

LPF Reading Exemplar

The Jury's Still out on the Work of Local Designers

Task Description

Students read a newspaper article about the state of Hong Kong design work in the pre-handover years (i.e. before 1997) and answered questions related to the various views presented in the article. Based on what they learnt from the design experts' views, students worked in groups to design a furniture item that would appeal to the experts in the design industry, and presented their design orally to the class.

Preparation

Before the reading activity, students were given three pictures showing a Chinese-style furniture item, a Western-style furniture item and an East-meets-West furniture item. In groups, they gave each picture one of the following labels: Chinese-style furniture, Western-style furniture, East-meets-West furniture. Students then discussed in groups which type of design appealed to them the most and why in order to prepare themselves for the discussion presented in the article.

Learning Outcomes: ATMs 6-7

ATM 6

Understanding and inferring information, ideas, feelings and opinions in a range of texts with some degree of complexity, using and integrating a range of reading strategies as appropriate

ATM 7

Understanding, inferring and interpreting information, ideas, feelings and opinions in a range of texts with some degree of complexity, using and integrating a range of reading strategies as appropriate

Questions	When students respond to the questions appropriately, they can:
<p>1. In Paragraph 13, Mr John Au said, ‘Different regions enhance different aspects of design.’ What does this tell the readers about his expectations of local designs?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> A. Local designs should reflect a sense of humour.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> B. Local designs should be open-minded.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> C. Local designs should reflect freedom of thought.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>D. Local designs should reflect Hong Kong’s identity.</i></p>	<p>ATM 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interpret Mr John Au’s opinion that different regions enhance different aspects of design with the help of:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– the example he used to illustrate what he means, i.e.. ‘Look at the UK, humour is popular in design there but it doesn’t work as a concept in the US’ (Paragraph 13)– his belief that there would be an enhanced identity in the post-1997 Hong Kong designs (i.e. ‘... with the coming of 1997 there is an enhanced identity... and that will be reflected in design’) (Paragraph 11) <p>and come to the conclusion that local designs should reflect Hong Kong’s identity, rather than draw heavily on the West for influence</p>

<p>2. Talking about the ‘First Picture Show’, Mr Jennings Ku said, ‘... we haven’t picked a rubber-stamped group of designers who would think great.’ (Paragraph 30)</p> <p>Explain what ‘a rubber-stamped group of designers’ means in the context of what Mr Jennings Ku said.</p> <p><i>It means a group of designers that would think the same way.</i></p>	<p>ATM 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work out the meaning of ‘rubber-stamped’ by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – using syntactic clues, e.g. determining that it is an adjective as it is positioned between the article ‘a’ and the noun phrase ‘group of designers’, which it describes; understanding that the relative clause ‘who would think great’ (Paragraph 30) explains what that group of designers is like – using semantic clues, e.g. associating ‘haven’t picked a rubber-stamped group of designers’ (Paragraph 30) with ‘brought in judges from various cultures, disciplines and experiences’ (Paragraph 30), and ‘The judges’ comments were mixed...’ (Paragraph 28), and concluding that the adjective ‘rubber-stamped’ alone implies sameness or lack of variety (which is the exact opposite of the idea conveyed by the words ‘various’ and ‘mixed’) when the literal meaning of its base form, ‘rubber-stamp’ (i.e. a device to make an imprint on a document) is extended into its figurative sense
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3a) Complete the following table by indicating what the four experts from the design industry say about the direction that Hong Kong design work should take. One has been done for you as an example.

Experts from the design industry	Hong Kong design work...
George Sowden (Paragraphs 5-9)	Should reflect emerging local value
John Au (Paragraphs 11-13)	<i>Should reflect changes in the identity that is a result of the coming of 1997</i>
Jennings Ku (Paragraphs 14-16)	<i>Should reflect an individual character (that is the result of synergy between countries and culture)</i>
David Hillman (Paragraphs 33-34)	<i>Should reflect Hong Kong's own style</i>

b) What do these four industry experts agree on as the future direction of Hong Kong design work?

*(Accept any answer that is similar in meaning)
They agree that Hong Kong design should reflect its unique identity.*

ATM 6

- gather the views of the various design experts from the paragraphs indicated
- distil the key ideas from what they say using and making connections between semantic clues, e.g.
 - for John Au’s comments, ‘the coming of 1997’ (Paragraph 11), ‘enhanced identity’ (Paragraph 11), ‘each country has its own personality’ (Paragraph 13)
 - for Jennings Ku’s comments, ‘synergy between countries and cultures’ (Paragraph 14), ‘our culture here – East and West’ (Paragraph 15), ‘We are bilingual, we think in both ways. We must build on that...’ (Paragraph 16)
 - for David Hillman’s comments, ‘Hong Kong ... designers find their own style...’ (paragraph 34), ‘The work I particularly liked was that of the designers who produced fresh modern and exciting interpretations of...’ (Paragraph 33)
- summarise the key ideas distilled with words and expressions used by the design experts that consistently convey a similar message, e.g. ‘enhanced identity’ (Paragraph 11), ‘its own personality’ (Paragraph 13), ‘Because of our culture here – East and West...’ (Paragraph 15), ‘... we think in both ways. We must build on that...’ (Paragraph 16), ‘their own style’ (Paragraph 34)

4. Provide an alternative title to this article.		ATM 6
	The jury heaps praises on the work of local designers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gather the various opinions expressed by the design experts on the work of local designers from the article, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ‘Simple yet definite with an impressive depth of ideas...’ (Paragraph 4) – ‘What a large number of the entries lacked was “thoughts, lifestyles and innovative cultural preferences” ...’ (Paragraph 9) – ‘The judges’ comments were mixed. Some felt the standard was high, others were disappointed’ (Paragraph 28) – ‘... some areas... were disappointingly weak...’ (Paragraph 32) • distil a pattern among the comments, i.e. some comments are positive while others are negative • come to the conclusion that opinions are divided, rather than unanimously positive or negative, over the work of local designers
	East-meet-west theme the way out for local designers	
	The work of local designer is far from satisfactory	
✓	<i>Opinions are divided over the work of local designers</i>	

Text

The jury's still out on the work of local designers, writes Deborah Herd

SCMP (Sunday) 3.11.96

Familiar or Innovative

(1) The yellow and red 'Lipton' label hangs on the end of a string over the side of a steaming teacup. A more traditional English image is hard to find, except the small white teacup which has no handle; it is a Chinese cup containing a Western incarnation of the ancient drink.

(2) The 'juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory Chinese and Western cultures' made the image by Alan Chan one of the judge's awarded winners in this year's Hong Kong Designers Association (HKDA) Design Show.

(3) 'When you blend the Pearl of the Orient with strong Western influences, what will the result be?' Taiwanese judge Ho Chin-hwei said.

(4) 'Simple yet definite with an impressive depth of ideas this poster makes for an inspiring sense of empathy and recognition by employing a familiar approach.'

(5) That was not how the English-born, Italy-based judge, George Sowden, considered the entries in this year's competition now on display in the forum of the Hongkong Bank headquarters in Central.

(6) He found too much nostalgia. 'I was looking for emerging local values and not necessarily stylistically correct results.'

(7) 'I adopted a firm and, on the whole, critical attitude to all those entries which in some measure (although designed with great precision of form and attention to details), failed to suggest any direction in which design can evolve,' Sowden said.

(8) 'Design cannot be reduced to only dealing with already established concepts, made weak

by an endless number of pointless variations on a theme in which the innovative heart of the work is shown only in a detail.'

(9) What a large number of the entries lacked was 'thoughts, lifestyles and innovative cultural preferences', commented Sowden, who runs his own design company.

The need for identity

(10) While the stylistic and manufacturing quality of entries proves Hong Kong has found its feet and can stand with the best, what appears to be lacking is an identity of its own, a design element the territory can claim.

(11) 'It is true many designers in Hong Kong have drawn on the West for influence but I think with the coming of 1997 there is an enhanced identity, confidence and responsibility here and that will be reflected in design,' HKDA chairman John Au said.

(12) 'We want to see Hong Kong as the New York of China. It is a very open-minded, cultured and liberated place that welcomes freedom of thought.'

(13) 'Different regions enhance different aspects of design,' Au said. 'Look at the UK, humour is popular in design there but it doesn't work as a concept in the US. Each country has its own personality.'

(14) Jennings Ku, a member of the HKDA executive committee, says what is needed is a synergy between countries and cultures that results in an individual character.

(15) 'The new larger market of China will be good for Hong Kong designers and for Chinese business. Because of our culture here - East and West - and China wanting to expand overseas, we have the international experience to offer China and it has the business for us. We will be able to grow together. The interaction will be mutual. We should not underestimate our power to influence China.'

(16) Already, designers are working on projects in China and lecturing there. 'Hong Kong is like Shanghai in the 1930s.

We are bilingual, we think in both ways. We must build on that,' Ku said.

The importance of support

(17) But the success of Hong Kong's design industry and the creation of its own identity depend primarily on two things - elements Au says have been sadly lacking: support from Government and industry.

(18) 'I would urge the Government and the business sector to use more Hong Kong designers,' Au said.

(19) 'That is a very good way to support our industry, which I don't think they do at the moment.'

(20) 'So many large projects, like the new airport, are sub-contracted to overseas agencies. Local designers need more opportunities, more exposure, so they can find their personality. A lot of our designers have overseas experience,' he said.

(21) 'The resources are here but perhaps it needs guts or courage for the Government or business sector to say, "Hey, we are good enough."'

(22) 'Countries such as Japan and Taiwan pump a lot of money into helping the industry, inviting overseas designers to lecture, setting up scholarships, donating funds for research,' the HKDA chairman said.

(23) 'I don't think the Hong Kong Government can tell the difference between art and design.'

(24) 'It has set up an arts council but no one represents designers. The artists certainly won't do it. They are artists, not designers.'

Identity rules

(25) That is partly why the design association was established in 1972, and the 'First Picture Show' held in 1975 as an annual event, as a

way to support the industry.

(26) 'This competition represents a history of the design work in Hong Kong. We can see how it has evolved and changed,' explains Au.

(27) The increasing number of entries forced it in 1980 to be turned into a biannual competition; this year, there were 1,651 entries, including 266 in 15 categories in a new Asia region competition.

(28) 'The judges' comments were mixed. Some felt the standard was high, others were disappointed. It depends where the judge comes from, his frame of mind, his preferences,' Ku said.

(29) 'I do not necessarily agree with some of the comments they made but it was a free show. I enjoy the variety of remarks.'

(30) 'It means we haven't picked a rubber-stamped group of designers who would think great. We brought in judges from various cultures, disciplines and experiences, and for that reason I respect what they have done,' Ku said.

(31) Of the 31 categories, from furniture to posters, toys to digital art, the largest number was in graphic design categories, and not all sections had entries that were selected for awards.

(32) Ku estimates that about 70 percent of entries were of a high standard, although some areas, such as jewellery and furniture, were disappointingly weak - the natural result, he says, of the industry mix in Hong Kong.

(33) Perhaps British judge David Hillman best summed up the overall response of the judges: 'The work I particularly liked was that of the designers who produced fresh modern and exciting interpretations of classic Chinese calligraphy and art.'

(34) 'I believe it is very important that Hong Kong and mainland Chinese designers find their own style and not try to emulate what US and UK designers produce.'

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