way this conclusion was reached started with the literature review. Since the key word of the study was innovation, it started with a review of the main variants of innovation literature in the design context. We saw how the most influential recent work tends to imply that design innovation works with meanings rather than technology, as stated by the Italian design management expert Roberto Verganti (2009). For example, Alessi re-invented kitchenware by thinking about items like cork screws as toys. However, Verganti's study builds on a narrow empirical base (Italian design of the 1980s and 1990s) and looks at design from the outside. Better guides for this study were by Kärt Summatavet (2005) and X. Xin (2006), who examined the tension between tradition and innovation.

In this research, the focus has been on Chinese culture as a source of inspiration in graphic design. To examine how this is approached by the experienced designers, an interpretive framework was built to understand culture from their perspective. Based on the qualitative methods employed in this research, this study analysed the tension between cultural tradition and innovation in graphic design.

At the core of the cultural interpretation framework (which is the main outcome and contribution of this study), there are six practical cultural interpretation methods that originated from two different philosophical thinking approaches. These are listed with conclusions in the following section.

### 6.1. Theoretical analysis of cultural interpretation approaches

In the studies of the two scholars conducted in the literature review chapter, it was revealed through Kärt Summatavet (2005) and X. Xin (2006)'s innovative application of researching culture in design that researchers play different roles—informants, designers, and translators. Kärt concluded in her research that when a researcher uses analytical terms, their attitude forms a significant distance from the interviewee in terms of methodology. In addition, their connection with the cultural relics they perceive and describe remain different. Therefore, in the summary of cultural research, the researcher's role is to translate rather than disseminate culture.

Moreover, the American anthropologist, Geertz (1973)'s analysis method of cultural interpretation, thick description, coincides with some of Kärt's view, which can be used as a good theoretical support for the analysis of cultural interpretative framework. In Geertz's standpoint, thick description itself is to provide more symbols to the understander, the meaning of the understander will continue to expand, so that the understander's free imagination will continue to develop in depth. And Cultural analysis is not an experimental science seeking rules, but an explanatory science seeking meaning. The researcher keep distance to study the experienced designers' cultural interpretation approaches are get rid of limit the imagination of the junior designers who will refer the framework.

In this study, the research questions are carried out sequentially. After the literature review and data analysis, one hypothesis was verified and critically evaluated, which allowed verification of another hypothesis. Finally, a summary and referred conclusion was obtained, instead of blindly respecting and affirming the experienced designers. This research method is summarised in the analytic induction and grounded theory referred to in [Chapter 3](#). The initial hypothesis was that Chinese designers generally lacked creative thinking, which was partially confirmed in the literature review through the first paragraph of background research. While it is true that a large number of designers in China lack creative thinking, a considerable number have gained a firm footing on the world design stage. These designers have their own unique innovative methods and are experienced in innovative applications of traditional culture. Accordingly, the next hypothesis is presented.

The main hypothesis of this research is that designers have their own innovative ways of interpreting Chinese culture. This explains the difference between designers who imitate Chinese visual elements and senior designers who use Chinese visual elements for cultural innovation. Accordingly, two related research questions need to be answered for this hypothesis: do designers consider their cultural background when innovating and how do designers innovate and design with Chinese cultural characteristics if they do not prioritise culture. The first question is summarised and answered in [Chapter 4](#). However, while culture is naturally taken into consideration in innovative designs, content, marketing requirements, and customer needs usually take priority.

Regarding the second question, Kärt's method of exploring cultural innovation applications can be referred as conducting research and analysis using several different identities. In addition to the designer's perspectives during the interviews, their background, the interview transcription, and secondary materials had to be judged and summarised into several parts from the researcher's perspectives in Chapter 4. For example, when answering the question 'how they define culture or Chinese culture?', not all interviewees gave a positive or definitive answer. Most designers in this study are design practitioners rather than theoretical researchers. Either they quoted many of their own design examples when attempting to illustrate the meaning of culture or researchers had to summarise this from the cultural innovations of which they were most proud. Moreover, cultural definitions are muddled because most of the specific rituals, customs, ideas, or anything else that we come to understand have been cleverly incorporated as background knowledge before the subject itself has been directly studied. And the so called culture analysis is the inference of meaning and draw explanatory conclusions from a better inference (Geertz, 1973). Therefore, the definition of culture is written in the two sections of Chapter 4—'acknowledgement of culture' and 'theory note.

In the same way, designers had no definite answer to the question 'how they considered traditional and modern values', even though this question is of great significance in explaining how they innovate Chinese culture. At this stage of the thesis, I read and analysed a large amount of literature on tradition and modernity and conducted research on the background behind the growth of several experienced designers and their related graphic design history. This acted as a type of invisible

power to help in understanding the designers at a deeper level. To keep the same track knowledge with designers, the researcher maintained a distance to analyse and summarise the cultural interpretation framework as a translator. Accordingly, confirming the hypothesis and answering the research question is the main content of this chapter.

## 6.2. The cultural interpretation processes

It is not possible to have an explicit process in which one step follows another. Rather, the process itself is implicit. This means it is only possible to identify several key stages with the key actions that form such an innovation process from cultural heritage to innovation strategies. For such a process to work for a designer, it is necessary for the designer to have an expected outcome that is related (or can be traced back to) a cultural element or root. After the interviews with all these experienced designers during the three years of research, I concluded that the process of cultural interpretation has three key stages: knowledge, persuasion, and decision. Many other researchers have also found this useful. To take definitive actions in design to implement these three stages, the following can be useful. For knowledge, the most important action is understanding, while for persuasion and decision it is transformation. This means new designs need to be created in the innovation process in which cultural elements or values are transformed to form new ideas or inspirations. This transformation process involves exploration and optimisation, during which new ideas and applications are experimented with, tested, and evaluated. Beyond these, it is also necessary to consider another key word—transcendence. Therefore, three actions are needed to apply this process in design applications.



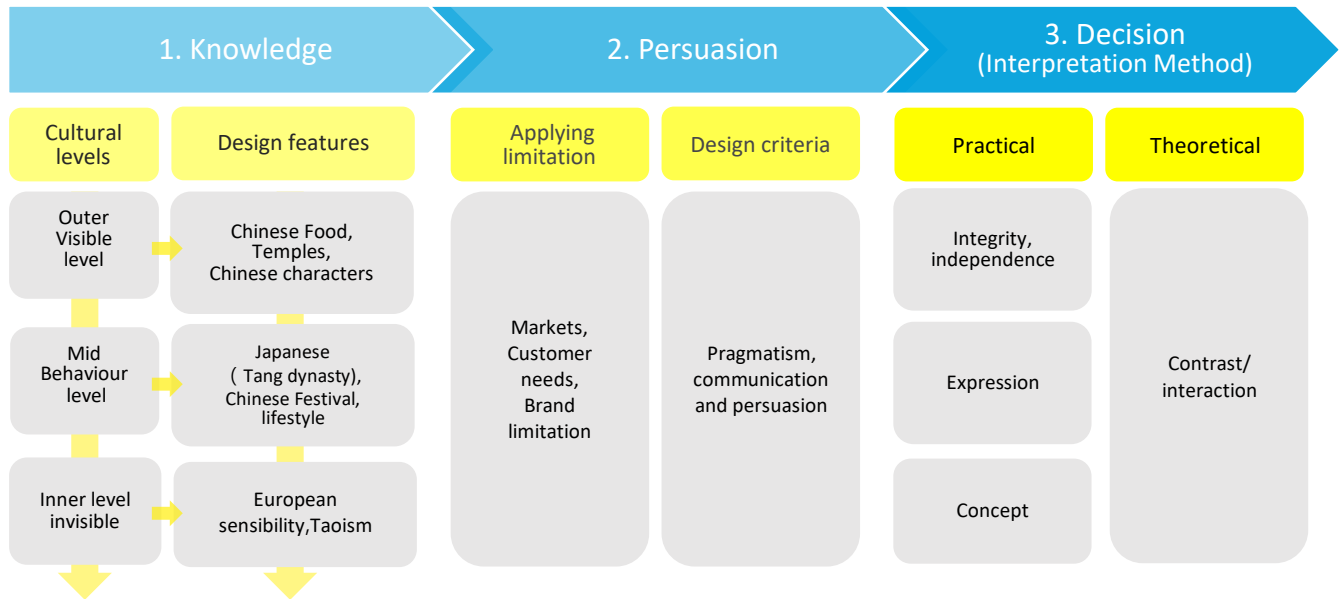
The first action is understanding, meaning a designer must appreciate and understand the values of cultural heritage and identify the exact cultural elements that are relevant to the design task at hand. This process is cognitive and involves critical reviews or selections of the available cultural heritages. If this stage is unsuccessful, it is necessary for designers to increase their efforts to obtain such resources or knowledge. Most design projects involve a research process. In the context of my cultural interpretation process, the research focused on the cognition of cultural resources. To continue the process, one needs to take actions for the application of useful cultural elements in the design task at hand, which involves transformation. Transformation is a key action for the generation of new designs or knowledge and is particularly necessary because it can stimulate the creative abilities of the designer to prevent direct copying. This transformation process itself must involve bringing cultural elements (or cultural understanding) to the context. Here, the new design to be created should be consistent with user expectations and the universal aesthetic standards of our time, because some cultural heritage can be dated back several hundred years or more.

The cultural interpretation process also involves another stage, which I refer to as transcendence. There is no mechanical way of furthering a process that is transcendent. Once again, this stage implicitly advances knowledge of the new design in the context of identified and utilised cultural heritage or cultural resources. In terms of innovation, transformation may process tactic achievement (to a certain extent). However, it cannot produce superior results unless transcendence is obtained. A new

design can be considered as transcendent if it advances and enhances the meaning of the culture intent that the designer applied during the cultural interpretation process. Whether transcendence is achieved is also an important evaluation criterion for the success of this cultural interpretation process. Transcendence can be understood as a new design enlarging the scope of the original culture elements in a timely manner, meaning it can be used as inspiration or new knowledge for others to learn or follow. In addition, the new design might produce a new trend directly characterised by the cultural elements used. It should be noted that there are already many successful developments and advancements for transformation (design tools) that allow easy and quick changes of an initial design solution. However, transcendence is the bottle neck for the cultural interpretation process and should be approached from the perspective of the social, historic, and cultural meanings of design and creation. Transcendence is the ultimate objective—from inheritance to development and advancement of culture into the future. We cannot only sit on the cultural heritage without making new progress. This interpretation process is different from the model introduced in previous research, as shown in Figure 3-4. In the process proposed in this thesis, translation, transformation, and transcendence focused on the actions that must be taken to proceed in the cultural interpretation process with implicit but intensified efforts.

### 6.2.1. Henry Steiner

Table 6-1 Henry Steiner's Culture innovation decision process

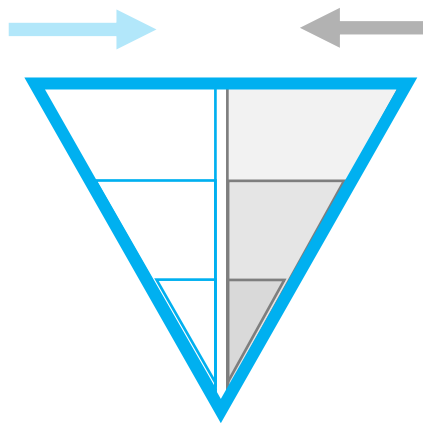


As argued in the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2.2.4, the knowledge, persuasion, and decision stages for Henry Steiner's cultural interpretation method are listed in Table 6-1. The 'Spatial Perspective of Culture' is implied to show how traditional Chinese culture is interpreted in his famous banknote design for the Hong Kong/Shanghai Bank, as shown in Figure 6.2-1, which demonstrated Henry's core concept of contrast. This concept emphasises preserving the integrity and independence of cultural elements to avoid simply blending them to achieve a harmonious concatenation. Therefore, the culture elements are understood and transformed to show the contrast between traditional Chinese and modern senses.





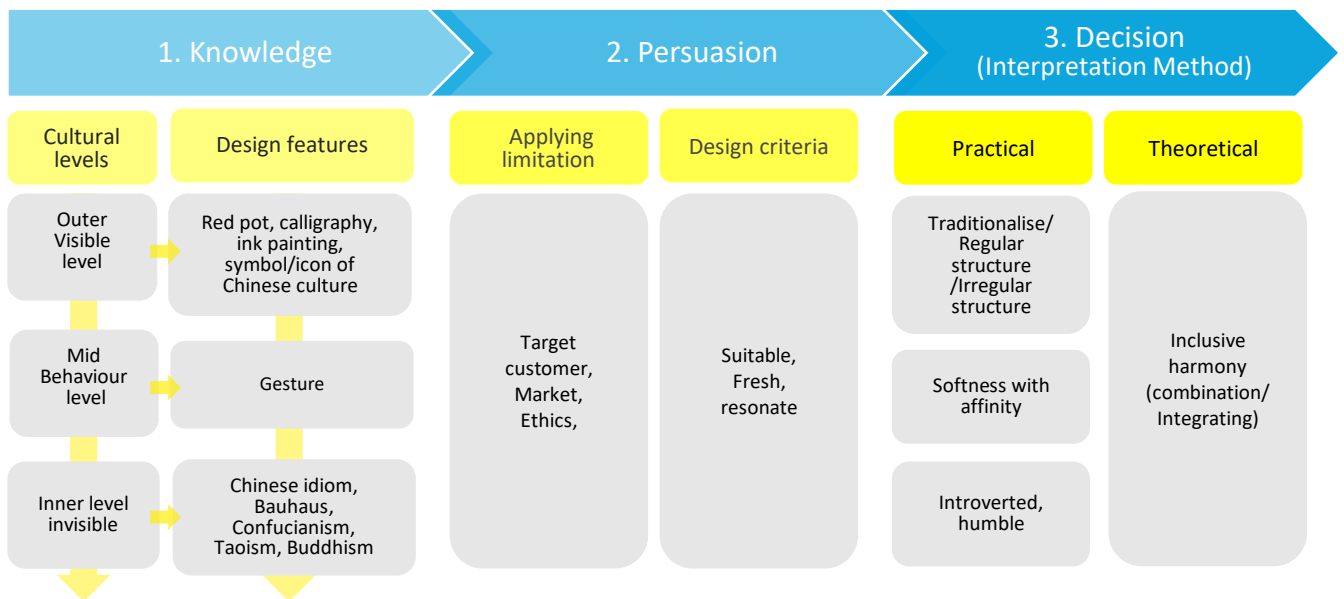
*Figure 6.2-2 Henry Steiner's cultural interpretation methods in graphic design  
( Left 1: Annual report of Hong Kong mass transit railway (1989))  
Left 2: Poster design (1988)*



*Figure 6.2-3 The design work of Henry Steiner*

### 6.2.2. KAN Tai Keung

Table 6-2 KAN Tai Keung's Culture innovation decision process



Based on a data analysis of the interviews and KAN Tai Keung's abundant design work presented in previous paragraphs, his frequently used design features representing Chinese culture are listed in Table 6-2. Instead of making a design softer with affinity to match Chinese philosophical thought at an invisible level, he frequently tried to integrate or combine Chinese culture thoughts in designs at a visible level. Taking the logo for an investment company in Figure 6.2-4 as an example, KAN used the beads of abacus to constitute the company name (aic) and used this traditional Chinese calculator to present the spirit of meticulous planning (similar meaning to a Chinese idiom '精打细算') at the investment company. These examples show that KAN's work is often inspired by Chinese philosophical ideas. As a Chinese designer, he is trying to represent the Chinese people's attitude towards life in his designs (Kan, 2016a, no.70-74). Looking at the cultural interpretation methods presented in Figure 4.2-4, although the

pattern and meticulous spirit were combined in the outer- and mid-levels, the inner-level was always Chinese.



Figure 6.2-4 AIC logo design by KAN in 1972 (Kan, 2014)

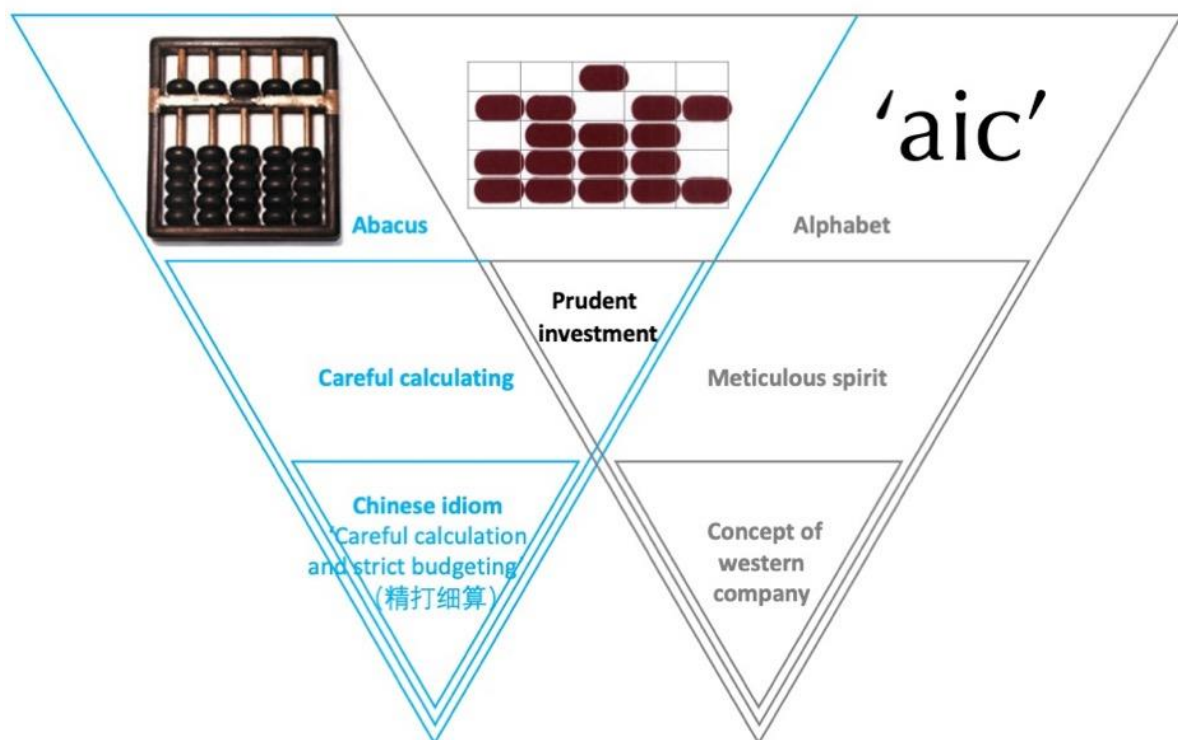


Figure 6.2-5 Chinese cultural interpretation method of AIC investment company by KAN Tai Keung

Another example is the logo design for Prosperity Press (Figure 6.2-7). This comprises a book and a peony, which is similar to the previous logo. It is beneficial to open the book, and the peony in the book is full of prosperity. This idea comes from the old saying of 'One can find a beauty as good as a jade in the books' (Chinese idiom '书中自有颜如玉'). Although the peony is also in the style

of traditional patterns, as a graphic element it became an unprecedented design (Kan, 2014, p. 156). As shown in Figure 6.2-6, although Chinese culture elements are integrated with modern forms (or the concepts of the company), the inner level of the final design is always Chinese, which is similar to Figure 4.2-21. Therefore, his cultural interpretation methods can be concluded in Figure 6.2-7.

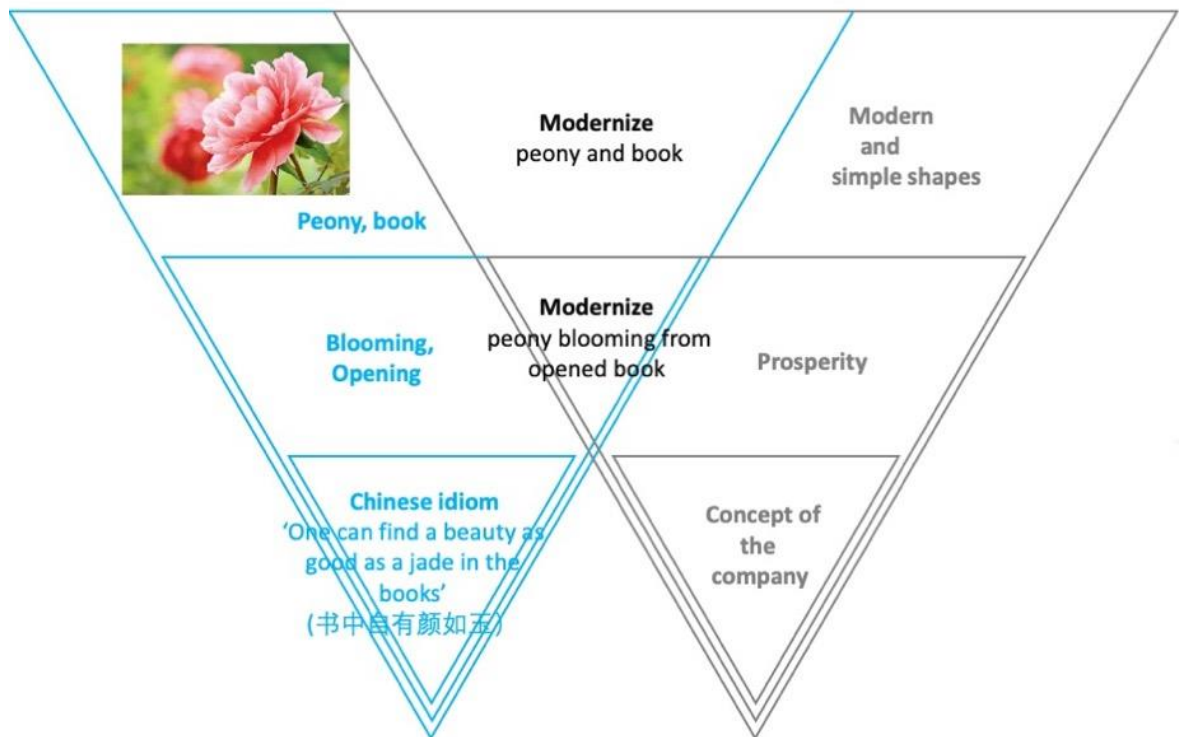


Figure 6.2-6 Chinese cultural interpretation method of Prosperity Press Logo design by KAN Tai Keung

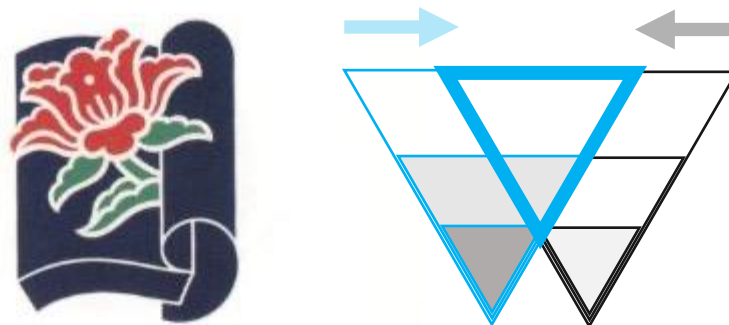
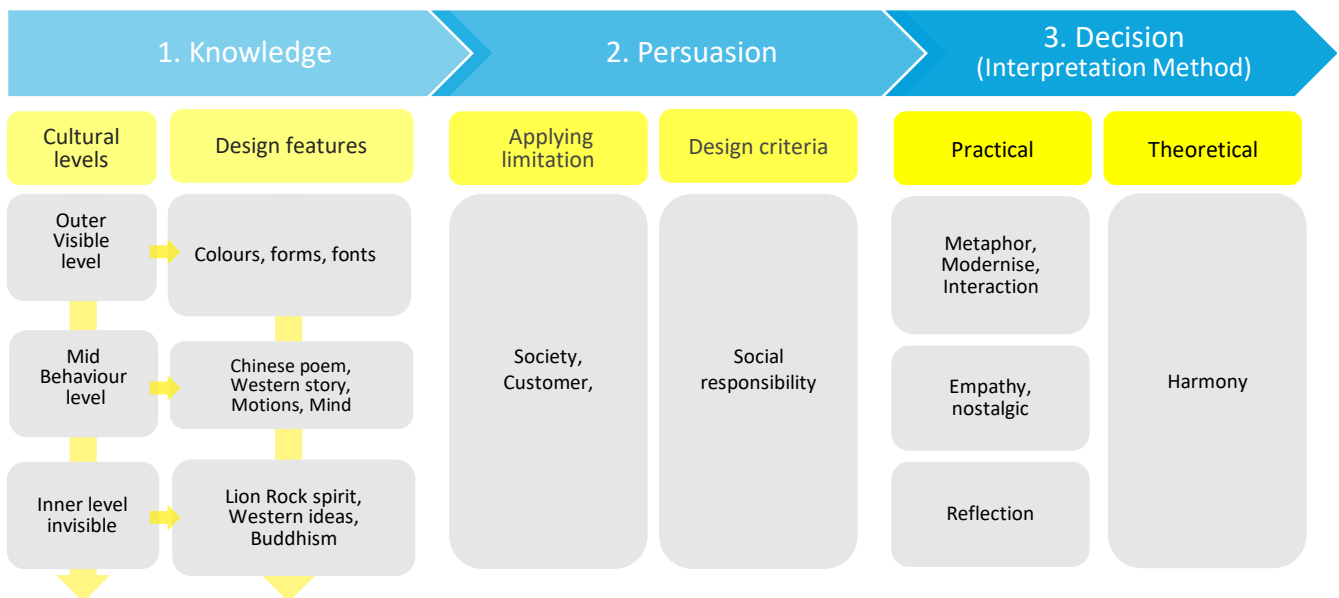


Figure 6.2-7 Prosperity Press Logo design by KAN Tai Keung



### 6.2.3. Stanley WONG

Table 6-3 Stanley WONG's Culture innovation decision process



Based on the previous analysis, Stanley Wong's cultural interpretation related knowledge is shown in Table 6-3. The LED video installation 'Dropping Pearls' (2018) is a recent, typical artwork of Stanley that exhibits his cultural interpretation method. Different from 'Red white, blue,' this installation was commissioned by the luxury French brand Chanel (Figure 6.2-8). Although the design element was fixed as pearls, Stanley had more freedom to make it a culture project and insist on implementing his oriental attitude (S. WONG, 2018, no.470-477). He took inspiration from the true story of Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel dancing during a dinner, when her strand of pearls suddenly broke and dropped to the ground. The same story has been told in a Chinese famous poem by Bai Ju Yi of the Tang Dynasty. He used the sound of pearls dropping to describe a clear and melodious sound. In his installation, dropping pearls were used as a connecting bond between France and China, which also connects natural graces to charms. Therefore, according to Stanley's design concept (Table 6-3) and

implementation (Figure 6.2-9), his cultural interpretation model was quite similar to KAN Tai keung's (which is the Chinese culture combination).



Figure 6.2-8 Led video installation: *Dropping pearls of CHANEL*

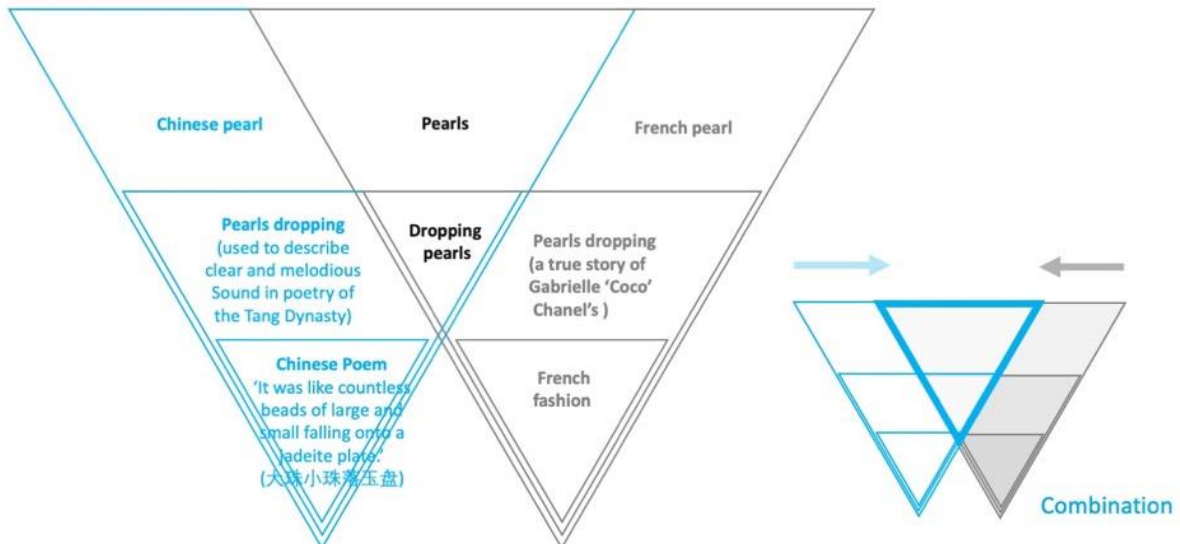
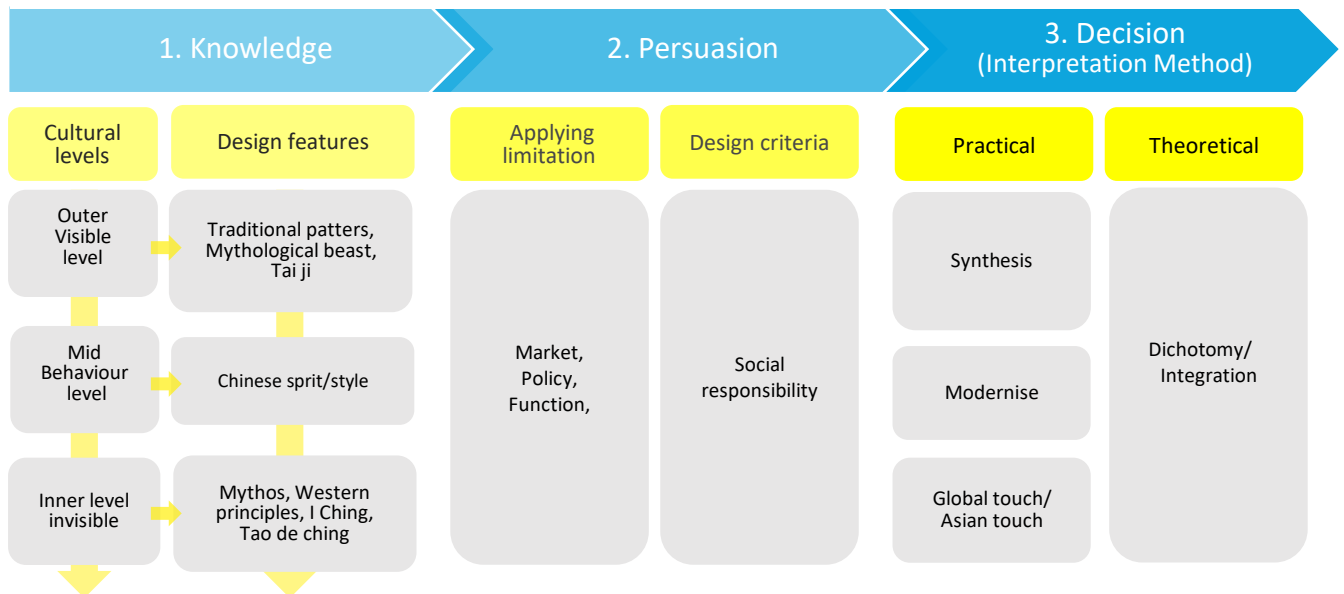


Figure 6.2-9 Cultural interpretation of *dropping pearls* designed by Stanley Wong and his typical cultural interpretation methods

#### 6.2.4. WANG Min

Table 6-4 WANG Min's Culture innovation decision process



As shown in Table 6-4, WANG Min's dichotomy in cultural interpretation is similar to Henry Steiner's methods of contrast. The difference is that WANG insisted integrating design features as a synthesis rather than as a simple collection of independent cultural elements. An example is the logo he designed for the US & Korea Trade Associations (Figure 6.2-10), where he merged the stars and stripes of the American flag with the Taegeukgi symbols of the South Korean flag. Further, the stripes of the American flag follow the direction of rotation of Taegeukgi. This makes it visually resemble traditional Chinese brush strokes, as shown in the 'Spatial perspectives of culture' in Figure 6.2-12. (Richard B. Doubleday, 2008a).



Figure 6.2-10 US & Korea Trade Association logo

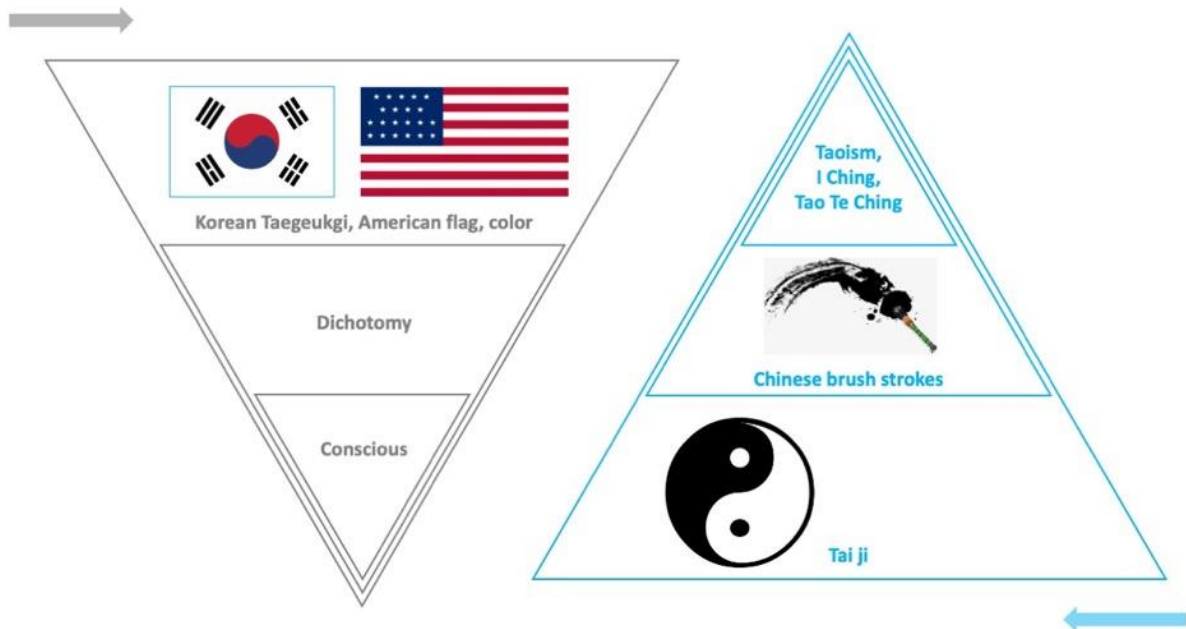
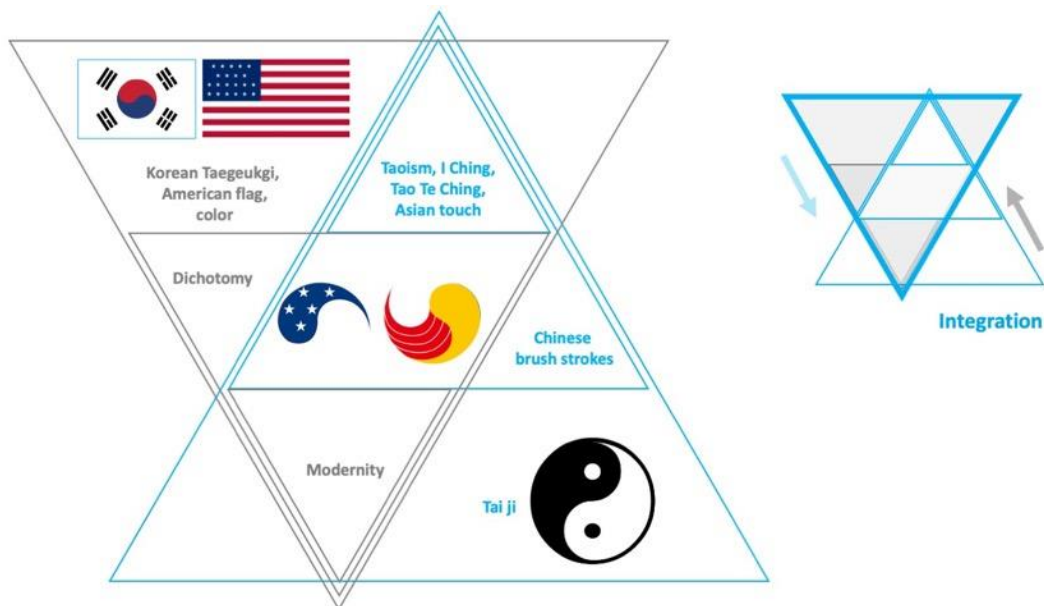


Figure 6.2-11 Cultural design features in US & Korea Trade Association logo design by WANG Min

Superficially, there is no direct expression of colours and graphic elements that symbolise Chinese culture. However, the styles of Chinese brushes in calligraphy are embedded in the idea for the design. In addition, the figure at the inner level (Taiji), which is a famous symbol for Taoism in China, is clearly visible. The concept of Yin and Yang is another important Chinese way of thinking about the universe. This is used in this logo design by WANG as a metaphor for the equality of Korea and the United States in cooperation. Moreover, the Koreans respect Taoism more than other Chinese philosophical branches (such as Confucianism and Buddhism). Therefore, although this logo design needs to contain visual cultural elements of the United

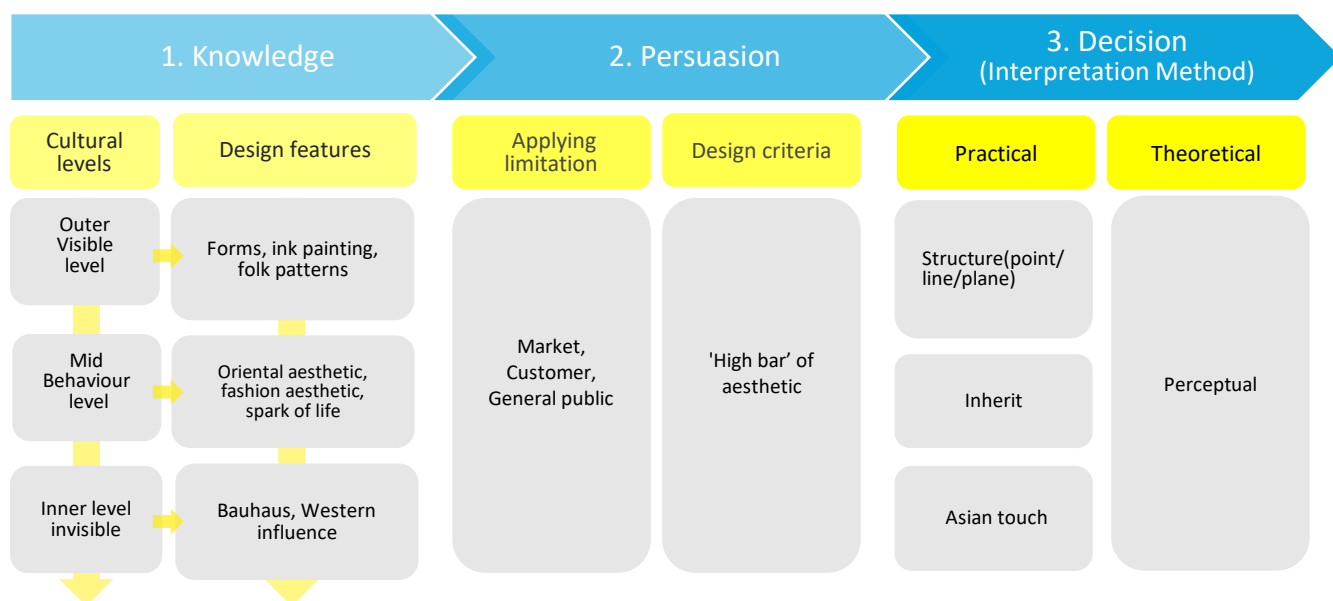
States and South Korea to fit the target user's theme, as a Chinese designer, Chinese philosophy infiltrated Wang Min's thinking (Figure 6.2-12). This inverse expression of design features can be considered an approach to cultural innovation by integration. Accordingly, Wang's design has been accepted by a wider audience in the world of graphic design with global success.



*Figure 6.2-12 Cultural interpretation process in US & Korea Trade Association logo design by WANG Min and WANG Min's cultural interpretation model in graphic design (right)*

### 6.2.5. HAN Jiaying

Table 6-5 HAN Jiaying's Culture innovation decision process



As concluded in Table 7-5, HAN Jiaying's cultural interpretation methods are quite abstract, insisting that cultural interpretation is a kind of aesthetic consciousness that requires 'high bar' design criteria. However, the answer is not difficult to find when simultaneously examining his design work. Apart from design work with cultural topics, Chinese culture could also arouse people's common sense in most commercial projects, even if the culture element is obscure. Taking the design for Hermes as an example, he used the Taihu stone for the window design of Hermès Shenzhen flagship store In 2009, which HAN Jia Ying entitled 'Beautiful Escape' (Figure 6.2-13). He thought of Taihu Stone, downloaded the outline of a Taihu Stone from the computer, then superimposed it into the shape of a horse's head. Hermes hopes that people will buy a bag to escape the troubles of reality and escape to the world of self, which fits well with the artistic conception of Taihu Stone. Without any detailed form of the Taihu stone, the entire design represented a state of mind

—‘the highest form of retreat is finding serenity amidst chaos’. Revisiting the cultural interpretation method of Han Jiaying mentioned previously, it seems that aesthetic cognition originated from the abstract concept. It actually it takes the outer visible level of culture as the Asian touch in the design and integrates it into the new design concept or cultural model (Figure 6.2-14).



*Figure 6.2-13 Hermès Shenzhen window design by HAN Jia Ying (ICAA, 2017)*



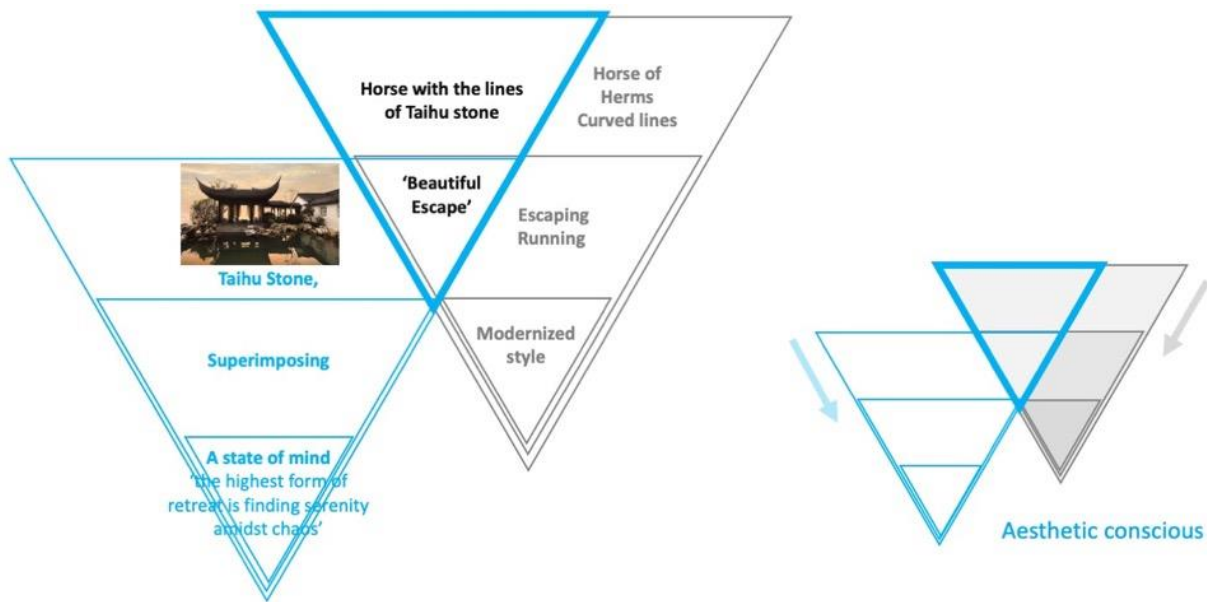


Figure 6.2-14 Cultural interpretation in Hermes window design by HAN Jiaying(Left)  
Cultural interpretation model of HAN Jiaying(Right)

#### 6.2.6. JIANG Hua

Table 6-6 JIANG Hua's Culture innovation decision process

1. Knowledge		2. Persuasion		3. Decision (Interpretation Method)	
Cultural levels	Design features	Applying limitation	Design criteria	Practical	Theoretical
Outer Visible level	Typography	Market, Customer,	Eastern path	Combination	Balance
Mid Behaviour level	seal-making, art of calligraphy			Empathy/Independent	
Inner level invisible	Zen, Erya, Western Renaissance, Chinese Exegetics, The Book of Songs, The Book of Changes, Tao Te Ching			Have consciousness	

In summation, good design is a kind of consciousness or taking advantage of a trend for JIANG Hua (Jiang, 2017, no.934-939), and his culture innovation process is shown in Table 6-6. Chinese people need to be conscious of their culture. Further, they should be curious enough to know the roots of things and practices,



such as in typography (which includes pronunciation and meaning) compared to Latin typography that focuses on the former (Jiang, 2017, no.138-166). This logic also permeates through JIANG Hua's teaching. He would prefer to teach student typography to cultivate their consciousness and their understanding of design methods rather than ask them to complete another exhibition piece for the library design (Jiang, 2017, no.182-189). Design should balance demand and supply and also pursue balance in itself (Jiang, 2017, no.1035-1040). The cultural interpretation methods of JIANG Hua are explained by his work. In the Hong Kong Returning poster, he combines the forms of the Latin letters 'Hong Kong' and the Chinese character '囍' in the outer visible level. In the mid- and inner-levels, JIANG Hua focuses on the Eastern path with Chinese character logic (including pronunciation and meaning) rather than the Western alphabetical logic of single pronunciations, as shown in Figure 6.2-6.

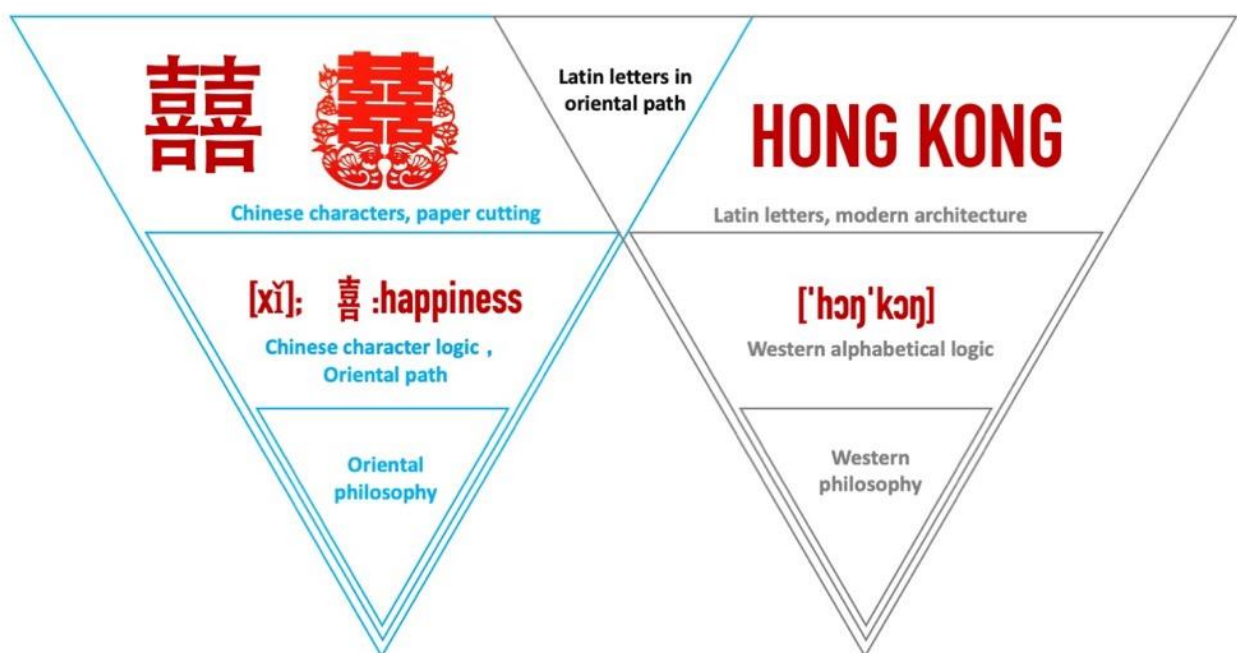


Figure 6.2-15 Cultural interpretation process of Hong Kong returning poster designed by JIANG Hua

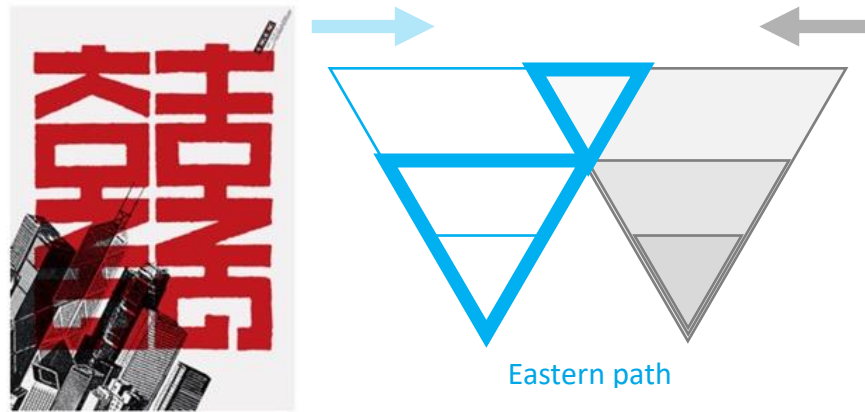
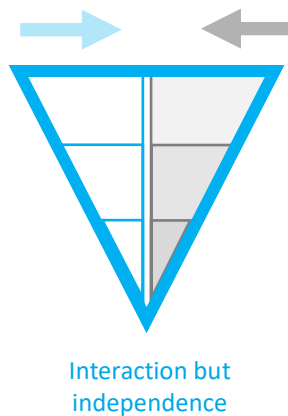


Figure 6.2-16 Hong Kong returning poster (left)  
Cultural interpretation methods by JIANG Hua (right)

### 6.3. Contrast:

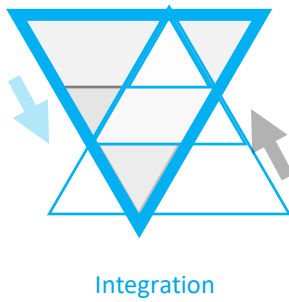
#### 6.3.1. Interaction but independence



With contrast, interacting with Chinese culture in graphic design is achieved by keeping the culture elements independent and emphasising their differences with Western cultural elements. This method is mostly demonstrated in the works of Henry Steiner. As shown in the left figure, contrast as a design philosophy exists at each

level of the design features (which are divided into outer, mid, and inner). When experienced designers apply Chinese culture to their design work, it is not a simple combination or a blending of culture elements. Instead, they introduce a contrasting design feature that is clearly visible in all three levels. The banknote design for the Standard Chart Bank of Hong Kong by Henry Steiner can be considered a classic example of using this method.

### 6.3.2. Integration



The integration of Chinese culture in graphic design was typically used by WANG Min based on his design philosophy—contrast. As shown in the left figure, the two triangles represent two kinds of design features with three cultural levels, while the bold frame is the scope of a new design. The

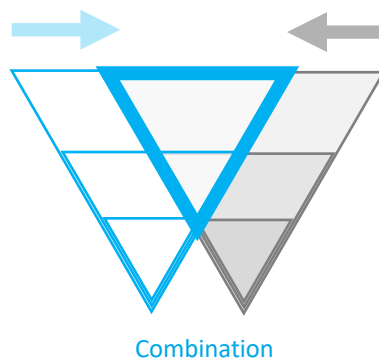
designer integrates Chinese culture with a reverse logic to meet customer and market needs. For example, if the content of the design or the target customer's requirements demand some intuitive Western cultural elements, then Chinese ideas and philosophical logic are integrated behind the Western elements to highlight the characteristics of Chinese designers in the international design community. This kind of cultural interpretation method can be found in Wang Min's logo design for Adobe (Figure 1.1-4) and the US & Korea Trade Association logo design (Figure 6.2-10). Conversely, if the content of the design and the expression of the customer's restriction on the design requires more of a Chinese touch, then the integration of Chinese elements in the outer level needs to join the Western touchpoint to render the design more international with a wider audience. The Jade medal design for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games (Figure 4.4-8) and the visual identity for the Forbidden City in Beijing (Figure 4.4-7) are good examples by WANG Min that demonstrate the method of integration.

### 6.4. Peace and harmony:

Different from the previous group of cultural interpretation methods that originated in Western philosophy, this group of Chinese cultural interpretation

methods is derived from Eastern philosophy (peace and harmony). Chinese culture has existed in designs in harmonious ways as an approximate and unified expression. From the analyses in previous chapters, three typical Chinese cultural interpretation methods can be summarised.

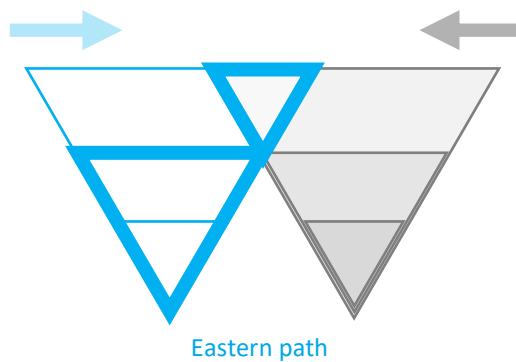
#### 6.4.1. Combination



The combination of Chinese culture and design needs is often used by Kan Tai Keung and Stanley Wong. It consists of a combination of visual elements in the outer level and the combination of story, prediction, and expression spirit behind relevant cultural

elements. For example, in the logo designs of the Prosperity Press (Figure 6.2-7) and AIC investment company (Figure 6.2-4) by KAN Tai Keung, two Chinese idioms are respectively placed (in order) to fit the concepts expressed by the clients. Similarly, Stanley WONG's installation design for Chanel (Figure 6.2-8) used the dynamic verse expression of beads in Tang Dynasty ancient poetry, which is in accordance with the fashionable and elegant design story and themes of France. This design successfully connects the Chinese and French cultures and achieves a good publicity effect by taking both Eastern and Western cultures out of its original brand connotation.

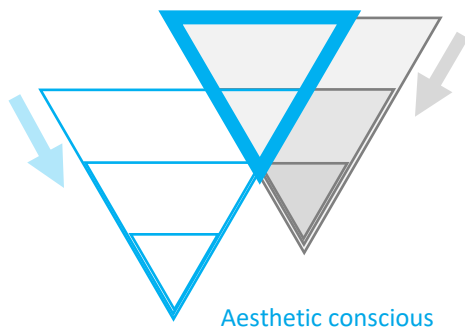
#### 6.4.2. Eastern path



JIANG Hua's representative approach is to Interpret Chinese culture with an Eastern path. Among the design features with three cultural levels, the Eastern path corresponds to the Western path (at the middle level), as

shown in the figure above. Jiang Hua learned Chinese seal calligraphy as a child, and his mastery of Chinese philosophy has made him capable of naturally expressing the design concept with oriental thinking. The differences in Chinese character logic is his path to interpreting Chinese culture, as the dual expression of pronunciation and meaning in Chinese characters is different from Latin letters. Taking JIANG Hua's 'Hong Kong Return' poster design as an example (Figure 4.6-4), the Chinese characters in the poster are composed of Latin letters with the words 'Hong Kong'. However, the concept of the poster was entirely based on the meaning and recognition direction of Chinese characters. While JIANG Hua's logic of using Chinese characters can be considered the Eastern path method, there are many other unique ways of achieving oriental expression in graphic design. For instance, colours, gestures, or shapes in different nationalities also have their specific meaning. In Chinese graphic designs, these can also be chosen as an Eastern path, which can now be referred to as a general method for cultural interpretation.

#### 6.4.3. Aesthetic conscious



The concept of aesthetic consciousness in cultural interpretation is proposed by HAN Jiaying, who exercised this concept in many of his works. In the model on the left, Chinese culture is the blue lined triangle,

while the grey triangle on the right represents an aesthetic standard design features based on customer needs. The measurement of this aesthetic standard is not only reflected in the vision, but also the expression of internal thoughts. For example, Han Jiaying fully understood the idea that ‘the highest form of recreation is finding serenity amidst chaos’. The mood represented by Taihu stone in Chinese culture is typical among many Chinese scholars. Therefore, Taihu stone successfully expressed the design concept in Hermes' window (Figure 6.2-13), poster (Figure 4.5-7), and magazine cover (Figure 4.5-6) designs.

#### 6.5. The cultural interpretation framework

Consequently, based on the frameworks of Professor Koskinen, Zimmerman, Binder, Redstrom, and Wensveen (2011), Summatavet (2005), and the author’s theoretical frameworks, the cultural interpretation framework of this research is presented in Figure 6.5-1. It attempts to show the connections between the experienced designers’ history, the design philosophy they rely on when they approach culture, and their personal approach to this philosophy.

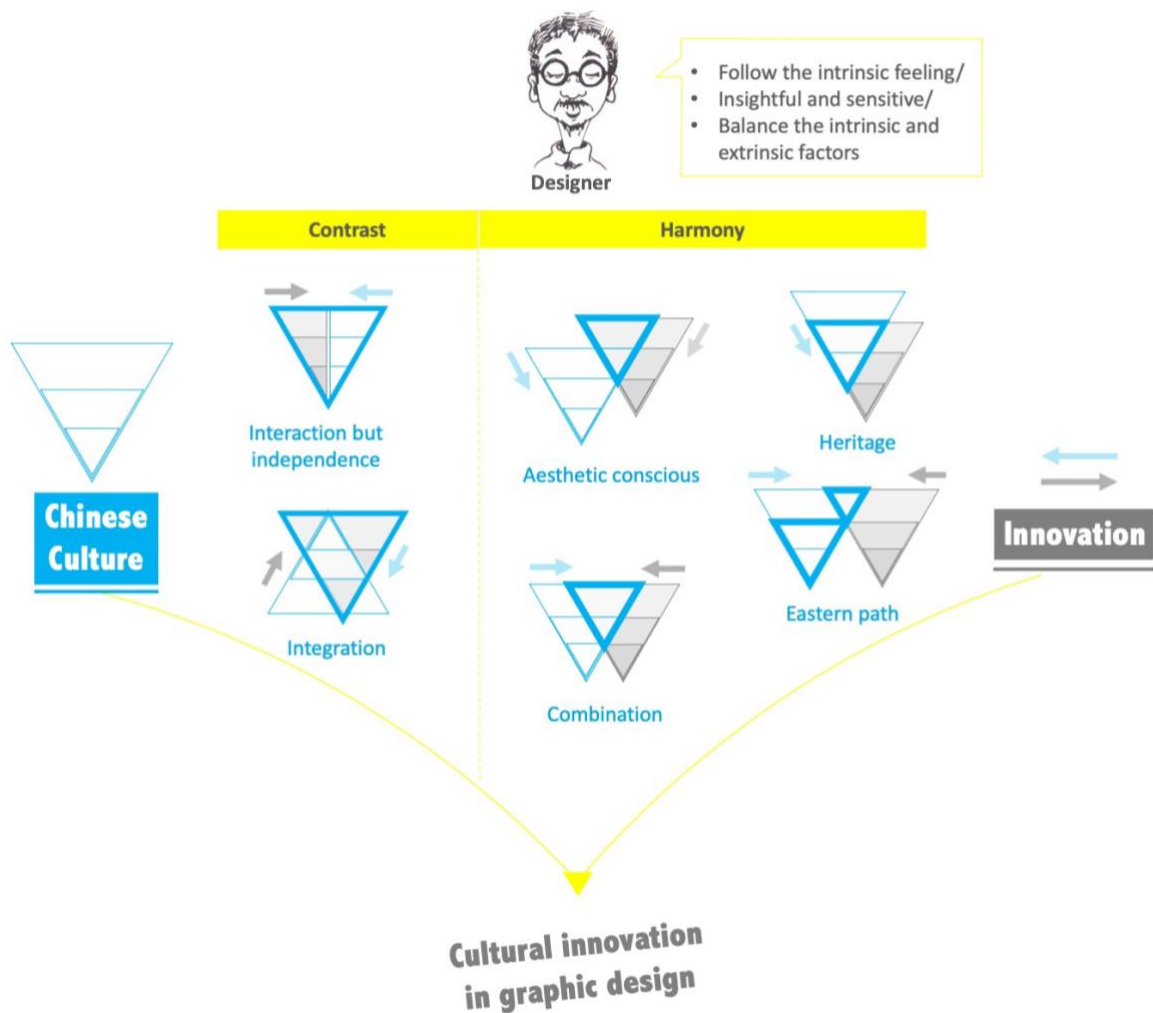


Figure 6.5-1 Cultural interpretation framework in graphic design

In the study, the experienced designers were approached from an interpretive angle. They were seen as sensitive human beings who observe their cultural environment and customs and sometimes find inspiration from them. Although these experienced designers are often familiar with traditional culture, it is not their only inspiration. Moreover, this study shows that knowledge of culture can be a significant design resource.

The main objective of the study has been to understand the details of the experienced designers' work as well as their ways of thinking, to understand how successfully they

have made breakthroughs that bring innovation to traditional cultural elements. The main result is described in Figure 6.5-1. The inner ring of the figure is formed by the culture-based design methods of all the experienced designers. When the figure progresses outwards, it shows in more detail how they approach culture and how they perceive the relationship between tradition and modernity.



## 7 Conclusions and discussions

This study has focused on the role of Chinese culture in innovation within graphic design. Six experienced designers were studied to determine how they turn their knowledge of Chinese culture into innovative designs and why they stand out in terms of their use of Chinese culture in their designs. While it is easy to apply Chinese elements in graphic design and turn these elements into clichés, this study concentrated on what drives the innovative application of Chinese culture in design and what explains the fact that the experienced designers have been able to use it innovatively in their work. This research provides a rich perspective for design researchers, educators, novice graphic designers, and design colleagues to focus on design skills and those elements of thinking that guide the use of these skills.

Cultural innovation has been studied in different design fields. Two studies have been particularly relevant for the current study. First, Kärt Summatavet (2005) provided inspiration for jewellery design from the perspective of traditional craftswomen. Second, X. Xin (2006) traced the rules of industrial design in different dynasties in China and Linder (2014) learned spatial clusters from different industries to provide useful knowledge in industrial agglomerations. This research, which focuses on the application of Chinese culture, can serve as a parallel extension of these studies. In many cases, the experienced designers are recognised and respected for their artwork. Moreover, they are also recognised and respected by customers who realise the commercial value of their work in the market. Accordingly, their way of turning Chinese culture into graphic designs can be instructive and meaningful for researchers.

Graphic designers always need to engage in active dialogue with customers and other professionals. As Frascara (1988) states, they are problem solvers for visual communication and customer needs. Therefore, from the perspectives of cultural application and visual communication, we can initially ask how designers can innovate under limited customer and market demands. Then, we can determine the circumstances under which cultural elements are used to promote innovation and the nature of that promotion.

These questions are answered by studying six experienced designers through constant comparison. Although their clients are sometimes the same, it is also possible to argue that they may share common features that explain their innovative capability. The aim of the study is to describe the most important ways in which the experienced designers find inspiration and design elements from Chinese culture. A qualitative case study achieved the aim and addressed the following main research questions:

- 1) *Do designers take their cultural background into account when innovating?*
- 2) *How do they innovate Chinese cultural characteristics?*

Following the empathic tradition (Koskinen et al., 2003), all the methods were qualitative and the aim was to study the experienced designers inductively. To facilitate an in-depth understanding of the theme and comparative study, each case study in this research consisted of four parts: experience and background, researcher observations, acknowledgement of culture, and theory notes. The designers chosen for this study come from different regions of China (mainland and Hong Kong) and have different ages, family backgrounds, and educational backgrounds. While the sample of six designers is small, it

contains undeniably experienced designers who are a small group by definition. The sample provided an extremely rich data set for this study that was produced through the following procedure. One hypothesis among the contextual explanations was that cultural expression in graphic design is related to the region where the designers work. The answer was made clear—while it shapes customers, the region is not an explanation. In another hypothesis, more traditional explanations of innovation were examined, including age, family and educational background, and customers. Again, there were few reasons to believe that these factors could explain innovation in design.

The method used was a variation of elite interviews. This is a practical method and draws on an opinion from the research of Summatavet (2005) that showed the need to study skilled design work in context. The data were collected by elite interview, photos and videos, and secondary materials with the snowball sampling process. The overall research design was built on analytic induction (Koskinen et al., 2003) and constant comparisons were conducted during data analysis. The work and thinking of the designers were studied in great detail. Combined with the massive portfolio of the experienced designers, this made it necessary to restrict the number of designers to six. The analysis started with a description in [Chapter 5](#). [Chapter 6](#) explored some potential explanations for the experienced designers' ability to treat Chinese culture innovatively, most of external causes which were ruled out, and the supportive internal causes were analysed concluded. Finally, [Chapter 7](#) focused on the experienced designers' thinking and the philosophical ideas that shape the way in which they see China and its culture, which culminated with the cultural interpretation framework of graphic design. The results are listed in Figure 7.1-1.

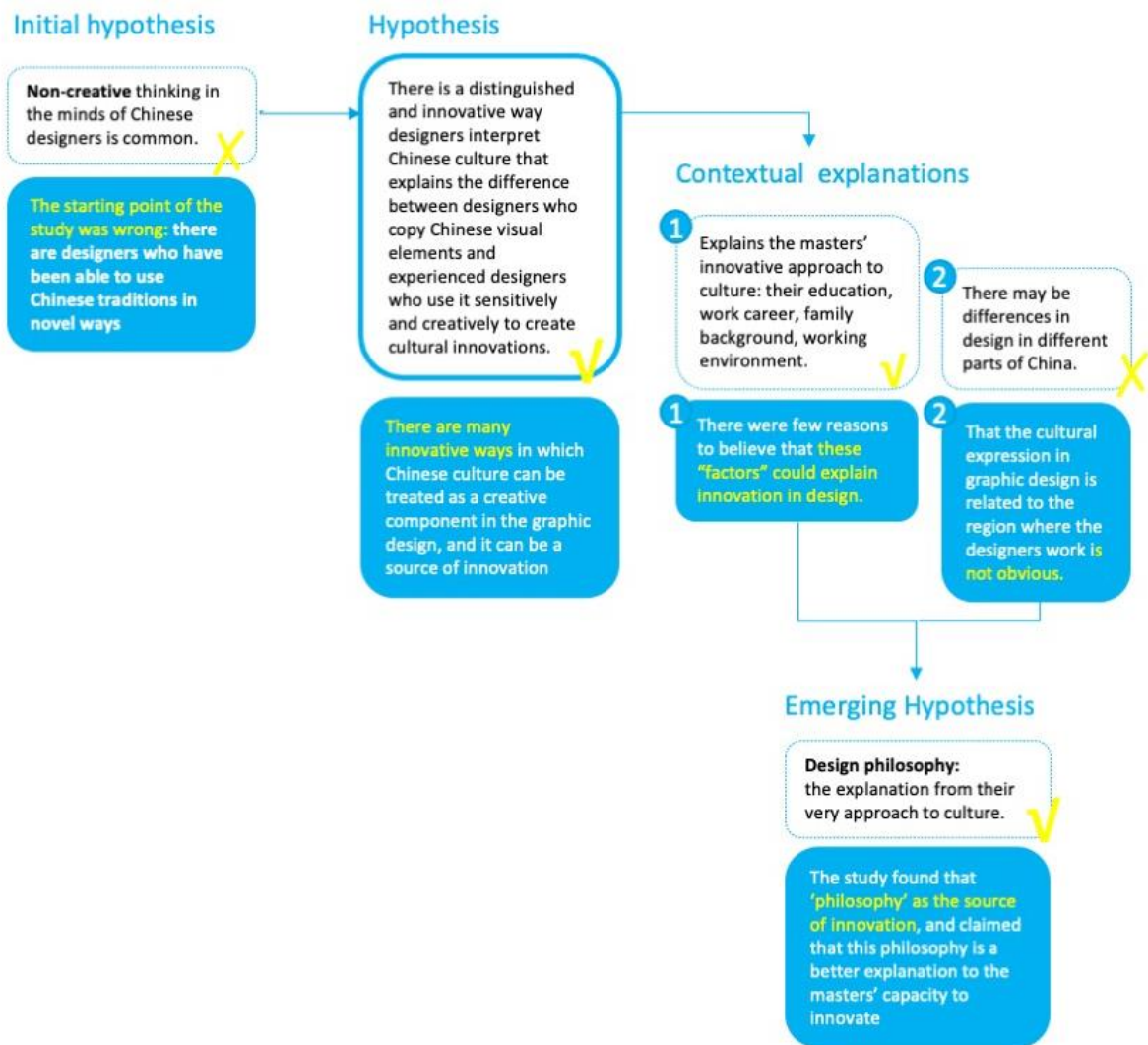


Figure 7.1-1 Results of the hypothesis in this research marked in full colour forms

This chapter restates the main findings and draws some conclusions. The findings of this research include the knowledge of graphic design in three aspects. First, it was shown that the starting point of the study was wrong. Although the vast majority of graphic designers treat China as a cliché, this study shows that it does not have to be this way as there are designers who have been able to use Chinese traditions in novel ways. Second, an interpretive framework of graphic design was built in the study. Third, the study found that philosophy to be the source of innovation. Further, it is claimed that this philosophy is a better explanation for the experienced designers' capacity to innovate than external

factors such as family background, education, group and professional memberships, and the modernisation of China after 1979.

## 7.1 Conclusions

### 7.1.1 Do Chinese designers copy Chinese elements?

At the beginning of this study, the researcher assumed that non-creative thinking in the minds of Chinese designers is common and they reuse Chinese culture unthoughtfully without much creativity. As research progressed, the detailed analysis (and its coding) of six experienced designers demonstrated this is not true. These six experienced designers are tremendously skilled in bringing a sophisticated understanding of Chinese culture into their work. The null hypothesis that Chinese designers focus on copying turned out to be incorrect. The main result of the study is that there are many innovative ways in which Chinese culture can be treated as a creative component in graphic design. This can also be a source of innovation.

By taking a descriptive approach to the six experienced designers and by analysing commonalities in their work, the study discovered how experienced designers have built a philosophy that helps them to approach Chinese culture. Hence, China does not have to be a design cliché. The experienced designers are sensitive to culture and use creatively to generate cultural innovations. Secondary hypotheses focused on studying two sets of contextual explanations for innovation:

One set of studies examines whether there is something contextual that explains the experienced designers' innovative approach to culture, which

could be their education, work career, family background, or working environment.

A larger contextual hypothesis focused on China's modernisation by comparing designers in Hong Kong and Mainland China. As an old civilization with very different stages of economic development, this hypothesis studied differences in design in various regions of China.

With regard to the first hypothesis, the analysis started from family background and education and progressed towards more abstract possible explanations. There was no clear link between these contextual explanations. The analysis showed that Chinese culture has offered rich sources of inspiration to every designer studied in this thesis, and they translate it into their designs in several ways. In philosophical terms, the most important difference was a line between those trained in Western thinking and those trained in Chinese thinking, and the question was then how the basic underlying philosophy serves as a guide to culture. The difference is between an analytical approach (which splits culture in elements and contrasts) and a harmonious approach (which merges culture into a peaceful language).

The evidence gathered in this study has clearly shown that the leading Chinese graphic designers can turn their knowledge of Chinese culture into creative resources and visual strength. Accordingly, Chinese designers could approach Chinese culture in a creative way rather than simply copying Chinese elements.

### 7.1.2 'Philosophy' as the source of innovation

The main outcome of the study has been that the ability of experienced designers to use Chinese elements innovatively in their work builds (to a large extent) on what they call their philosophy. This is their way of giving a name to their creative process, which brings together their training, experience, learning, and knowledge of Chinese culture. Philosophy is an internal process for some of the experienced designers, while for others it is a sensitising framework. This is not an academic system; it is a personal view of the world.

We have encountered several variations of this philosophy. Some built on Western philosophy (especially pragmatism), which was the case with Henry Steiner and WANG Min. Others clearly build on the main Chinese forms of philosophy and religions (Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism), which leads the designers to a peaceful, harmonious, and subtle expression. Chinese philosophy animates the work of KAN Tai Keung, HANG Jia Ying, Stanley WONG, and JIANG Hua.

The significance of Figure 7.1-1 is that the approaches it describes lead to remarkably different approaches to design. For instance, while pragmatism tends to lead to an approach that emphasises conceptual work and contrast as a favourite device, Chinese philosophical frameworks tend to relate primacy to interdependence, harmony, and visual balance.

It was clear from almost the very beginning of the empirical study that external explanations of innovation do not provide watertight explanations for innovation. For example, while family background is certainly relevant to designers, it was impossible to use it as an explanation for innovation in design in every case. Rather, it was one element that shaped the philosophy for some of the experienced designers. The same was true of training, company context, and Chinese context. Clearly, it is impossible to rule out every imaginable external explanation of this type. However, examining these possible factors quickly demonstrated that it is easy to find experienced designers who do not fit into any of them. For this reason, this study suggests that external factors are irrelevant as direct explanations, and it is better to see them as elements that work through the context of the philosophy of the experienced designers.

In terms of methods, only six designers were examined in this study, which was warranted because of the workload. When you study very experienced designers, you have to study massive portfolios in detail, conduct tens (if not hundreds) of interviews, and read several books before each interview. This is typical of any elite interview. However, this means that the study focuses on a small sample of people by necessity. Since it is shown that the main source of innovation among these six designers is their philosophical approach, the only general conclusion that can be drawn from the study is that every experienced designer at this level has their own unique style.



The original intention of this study was to also study designers in Taiwan and possibly Japan. However, this had to be omitted due to a lack of funding. The question is would the results have been different. The answer is possibly, especially in the case of Japan where design has evolved for a longer time in a prosperous society. However, the researcher believes that the main outcome of the study would be the same—ultimately, every famous Japanese designer would have a unique approach to designing a unique philosophy.

### 7.1.3 Significance

This research was motivated by the lack of creativity among many graphic designers in mainland China. I believe this lack of creativity or ability to innovate is part of the reason many designers choose to follow or even copy the work of others. This is partly because that they are not confident about deriving design talents or innovation abilities from studying one's own culture. The quality of graphic design work is undermined by a common trend amongst young designers, who take copying others (mostly Western designs) for granted. The aim of my research is to provide a framework of interpreting culture in graphic design work that can draw experiences from well-established designers. While these designers have achieved international acclaim and successes, few people know that behind their successes are the hard lessons learned during many years of practicing. The Interpretation of culture and using these interpretations during the design process to derive innovation strategies and knowledge are the most outstanding abilities amongst these experienced designers.

The term cultural interpretation framework is considered a summary of the

findings in this research in terms of providing inspiration or guidance for junior (especially young) designers to learn how to increase their abilities in design and innovation. In graphic design, the experiences and stories of six well-established designers may give provide inspiration and guidance, which be demonstrated most effectively through their successful designs. In other fields of design, such as product or interior design, such knowledge about the utilisation of culture in the practice of design may have to be further divided into different and more generic categories, such as design thinking, aesthetic judgment, and design evaluation. In the revised thesis, I have provided a more detailed explanation about the definition, scope, and key components of the cultural interpretation framework. Such a framework can be understood as a qualitative elaboration of experienced graphic designers' successful stories and examples, compared to quantitative methods that can be systematically applied to the design process.

## 7.2 Discussions

China has a rich culture that goes back over 5000 years, and this study has provided a map of how this culture can be used as inspiration for design. Although cultural values are constantly changing, they keep pace with economic and social changes and most of them are traditional (such as Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism). Only a small part can be considered contemporary given the time span of their development and involving. Chinese culture is regarded as a set of core values and has remained relatively stable for a long period of time, which lays the foundation for social interaction between ordinary Chinese people (Y. Fan, 2000). The effect of time is discussed in Chapter 5.1.4, where it can be concluded that the experienced designers'

use of Chinese culture in design is primarily internally and personally driven. This is different from technological innovation where new inventions constantly replace old ones, making technology a significant factor in radical innovations within product design (Verganti, 2009). This is the reason we still learn about the skills involved in ancient Chinese paintings, the spirit of philosophy, and the story of China's four great classic novels rather than learning about outdated technology. Therefore, a group of experienced designers were chosen who are highly recommended in the field and recognised in the global design world by their unique methods of cultural interpretation.

Although the main conclusion of the study is that to understand the experienced designers' design work, we must understand their philosophy, it is worthwhile to note that although this philosophy is unique it also has deep historical roots. All through the study, we have seen references to design schools and institutes such as Yale University in the United States, CAFA in Beijing, and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University in Hong Kong. When examining the philosophical and artistic roots of these schools in more detail, we see how their philosophy has been shaped by constructivism (which originated in Russia), the Bauhaus from Germany, and Modernism from countries such as Switzerland and the United States. Chinese graphic design builds on a variety of traditions. Further, this study has shown that a uniquely Chinese way of approaching graphic design is developing at CAFA in particular, which mixes Western influences with uniquely Chinese traditions. Maybe this unique mixture can one day enrich Chinese graphic design worldwide and furnish it with a reputation that equals its counterparts in Europe and America.

### 7.2.1 Suggestions for future studies

The researcher intended to interview more experienced designers and wished to follow experienced designers in their design work or collaborations with others. However, this was not possible but due to the envisaged workload and limited available time. In the future, for other researchers who would like to conduct research based on this study, three directions are suggested. The first is more detailed research with a smaller minor scope. For example, research could focus on only one or two experienced designers to describe their approaches in detail. The second is to study junior graphic designers to learn how their way of interpreting culture differs from the experienced designers. The third way would investigate the customers perspective, to discover why they appreciate the unique abilities of the experienced designers so highly.

In conclusion, the purpose of developing this framework is because many designers (even the experienced designers) cannot explain the process through which they innovated with their interpretation of culture and utilisation of Chinese culture resources. However, there are definitely methods and philosophical thinking behind their work. A framework for cultural interpretation should provide generic and sometimes abstract descriptions of the design steps that can be taken by junior designers, especially designers of the young generation. It is preferable to use this framework together with the contextual explanations provided for each experienced designer's work. In this way, this framework can be used as a benchmark for ordinary designers when they are examining and evaluating their designs in the context of utilising cultural factors

and elements. This framework is therefore a main focus of the study and the contributions derived from the interviews and the analyses which are guided by an analytic induction methodology throughout.

### 7.2.2 Limitations

While this framework is primarily for supporting graphic design, it can also be further developed to suit other applications in 3D design. The limitation in this study was that the number of experienced designers interviewed and studied was restricted to six: three from Hong Kong and three from mainland China. I had hoped to include experienced designers in Taiwan and Singapore to provide a more complete picture representing modernised Asian design cities. However, the scope of the study and the limited time did not allow expansion to these two places. In a future study, it would be useful to consider these two places and a consideration of gender balance among experienced designers. A future study could build on the framework developed in this thesis for enriching the knowledge, strategies, philosophies, and methods for culture innovation to form a knowledge base (or tool) to support junior designers.

This framework can be tested in a universal context and it may be incorrect for me to claim that it is easier to test this framework with Chinese culture. In this research, I worked closely with six experienced designers, all of whom are either Chinese or have lived in Hong Kong for a time. This may be considered a limitation of this research. For future studies, it would be necessary to work on this process with a more detailed approach, which would help to identify the necessary steps

in cognition, transformation, and transcendence. Finally, it would be useful to test the framework with foreign designers.

This study did not consider the gender issue and it was pure chance that all the interviewees were male. As introduced in the thesis, the experienced designers were initially selected according to their reputations in the field of graphic design. For example, the names of KAN Tai Keung and Henry Steiner frequently appear in design journals, global design awards, and famous design projects. Needless to say, they were good candidates to be interviewed for this research. Moreover, they recommended many names for possible inclusion during the interviews. These designers are important members of an organisation called Alliance Graphique Internationale (AGI), which is a member-based association of professionals working in the field of graphic design around the world. As the research progressed, I gained increasing trust of these designers and decided to interview more AGI members. Therefore, the issue of gender was not considered a criterion for selecting respondents in this research. However, it may be necessary to consider this in the future research considering many graphic designers are female.

## Appendix

### Interview introduction before interview

#### **Expert Interview on influence factors for designers in thinking process to do graphic design**

#### **关于平面设计大师怎样诠释中国文化的研究采访**

##### Introduction (5 to 10 mins)

##### 介绍（5至10分钟）

- **Introduce aims of this interview:** To verify how masters in graphic design interpret Chinese culture and their viewpoints of traditional culture transformation in design.

**介绍采访意图：**确认平面设计大师怎样诠释中国文化以及他们的对于传统文化在设计中转化的观点。

- **Explain interview process**

##### **解释采访程序**

This interview may take about 1 hours and it includes three parts:

这个采访将进行一个小时左右，并且分为三部分：

Part 1. Your previous experience related to designing work.

第一部分：你同设计相关的过往经历。

Part 2. Use your own artwork to design view point of culture.

第二部分：用你的设计作品介绍你对文化表达的看法。

Part 3. Detail exploration on design process interprets culture based.

第三部分：关于文化相关设计过程的详细探索

- **Asking for permission of recording and photographing**

##### **询问录制以及影像许可**

The interview will be recorded and some part of the interview will be photographed.

The information collection will only be used for further analysis with an academic purpose. No parts of collected information will be used for commercial purpose.

这个采访将会被录制，某些部分将会被拍照。采访中的信息采集只会被用作以学术为目的的研究交流，不会用作商业用途。



## Interview outline of Henry Steiner

### Part 1: Warm up questions (10-20 mins)

Your previous experience related to design.

- What makes you decide to stay in Hong Kong for decades and set up your own company?
- (I got to know that you have rich life experience when you were young and had been lived in different countries, Austria, New York, Paris and HK, I remembered you mentioned you had developed much more European sensibility after study in Paris.)  
From the perspective of graphic design, what do you think are the differences between America, Europe and China, especially HK?
- From science fiction to graphic design, would you tell me some difficulties you faced before?

### Part 2: Use your own artwork to design viewpoint of culture.

You're the leading exponent of cross – cultural design and known for being mastered in using Chinese elements in your work.

- Please could you tell me about some works of yours you consider as good examples?
- To show about 3 to 4 works  
(Such as characters of different dynasties from your banknote design, How do you know these elements? Why you use it?).
- What themes regular used in your work?
- Do you have interactions with others? Such as fine art or architectures  
( Isozaki Arata and Issey Miyake, they are neighbors and good friends)

### Part 3: Detail exploration on design process interprets culture based.

- Besides of what we talked, could you describe your working process?  
How do you form your current working process? Which part you think is most important through the whole process?
- Does your working process influenced by other people, such as your teacher in Yale, Paul Rand?
- Design firms, division of take roles.
- Customers  
Big brands? (If a major brand wants Chinese elements in their design, how do you work with them?)



- Chinese market targeted or global?
- Other?

Do you think traditional culture can be one of the most important factors to influence creativity in brand design? Why?

Closing

Thanks & further questions

**Part 1: Warm up questions (10-20 mins)**

**第一部分：暖场问题（10 至 20 分钟）**

Your previous experience related to design.

- How do you evaluate the role of Chinese design in the world?  
您怎样评价中国设计在世界设计中的地位？
- From tailor to graphic designer, would you tell me some difficulties you faced before?  
从裁缝到平面设计师，你曾经是否遇到过一些困难呢？
- I learned from other reports that you are fond of following western trend when you were young? What accurate you to turn to Chinese culture in design?  
通过其他的采访，听说您年轻时候喜欢跟从西方设计理念？是什么让您转向在设计中应用中国文化的呢？

**Part 2: Use your own artwork to design viewpoint of culture(30 mins)**

**第二部分：用你的设计作品介绍你对文化元素的看法（30 分钟）**

You're known for being mastered in using Chinese elements in your work.

您在用中国元素设计上很出名

- Please could you tell me about some works of yours you consider as good examples? And some others' work?  
请您可以跟我说一些您觉得比较好的运用传统文化的作品吗？或者其他的的一些？
- To show about 3 to 4 works. 请您展示三到四件作品  
(why you use it?) 您为什么会用这些元素呢？
- From your previous design work, I found the elements of Chinese painting were frequently used in your design, why you use it in graphic design? Why do you think this kind of traditional elements could have a good collaboration with modern design?  
为什么您会觉得这些传统元素会和现代设计很好的结合呢？
- What does Chinese culture mean in design?
- Do you have interactions with others? Such as fine art or architectures.  
在设计创作中，您是否与其他设计师或艺术家有合作关系呢？

**Part 3: Detail exploration on design process interprets culture based (10-20 mins)**

**第三部分：关于文化因素相关设计过程的详细探索(10 至 20 分钟)**

- Besides of what we talked, could you describe your working process?  
除了您之前谈到的，您能介绍一下您的设计流程吗？

How do you form your current working process? Which part you think is most important through the whole process?

您是怎样规划总结出现在的设计流程呢？您认为哪一部分在设计流程中是最重要的呢？

- **Design firms, division of take roles.**

设计任务分配或职责分工

- **Does your working process influenced by other people, such as your teachers before, Wucius WONG, Zhong Peizheng?**

您认为您现在的设计流程有受到其他人的影响吗？例如您的导师，王无邪或者钟培正，亦或您之前采访交流过的其他设计师？

- **Customers**

关于客户

**Big brands? (If a major brand wants Chinese elements in their design, how do you work with them?)**您更愿意合作大公司还是小公司呢？您觉得合作中有什么差别吗？（如果他们坚持要用某种元素让您进行设计，您怎样与他们合作呢？）

- **Chinese market targeted or global? Other?**

您是更倾向于做中国市场呢还是全球市场？

**Do you think traditional culture can be one of the most important factors to influence creativity in brand design? Why?**

您认为传统文化元素可以成为影响品牌创新的关键因素吗？为什么

**Closing**

完毕

**Thanks & further questions**

非常感谢&期待未来再次交流

**Part 1: Warm up questions (10-20 mines)**

**第一部分：暖场问题（10 至 20 分钟）**

Your previous experience related to design.

- How do you evaluate the role and development of Chinese design in the world?  
您怎样评价近些年中国设计在世界设计中的地位和变化？
- At the time you came back from US, would you tell me some difficulties you faced before?  
您刚从美国回来的时候，曾经是否遇到过一些困难呢？
- As the supervisor of PhD student and art director of major programs, you have reached the high level in both fields, how do you balance the two works?  
作为博士生导师和国家重要项目的设计者，在设计和教育领域中您都达到了同样的高度，您是怎样权衡设计和教育研究工作的呢？

**Part 2: Use your own artwork to design viewpoint of culture (30 mines).**

**第二部分：用你的设计作品介绍你对文化元素的看法（30 分钟）**

You're known for being mastered in using Chinese elements in your work, especially Beijing Olympic Games, People's Daily and etc.

您在用中国元素设计上很出名，特别是北京奥运会、人民日报和国家大剧院等

- Please could you tell me about some works of yours you consider as good examples? And some others' work?  
请您可以跟我说一些您觉得比较好的运用传统文化的作品吗？或者其他的的一些？
- To show about 3 to 4 works. 请您展示三到四件作品  
(why you use it?) 您为什么会用这些元素呢？
- Why you use it in graphic design? Why do you think this kind of traditional elements could have a good collaboration with modern design?  
为什么您会觉得这些传统元素会和现代设计很好的结合呢？
- What does Chinese culture mean in design?  
您觉得中国文化在设计中的定义是什么呢？
- Do you have interactions with others? Such as fine art or architectures.  
在设计创作中，您是否与其他设计师或艺术家有合作关系呢？

**Part 3: Detail exploration on design process interprets culture based**

**(10-20 mins).**

**第三部分：关于文化因素相关设计过程的详细探索(10 至 20 分钟)**

- Besides of what we talked, could you describe your working process?  
除了您之前谈到的，您能介绍一下您的设计流程吗？  
How do you form your current working process? Which part you think is most important through the whole process?  
您是怎样规划总结出现在的设计流程呢？您认为哪一部分在设计流程中是最重要的呢？
- Design firms, division of take roles.  
设计任务分配或职责分工。  
记得看您的经历，在 adobe 工作后，还开了两方设计公司，现在是开在北京了吗？美国的公司还有吗？您觉得学院派合作与公司制度下合作有什么分别呢？
- Does your working process influenced by other people, such as your teachers before, Paul Rand or other designers?  
您认为您现在的设计流程有受到其他人的影响吗？例如您的导师，保罗兰德，或是其他朋友、设计师？
- Customers  
关于客户  
Big brands? (If a major brand wants Chinese elements in their design, how do you work with them?) 您更愿意合作大公司还是小公司呢？您觉得合作中有什么差别吗？  
(如果他们坚持要用某种元素让您进行设计，您怎样与他们合作呢？)
- Chinese market targeted or global? Other?  
您是更倾向于做中国市场呢还是全球市场？

Closing

完毕

Thanks & further questions

非常感谢&期待未来再次交流

**Part 1: Warm up questions (10-20 mins)**

**第一部分：暖场问题（10 至 20 分钟）**

Your previous experience related to design.

- At the time you arrived Shenzhen, would you tell me some difficulties you faced before?  
您刚到深圳的时候，曾经是否遇到过一些困难呢？因为在西安教了五年课，再转到深圳去做商业设计，也是有一个适应过程的吧
- Have you influenced by the designers. KAN Tai Keung, Freeman LAU or Henry Steiner, after you visited them in Hong Kong before?  
记得 14 年您受东方早报采访，说到在深圳有机会去到香港时第一件事就是‘拜山头’，靳埭强、刘小康、石汉瑞，您觉得后期的设计中有受到他们的影响吗？
- As a famous designer and the supervisor of design students, you have reached the high level in both fields, how do you balance the two works?  
作为著名设计师和设计教育工作者，在设计和教育领域中您都达到了同样的高度，您是怎样权衡设计和教育研究工作的呢？

**Part 2: Use your own artwork to design viewpoint of culture (30 mins).**

**第二部分：用你的设计作品介绍你对文化表达的看法（30 分钟）**

Your works insist on seeking Oriental temperament under the framework of the west, establishing their own cultural taste, style and aesthetic taste, rather than piling up Chinese elements.

您的作品坚持在西方的框架下寻找东方气质，但不是堆砌中国元素，要建立自己的文化品位，格调和审美趣味。

- Please could you tell me about some works of yours you consider as good examples? And some others' work?  
请您可以跟我说一些您觉得比较好的体现东方亦或中国文化的作品吗？或者其他的一些？
- To show about 3 to 4 works. 请您展示三到四件作品
- Please could you tell me how to pursue the characteristics of Chinese culture in these works and make a visual expression?  
您能说一说是怎样在这些作品中追寻中国文化的特质，进行视觉化的表达
- Do you have your own commonly used design techniques? Or the design philosophy you adhere to?

您觉得自己有常用的设计表现手法吗？或者是自己坚持的设计哲学？

What does Chinese culture mean in design?

您觉得中国文化在设计中的定义是什么呢？

- Do you have interactions with others? Such as fine art or architectures.

在设计创作中，您是否与其他设计师或艺术家有合作关系呢？

### **Part 3: Detail exploration on design process interprets culture based (10-20 mins).**

#### **第三部分：关于文化因素相关设计过程的详细探索(10 至 20 分钟)**

- Besides of what we talked, could you describe your working process?

除了您之前谈到的，您能介绍一下您的设计流程吗？

How do you form your current working process? Which part you think is most important through the whole process?

您是怎样规划总结出现在的设计流程呢？您认为哪一部分在设计流程中是最重要的呢？

- Design firms, division of take roles.

设计任务分配或职责分工。

- 记得看您的经历，在万科工作后，您的公司由深圳开到北京、上海、香港，如果方便的话，您能讲一下是怎样分配任务和做出如此公司布局的吗？

- Does your working process influenced by other people, such as your teachers before or other designers?

您认为您现在的设计流程有受到其他人的影响吗，例如您之前的老师或是其他设计师？

- Customers

关于客户

Big brands? (If a major brand wants Chinese elements in their design, how do you work with them?) 您更愿意合作大公司还是小公司呢？您觉得合作中有什么差别吗？

(如果他们坚持要用某种元素让您进行设计，您怎样与他们合作呢？)

- Chinese market targeted or global? Other?

您是更倾向于做中国市场呢还是全球市场？

Closing

完毕

Thanks & further questions



**Part 1: Warm up questions (10-20 mins)**

**第一部分：暖场问题（10 至 20 分钟）**

Your previous experience related to design.

- What makes you fond of Chinese typeface design and devoted in researching that?  
请问您为什么对汉字设计如此感兴趣并致力于研究它呢？（家庭文化？小时候学习经历？...）
- I learned from other reports, you insist that designer should have unique design methodology, could you tell some about your design methodology or philosophy?  
通过其他的采访，了解到您认为设计师要有独立的态度和方法，可以请您说一些关于您自己的吗？
- You were known as designer, design educator and curator, how do you balance the different jobs?  
在过往介绍中了解到，您是设计师、设计教育者，同时也是展览策划人，请问您是怎样权衡取舍这些工作的呢？会相互影响吗

**Part 2: Use your own artwork to design viewpoint of culture (30 mins).**

**第二部分：用你的设计作品介绍你对文化元素的看法（30 分钟）**

- Please could you tell me about some works of yours you consider as good examples? And some others' work?  
请您可以跟我说一些您觉得比较好的体现中国文化的作品吗？或者其他的的一些？
- To show about 3 to 4 works. 请您展示三到四件作品  
（why you use it?）您为什么会用这些元素呢？
- Why you use it in graphic design? Why do you think this kind of traditional elements could have a good collaboration with modern design?  
为什么您会觉得这些文化元素会和现代设计很好的结合呢？
- For comprehending and interpreting Chinese culture, what does Chinese culture mean in design?  
对于中国文化在设计中的应用和理解，您认为作为设计师，应该怎样看待中国文化呢？
- From the previous materials, I learned that you had good relationships with many designers and artists. Do you cooperate with some? How?  
在设计创作中，您有经常合作的设计师或艺术家么，如果有，可以了解一下是怎样一



**Part 3: Detail exploration on design process interprets culture based**

**(10-20 mins).**

**第三部分：关于文化因素相关设计过程的详细探索(10 至 20 分钟)**

- Besides of what we talked, could you describe your working process?  
除了您之前谈到的，您能介绍一下您的设计流程吗？  
How do you form your current working process? Which part you think is most important through the whole process?  
您是怎样规划总结出现在的设计流程呢？您认为哪一部分在设计流程中是最重要的呢？
- Design firms, division of take roles.  
设计任务分配或职责分工。
- Does your working process influence by other people?  
您认为您现在的设计流程有受到其他人的影响吗？
- Customers  
关于客户  
Cultural or Commercial projects? Big brands? (If a major brand wants Chinese elements in their design, how do you work with them?)  
您更愿意合作大公司还是小公司呢？或者文化商业项目有没有什么倾向呢？您觉得合作中有什么差别吗？（如果他们坚持要用某种元素让您进行设计，您怎样与他们合作呢？）
- Chinese market targeted or global? Other?  
您是更倾向于做中国市场呢还是全球市场？

Closing

完毕

Thanks & further questions

非常感谢&期待

## Interview outline of Stanley WONG

### **Part 1: Warm up questions (10-20 mins)**

Your previous experience related to design.

- You were notable careerist with three identities (Design artist, Social worker and design educator). How do you balance the works and time?
- When did you start to study the Buddhism? Did it have any effect on your creation?
- Could you talk about your work planning in recent years, curation, and documentary or designing etc.?

### **Part 2: Use your own artwork to design viewpoint of culture. (30-40 mins)**

You were known for being devoted to spreading Hong Kong culture and specialize to show your insights of time, life and community in artworks.

- Please could you tell me about some works of yours you consider as good examples?
- To show about 3 to 4 works.  
(In terms of red white blue, how do you define it in your heart? The starting point?)
- What themes regular used in your work?
- What do you think the meaning of culture in your design?
- Do you have cooperation with others? Such as fine art or architectures

### **Part 3: Detail exploration on design process interprets culture based (10-20 mins).**

- Besides of what we talked, could you describe your working process?  
(How do you form your current working process? Which part you think is most important through the whole process?)
- Do your working process influence by other people, such as your teacher KAN Tai Keung or some other designers?
- Design firms, division of take roles.
- Customers
- Chinese market targeted or global?
- Other?

Do you think traditional culture can be one of the most important factors to influence creativity in brand design? Why?

Closing

Thanks & further questions

## References

- Abernathy, W. J., & Clark, K. B. (1985). Innovation: Mapping the winds of creative destruction. *Research policy*, 14(1), 3-22.
- AD518. (2017). Book design, Dream Lotus Poetry. Retrieved from <http://www.ad518.com/article/id-12574>
- Albert, R. S. (1994). *The contribution of early family history to the achievement of eminence*. Paper presented at the Talent development.
- Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R., & Bedinger, S. D. (1994). When expectations work: Race and socioeconomic differences in school performance. *Social psychology quarterly*, 283-299.
- Altshuller, G., Shulyak, L., & Rodman, S. (1999). *The innovation algorithm: TRIZ, systematic innovation and technical creativity*: Technical Innovation Center, Inc.
- Amit, R., & Zott, C. (2012). Creating value through business model innovation. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 53(3), 41.
- askART. (1999). Shoukun Lü. Retrieved from [http://www.askart.com/artist/Shoukun\\_Lu/11141738/Shoukun\\_Lu.aspx#](http://www.askart.com/artist/Shoukun_Lu/11141738/Shoukun_Lu.aspx#)
- Baker, S. E., & Edwards, R. (2012). How many qualitative interviews is enough.
- Bang, A. L., Krogh, P., Ludvigsen, M., & Markussen, T. (2012). The role of hypothesis in constructive design research. In *Proceedings of the Art of Research Iv*.
- Bao, W. Y. (2011). Chinese graphic designer listed in international mainstream - Wang Min. Retrieved from <http://blog.renren.com/share/224432147/8536007754>
- Barnard, M. (2013). *Graphic design as communication*: Routledge.
- Barnett, H. G. (1953). Innovation: the basis of cultural change.
- Barron, F. J. T. n. o. c. (1988). Putting creativity to work. 76-98.
- Barthes, R. (1972). Mythologies.
- Battarbee, K., & Koskinen, I. J. C. (2005). Co-experience: user experience as interaction. 1(1), 5-18.
- Baudrillard, J. (1987). Modernity. *CTheory*, 11(3), 63-72.
- Beasley, W. (1980). Tradition and modernity in post-war Japan. *Asian Affairs*, 11(1), 5-17.
- Bell, D. (2004). *Ukiyo-e Explained*: Global Oriental.
- Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball sampling: Problems and techniques of chain referral sampling. *Sociological methods & research*, 10(2), 141-163.

- Blumer, H. (1986). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*: Univ of California Press.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Research for education: An introduction to theories and methods*. New York: Pearson.
- Brown, T. (2008). Design thinking. *Harvard business review*, 86(6), 84.
- CERINI, M. (2017). Masters of Design: Alan Chan & Stanley Wong. Retrieved from <https://hk.asiatatler.com/life/masters-of-design-alan-chan-stanley-wong>
- Chan Hung Ngai, J., & Ellis, P. J. I. M. R. (1998). Market orientation and business performance: some evidence from Hong Kong. *15*(2), 119-139.
- Chang, J. C. (2013). KAN Tai keung, as full imagination as a 20-year-old boy. *Art & Design*(10), 86-93.
- Chen, X. Q. (2014). KAN Tai keung, think of what the predecessors didn't, do what the predecessors didn't. Retrieved from <http://www.infzm.com/content/103561>
- Clark, H. (2009). Fashioning “China style” in the twenty-first century. *The Fabric of Cultures: Fashion, Identity, and Globalization*, 177-193.
- Co-operation, O. f. E., & Development. (1991). *Technology and productivity: the challenge for economic policy*: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; Washington, DC: OECD Publication and Information Center.
- Collins, A., Joseph, D., & Bielaczyc, K. (2004). Design research: Theoretical and methodological issues. *The Journal of the learning sciences*, 13(1), 15-42.
- Cooperrider, D., & Fry, R. (2010). Design-inspired corporate citizenship. *Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, 37, 3-6.
- Cross, N. (2004). Expertise in design: an overview. *Design studies*, 25(5), 427-441.
- Crouch, C. (2010). Contemporary Chinese Visual Culture.
- Dahl, S. (2004). Intercultural research: The current state of knowledge.
- Davis-Kean, P. E. (2005). The influence of parent education and family income on child achievement: the indirect role of parental expectations and the home environment. *Journal of family psychology*, 19(2), 294.
- Defazio, J. (2008). The identification of design experts. *Journal of Design Research*, 7(1), 84-96.
- Denzin, N. K. (1978). *Sociological methods: A sourcebook*: McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Dewey, J. (2005). *Art as experience*: Penguin.
- Dexter, L. A. (1970). *Elite and specialized interviewing*: Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

- Diakidoy, I. A. N., & Kanari, E. J. B. E. R. J. (1999). Student teachers' beliefs about creativity. *25*(2), 225-243.
- Dierickx, I., & Cool, K. (1989). Asset stock accumulation and sustainability of competitive advantage. *Management science*, *35*(12), 1504-1511.
- Dirlik, A. (1995). Confucius in the borderlands: Global capitalism and the reinvention of Confucianism. *boundary 2*, *22*(2), 229-273.
- Dirlik, A. (2002). Modernity as history: Post-revolutionary China, globalization and the question of modernity. *Social History*, *27*(1), 16-39.
- Dorst, K. (2015). *Frame innovation: Create new thinking by design*.
- Dreyfuss, H. (2003). *Designing for people*: Skyhorse Publishing Inc.
- Dynkin, A. A., & Ivanova, N. N. (1998). Technological innovation in Russia. *Research-Technology Management*, *41*(1), 44-47.
- Eckert, C., & Stacey, M. (2000). Sources of inspiration: a language of design. *Design studies*, *21*(5), 523-538.
- Edensor, T. (2002). *National identity, popular culture and everyday life*: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Eisenstadt, S. N. (2017). *Multiple modernities*: Routledge.
- Elizabeth, B. N. S., & Dandavate, U. (1999). *Design for experiencing: new tools*. Paper presented at the First International Conference on Design and Emotion, TU Delft.
- Fan, Y. (2000). A classification of Chinese culture. 7; 2.
- Fan, Y. X. (2016). KAN Tai keung said that design needs to be ethical. Retrieved from [http://www.job853.com/MacauNews/news\\_list\\_show\\_macao.aspx?type=1&id=508819&page=&y=0&m=0&d=0](http://www.job853.com/MacauNews/news_list_show_macao.aspx?type=1&id=508819&page=&y=0&m=0&d=0)
- Fascara, J. (1988). Graphic design: Fine art or social science? *Design issues*, *5*(1), 18-29.
- Freeman, C. (1994). The economics of technical change. *Cambridge Journal of economics*, *18*(5), 463-514.
- Freeman, C. (1995). The 'National System of Innovation' in historical perspective. *Cambridge Journal of economics*, *19*(1), 5-24.
- Garcia, R., & Calantone, R. (2002). A critical look at technological innovation typology and innovativeness terminology: a literature review. *Journal of product innovation management*, *19*(2), 110-132.
- Geertz, C. (1973). Thick Description; Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture. *The interpretation of cultures*, 3-30.

- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (2009). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*: Transaction Publishers.
- GONG, W. (2003). Conceptual analysis of 'Calligraphy and painting has the homological source'. 3.
- Guan, J., & Ma, N. (2003). Innovative capability and export performance of Chinese firms. *Technovation*, 23(9), 737-747.
- Gusfield, J. R. (1967). Tradition and modernity: Misplaced polarities in the study of social change. *American journal of sociology*, 351-362.
- Haas, K., & Steiner, H. (1995). *Cross-cultural design: communicating in the global marketplace*: Thames and Hudson.
- Hall, S. (1996). Cultural studies and its theoretical legacies. *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies*, 262-275.
- Han, J. Y. (2012a). *Han Jiaying + 5000 years x 50 objects x 500 colors : 5 〇〇〇5 〇5 〇〇* (1st ed.). Changsha: Hunan People's Publishing House.
- Han, J. Y. (2012b). *Reflection*: Hunan People's Publishing House.
- Han, J. Y. (2017) *Interview of HAN Jiaying/Interviewer: Y. TIAN*.
- Hang, J. (2007). Design Review: 'Shenzhen Graphic Design' in China. *Art Observation*(10), 31.
- Hang, J., He, J., & Kan, T. K. (2005). *Three durable friends: Chinese Traditional Graphics and Modern Visual Design [in Chinese]*: Shandong hua bao press.
- Hao, J. Y. (2012, 01.02). Designer JIANG Hua, 'Stop daydreaming and be realistic'. Retrieved from [http://culture.ifeng.com/zhuanlan/detail\\_2012\\_01/12/11931449\\_1.shtml](http://culture.ifeng.com/zhuanlan/detail_2012_01/12/11931449_1.shtml)
- Harris, F. (2012). *Ukiyo-e: the art of the Japanese print*.: Tuttle Publishing.
- Haveman, R., & Wolfe, B. J. J. o. e. l. (1995). A review of methods and findings. 33(4), 1829-1878.
- He, J. P. (2013). Reflection - HAN Jia ying in design translation. *Tian Ya*(3).
- He, X. (1992). The worship of Chinese gods of nature. *Shunghi: Shunghi Sanlian Bookstore*.
- Heiser, R. S., Sierra, J. J., & Torres, I. M. (2008). Creativity via cartoon spokespeople in print ads: Capitalizing on the distinctiveness effect. *Journal of advertising*, 37(4), 75-84.
- Heller, S. (2015). *The education of a graphic designer*: Skyhorse Publishing, Inc.
- Hennessey, B. A., & Amabile, T. M. (1987). *Creativity and Learning: What Research Says to the Teacher*: ERIC.

- Heskett, J. (2002). *Toothpicks and logos: Design in everyday life* (Vol. 1): Oxford University Press Oxford.
- Hobsbawm, E., and Terence Ranger, eds. (2012). *The invention of tradition*: Cambridge University Press.
- Hofer, B. K., & Pintrich, P. R. J. R. o. e. r. (1997). The development of epistemological theories: Beliefs about knowledge and knowing and their relation to learning. *67*(1), 88-140.
- Honko, L. (1998). Folklooriprotsess. *Mäetagused. Hüperajakiri*(06), 56-84.
- Hoskins, C. N., & Mariano, C. (2004). *Research in nursing and health: Understanding and using quantitative and qualitative methods* (Vol. 23): Springer Publishing Company.
- Hsu, C.-H., Lin, C.-L., & Lin, R. (2011). *A study of framework and process development for cultural product design*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Internationalization, Design and Global Development.
- Hu, J. X. (2017). The zodiac stamp is inspired by the 'insane chicken'. The graphic design godfather KAN Tai keung said: we need to come down off the high horse. Retrieved from <https://www.hk01.com/social news/64327/>
- ICAA. (2017). ICCA Council Member - HAN Jia Ying. Retrieved from <http://www.icaalliance.org/en/User/desc/id/1/aid/309.html>
- Industry, D. o. T. a. (2003). Department of Trade and Industry. Retrieved from <http://www.dti.gov.uk/>
- Ives, C. F. (1974). *The great wave: the influence of Japanese woodcuts on French prints*: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Jackall, R. (1988). Moral mazes: The world of corporate managers. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, *1*(4), 598-614.
- Jiang, H. (2010). Daily luxury. *National New Books information*(23), 19-20.
- Jiang, H. (2014a). JIANG Hua - Pursue the origin of design education. Retrieved from [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_8c4e4feb0102uxfr.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_8c4e4feb0102uxfr.html)
- Jiang, H. (2014b, 01.29). New Year Design Testimonial: Jiang Hua - The Contemporary Turn of Graphic Design. Retrieved from <http://www.designedu.cn/showposts.aspx?columnid=118&id=3658>
- Jiang, H. (2017) *Interview of JIANG Hua/Interviewer: Y. TIAN*.
- Jiang, H. (2018). Central Academy of Fine Arts 2018 Excellent Compulsory Course - Chinese Characters as a Method. Retrieved from [https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/YJWW-2pc\\_SR\\_i3J8nZoaDw](https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/YJWW-2pc_SR_i3J8nZoaDw)

- Johnson, R. (1986). What is cultural studies anyway? *Social text*(16), 38-80.
- jyueyau. (2009). Measure water with ruler, conquering the unyielding with the yielding. Talking about Chinese designer: KAN Tai Keung. Retrieved from <https://jyueyau.pixnet.net/blog/post/28629108>
- Kan, T. k. (2000). *Chinese graphic design: VI desgin*.
- Kan, T. K. (2002a). *Packaging designer: KAN Tai keung and his designer friends*. China: Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House.
- Kan, T. K. (2002b). *Poster designer: KAN Tai keung and his designer friends*. China: Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House.
- Kan, T. K. (2002c). *VI designer: KAN Tai keung and his designer friends*. China: Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House.
- KAN, T. K. (2004). From Chinese Traditional Graphics to Philosophical Thoughts - Inheritance and Innovation in Design. *Three friends in chilly weather- Poetic Design" - Proceedings of the Symposium on Chinese Traditional Graphics and Modern Visual Design in the Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong*.
- Kan, T. K. (2012). *Interesting and artistic things 100+1*. Hong Kong: Et press.
- Kan, T. K. (2013). *Design thinking 100+ 1*: Peking University Press.
- Kan, T. K. (2014). Eastern and Western Civilization and Contemporary Chinese Design. *China Advertising*(4), 147-149.
- Kan, T. K. (2016a) *Interview of KAN Tai Keung/Interviewer: T. Yao*.
- Kan, T. K. (2016b). *Typography design 100+1*: Et press.
- Kan, T. K., & Liu, Y. Y. (2009). The catcher in the rye of design fields. *Package & Design*(2), 104-105.
- Kavakli, M., & Gero, J. S. (2002). The structure of concurrent cognitive actions: a case study on novice and expert designers. *Design studies*, 23(1), 25-40.
- Kazmierczak, E. (2000). A semiotic perspective on aesthetic preferences, visual literacy, and information design. *Information Design Journal*, 10(2), 176-187.
- Kember, D. J. L., & instruction. (1997). A reconceptualisation of the research into university academics' conceptions of teaching. 7(3), 255-275.
- Kincaid, H. V., & Bright, M. (1957). Interviewing the business elite. *American journal of sociology*, 304-311.
- Klebanov, P. K., Brooks-Gunn, J., Duncan, G. J. J. J. o. M., & Family, t. (1994). Does neighborhood and family poverty affect mothers' parenting, mental health, and social support? , 441-455.



- Kleinschmidt, E. J., & Cooper, R. G. (1991). The impact of product innovativeness on performance. *Journal of product innovation management*, 8(4), 240-251.
- Kobayashi, T. (1993). *Utamaro: portraits from the floating world*: Kodansha Amer Incorporated.
- Kobayashi, T. (1997). *Ukiyo-e: an introduction to japanese woodblock prints*: Kodansha Amer Incorporated.
- Koskinen, I., Battarbee, K., & Mattelmeaki, T. (2003). *Empathic design*: IT Press.
- Koskinen, I., Zimmerman, J., Binder, T., Redstrom, J., & Wensveen, S. (2011). *Design research through practice: From the lab, field, and showroom*: Elsevier.
- Krippendorff, K. (2007). Design research, an oxymoron? *Design research now*, 67-80.
- Kun, L. (2017). The Commonality of Cultural Development of China and Japan Modern Poster Design. *Art and Design*.
- Laozi. (1992). *The tao of the Tao te ching : a translation and commentary*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press.
- Lawson, B. (2006). *How designers think: The design process demystified*: Routledge.
- Lazarus, S. (2014). Henry Steiner: the king of graphic design. Retrieved from <https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/article/1622030/one-man-brand>
- Lee, K.-P. (2004). *Design methods for a cross-cultural collaborative design project*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of Design Research Society International Conference-Futureground, 2004.
- Leong, B. D., & Clark, H. (2003). Culture-based knowledge towards new design thinking and practice—A dialogue. *Design issues*, 19(3), 48-58.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (2008). *Structural anthropology*: Basic Books.
- Lévi-Strauss, C., & Sisask, K. (2001). *Metsik môtlemine*: Vagabund.
- Li, J. (2010, 07.25). JIANG Hua : Chinese design. Retrieved from <http://art.zjol.com.cn/system/2010/07/25/016791251.shtml>
- Li, T. (2017) *Interview of Tommy LI/Interviewer: Y. TIAN*.
- Li, Y. (2009). LEUNG Mantao, Stanley WONG: Be loyal to your will to create. Retrieved from <http://cul.sohu.com/20091218/n269055554.shtml>
- Li, Y. R. (2012). KAN Tai keung, restart at 70 years old. Retrieved from <https://www.yahoo.com/news/%E4%B8%83%E5%8D%81%E5%86%8D%E5%87%BA%E7%99%BC-%E9%9D%B3%E5%9F%AD%E5%BC%B7-160000318.html>

- Linder, E. (2014). *Places of creation: design in industrial agglomerations*: Aalto University.
- Ling-hong, Y. (2007). Discussion about Graphic Rhetoric of Japanese Poster Design. *Journal of Zhejiang Sci-Tech University*, 4.
- Lu, L., Etzkowitz, H., Lu, L., & Etzkowitz, H. (2008). Strategic challenges for creating knowledge-based innovation in China: Transforming triple helix university-government-industry relations. *Journal of Technology management in China*, 3(1), 5-11.
- Lu, Q., Liu, J., Kang, W. j., & Wu, X. c. (2015). WANG Min, good design is the convient to use. *设计*(18), 48-49.
- Lyon, P. (2016). *Design education: learning, teaching and researching through design*: Routledge.
- Mattelmäki, T., Vaajakallio, K., & Koskinen, I. J. D. i. (2014). What happened to empathic design? , 30(1), 67-77.
- Meggs, P. B. (1992). *Type and image: The language of graphic design*: John Wiley & Sons.
- Meggs, P. B., & Chronicle, B. (1997). *6 chapters in design : Saul Bass, Ivan Chermayeff, Milton Glaser, Paul Rand, Ikko Tanaka, Henryk Tomaszewski*. San Francisco: San Francisco : Chronicle Books.
- Meggs, P. B., & Purvis, A. W. (2011). *Meggs' history of graphic design*: John Wiley & Sons.
- Michener, J. (2013). *Japanese Prints: From Early Masters to the Modern*: Tuttle Publishing.
- Mikesell, M. W. (1978). Tradition and innovation in cultural geography. *Annals of the Association of American geographers*, 68(1), 1-16.
- Moalosi, R., Popovic, V., & Hickling-Hudson, A. (2010). Culture-orientated product design. *International Journal of Technology and Design Education*, 20(2), 175-190.
- Moalosi, R., Popovic, V., Hickling-Hudson, A. R., & Kumar, K. L. (2005). Integration of culture within Botswana product design.
- Moholy-Nagy, L. (2012). *The new vision: fundamentals of Bauhaus design, painting, sculpture, and architecture*: Courier Corporation.
- Munro, D. J. J. S. (1969). The concept of man in ancient China. 63, 105-106.
- Mykkänen, J. (2001). Eliittihaastattelu [The Elite Interview, in Finnish]. *Politiikka: Valtiotieteellisen yhdistyksen julkaisu 43 (2001): 2*.
- Naoum, S., & Mustapha, F. J. C. R. (1994). Influences of the client, designer and procurement methods on project performance. 221-221.

- Norman, D. A. (2013). *The design of everyday things: Revised and expanded edition*: Basic books.
- ON.CC. (2013). Hong Kong British Zodiac Stamp 'Forbidden Red'. Retrieved from [http://the-sun.on.cc/cnt/news20130122/00407\\_090.html](http://the-sun.on.cc/cnt/news20130122/00407_090.html)
- Onians, R. B. (2011). *The origins of European thought: About the body, the mind, the soul, the world, time, and fate*: Cambridge University Press.
- Pajares, M. F. J. R. o. e. r. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. 62(3), 307-332.
- Papanek, V., & Fuller, R. B. (1972). *Design for the real world*: Thames and Hudson London.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*: SAGE Publications, inc.
- Peirce, C. S. (1958). *Collected Papers: Science and philosophy and Reviews, correspondence, and bibliography* (Vol. 7): Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Penkoff, R. (1964). *Roots of the Ukiyo-e: Early Woodcuts of the Floating World*: Ball State Teachers College.
- Polanyi, M. (2009). *The tacit dimension*: University of Chicago press.
- Post, O. M. (2014). Being a designer in the moment, both lucky and painful. Retrieved from [http://fashion.ifeng.com/news/detail\\_2014\\_03/31/35299089\\_0.shtml](http://fashion.ifeng.com/news/detail_2014_03/31/35299089_0.shtml)
- Qin, J. p. (2015). Dialogue 10, Designing and Creating the Future - Dialogue Wang Min, Dean of School of Design. Retrieved from <http://chuansong.me/n/1639674452272>
- Rāhula, W. (1974). *What the Buddha taught* (Vol. 641): Grove Press.
- Rand, P. (2017). *Design, form, and chaos*: Yale University Press.
- Redacción. (2010). Cross-cultural design from China. Retrieved from <https://www.experimenta.es/en/in-depth/cross-cultural-design-china-2442/>
- Ren, Z. P. (2011). KAN Tai keung: Daily life is the source of art. Retrieved from [http://cul.china.com.cn/renwu/2011-04/27/content\\_4160930.htm](http://cul.china.com.cn/renwu/2011-04/27/content_4160930.htm)
- Richard B. Doubleday, S. G. (2008a). THE GRAPHIC LANGUAGE OF MIN WANG - PART 1 OF 3. Retrieved from <http://www.ico-d.org/connect/features/post/300.php>
- Richard B. Doubleday, S. G. (2008b). THE GRAPHIC LANGUAGE OF MIN WANG - PART 2 OF 3. Retrieved from <http://www.ico-d.org/connect/features/post/301.php>
- Richard B. Doubleday, S. G. (2008c). THE GRAPHIC LANGUAGE OF MIN WANG - PART 3 OF 3. Retrieved from <http://www.ico-d.org/connect/features/post/302.php>
- Robertson, T. S. (1967). The process of innovation and the diffusion of innovation. *The Journal of Marketing*, 14-19.

- Robinson, J. A. (1960). Survey interviewing among members of Congress. *Public opinion quarterly*, 127-138.
- Rogers, E. M. (1962). *Diffusion of innovations*: Simon and Schuster.
- Rogers, E. M. (2010). *Diffusion of innovations*: Simon and Schuster.
- Roy, K. R. (2001). The early years of graphic design at yale university. *Design issues*, 17(3), 3-14.
- Runco, M. A. (1999). A longitudinal study of exceptional giftedness and creativity. *Creativity research journal*, 12(2), 161-164.
- Sanders, E. B.-N. (1992). Converging perspectives: product development research for the 1990s. *Design management journal*, 3(4), 49-54.
- Searing, D. D. (1994). *Westminster's world: understanding political roles*: Cambridge Univ Press.
- Shan, Z. P. (2002). Outside of art - HAN Jiaying's visual world view. *Tian Ya*(1).
- Shuai, Z., & Min, W. (2010). What does ICOGRADA bring to us? Retrieved from [http://www.dolcn.com/data/cns\\_1/article\\_31/dialogue\\_313/dgra\\_3132/2010-05/1273371844.html](http://www.dolcn.com/data/cns_1/article_31/dialogue_313/dgra_3132/2010-05/1273371844.html)
- Silva, A., Leite, M., Vilas-Boas, J., & Simões, R. J. E. J. o. E. E. (2018). How education background affects design outcome: teaching product development to mechanical engineers, industrial designers and managers. 1-25.
- Sina. (2010). Exclusive interview, Design360° Concept and design random talk. Retrieved from [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_639ba7060100lt01.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_639ba7060100lt01.html)
- Smigel, E. O. (1958). Interviewing a legal elite: the Wall Street lawyer. *American journal of sociology*, 159-164.
- Smith, J. R., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Klebanov, P. K. J. C. o. g. u. p. (1997). Consequences of living in poverty for young children's cognitive and verbal ability and early school achievement. 132, 189.
- Society, A. (2015). Asia Society's third annual Art Gala honoring contemporary artists. Retrieved from <https://asiasociety.org/hong-kong/art-gala-2015-dummy>
- Song, X. M., & Montoya-Weiss, M. M. (1998). Critical development activities for really new versus incremental products. *Journal of product innovation management*, 15(2), 124-135.
- Sosa, R., & Gero, J. S. (2004). A computational framework for the study of creativity and innovation in design: Effects of social ties. In *Design Computing and Cognition '04* (pp. 499-517): Springer.

- Steiner, H. (2016a). *How to make money*. Retrieved from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University:
- Steiner, H. (2016b) *Interview of Henry Steiner/Interviewer: Y. TIAN*.
- Sternberg, R. J. J. E. L. (1996). Investing in Creativity: Many Happy Returns. 53(4), 80-84.
- Sternberg, R. J. J. E. P. (1986). Intelligence, wisdom, and creativity: Three is better than one. 21(3), 175-190.
- Summatavet, K. (2005). *Folk Tradition and Artistic Inspiration: A Woman's Life in Traditional Estonian Jewelry and Crafts as Told by Anne and Roos*: University of Art and Design Helsinki.
- Taylor, C. W. J. T. n. o. c. (1988). Various approaches to and definitions of creativity. 99-121.
- Teece, D. J. (2010). Business models, business strategy and innovation. *Long Range Planning*, 43(2), 172-194.
- Tezign. (2017). HAN Jia ying, you can see his design almost every corner in China. Retrieved from <https://www.zcool.com.cn/article/ZNDczMzY4.html>
- Thomas, R. J. (1993). Interviewing important people in big companies. *Journal of contemporary ethnography*, 22(1), 80-96.
- Thompson, P. (2000). *Voice of the past: Oral history*: Oxford University Press on Demand.
- Throsby, D. (2006). An artistic production function: Theory and an application to Australian visual artists. *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 30(1), 1-14.
- Utterback, J. (1994). Mastering the dynamics of innovation: how companies can seize opportunities in the face of technological change. *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership Historical Research Reference in Entrepreneurship*.
- Verganti, R. (2009). Design-driven innovation. *Boston, MA*.
- Von Stamm, B. (2008). *Managing innovation, design and creativity*: John Wiley & Sons.
- Wajiro, K. (2015). Selected writings on design and modernology, 1924–47. *A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture*, 22(2), 190-216.
- Wang, M. (2006). Innovation and integration in the design process. *National Art Museum of China*(2), 112-113.
- Wang, M. (2017) *Interview of WANG Min/Interviewer: Y. TIAN*.
- Wang, M., & Shen, X. (2005). *Square Two Design: SHANGHAI CALLIGRAPHY AND PAINTING PUBLISHING HOUSE*.
- Wang, S. Z. (2002). A History of Graphic Design. In: China Youth Press.

- Weber, M., & Gerth, H. H. (1953). *The Religion of China, Confucianism and Taoism*.
- Weber, R. P. (1990). *Basic content analysis*: Sage.
- Whitehead, K. (2017). Artist Stanley Wong on his creative epiphany, positivity and remarrying his wife. Retrieved from <https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/long-reads/article/2121259/artist-stanley-wong-his-creative-epiphany>
- Williams, R. (1985). *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*: Oxford University Press.
- Wittrock, B. (2000). Modernity: One, none, or many? European origins and modernity as a global condition. *Daedalus*, 129(1), 31-60.
- WONG, S. (2010). Stanley Wong: 'Don't call me artist, I am just social worker.'. *Design*(7), 83-84.
- WONG, S. (2015). Chinese designers must find strength in self-identification. Retrieved from <http://designperspectives.org/zh-hans/2015/03/11/stanley-wong/>
- WONG, S. (2018) *Interview of Stanley WONG/Interviewer: Y. TIAN*.
- Wong, W. S. (2001). Detachment and Unification: A Chinese graphic design history in Greater China since 1979. *Design issues*, 17(4), 51-71.
- Wong, W. S. (2013). The three orders of cultural signification: a proposed design thinking theory considering cultures and globalization. *Faculty of Design, Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia*.
- Wong, W. S. (2018). An International Design Identity of Hong Kong: Colonization, Decolonization and Recolonization. In *The Disappearance of Hong Kong in Comics, Advertising and Graphic Design* (pp. 191-213): Springer.
- XIAO, G. L. (2018). Panyu Ancient Construction Artisan Village: famous craftsmen have participated in the construction of Chen Clan Ancestral Hall and the Summer Palace. Retrieved from <https://kknews.cc/zh-mo/culture/p2em4q2.html>
- Xiao, M. (2011). KAN Tai keung - design philosopher. Retrieved from <http://arts-news.net/artnews/article/%E9%9D%B3%E5%9F%AD%E5%BC%B7%EF%B9%A3%E8%A8%AD%E8%A8%88%E5%93%B2%E5%AD%B8%E5%AE%B6>
- Xin, J. (2017). Wang Min: Simple & Complex. *'Edge' Life Design Magazine*.
- Xin, K. B. (2013). KAN Tai Keung: Design is greater. Retrieved from [http://art.china.cn/huodong/2013-07/24/content\\_6150474.htm](http://art.china.cn/huodong/2013-07/24/content_6150474.htm)
- Xin, X. (2006). *Product innovation in a cultural context—A method applied to Chinese product development*. USA: Carnegie Mellon University,

- Xu, T., Smith, N., Bower, D., & Chew, A. (2004). Development strategies for Chinese design institutes. *Journal of Management in Engineering*, 20(2), 62-69.
- Yam, R. C., Guan, J. C., Pun, K. F., & Tang, E. P. (2004). An audit of technological innovation capabilities in Chinese firms: some empirical findings in Beijing, China. *Research policy*, 33(8), 1123-1140.
- Yan, Y. (2014). Another mountain: Thirty years of dialogue with creation and society. Retrieved from [http://news.ifeng.com/a/20141209/42677466\\_0.shtml](http://news.ifeng.com/a/20141209/42677466_0.shtml)
- Yao, T. (2016). *Inertia and Innovation: How masters in branding interpret Chinese culture ?*. Paper presented at the CULTURAL INNOVATION and LIFE DESIGN, Chiang Mai, Thailand.
- Yi, W. (2013). Han Jiaying Design Review Exhibition at the Central Academy of Fine Arts Museum - 'Reflection'. Retrieved from <http://fashion.163.com/13/0407/14/8RS8SSCD00264MK3.html>
- Youlan, F. (1995). History of Chinese philosophy.
- Zhao, X. (2015). The first of the Five Classics broke out new energy, KAN Tai keung used the 'Qian diagram' symbol to interpret the tradition. Retrieved from <http://paper.wenweipo.com/2015/12/04/OT1512040001.htm>
- Zuckerman, H. (1972). Interviewing an ultra-elite. *Public opinion quarterly*, 36(2), 159-175.